

RRL Jammu renamed as Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine

CSIR's Jammu-based Regional Research Laboratory (RRL) has recently been renamed as Indian Institute of Integrative Medicine (IIIM).

'The name RRL was not matching with the work profile, expertise and orientation of the laboratory. Since its inception, the lab has slowly changed into a vibrant world-class institution with main focus on herbal drugs, medicinal and aromatic plants or phytomedicine', according to S. C. Taneja, the Acting Director of IIIM, Jammu. He further adds, 'The new name gives the most appropriate identity to this laboratory at the national and international levels'.

In this regard, a proposal for re-naming five RRLs to commensurate with their

changed profiles was considered by the Governing Body of the CSIR in its 168th meeting held on 8 December 2006. The other four RRLs whose names were changed are at Bhopal, Bhubaneswar, Jorhat and Thiruvananthapuram.

RRL Jammu was initially established as the Drug Research Laboratory (DRL) in 1941. Since then, it has been a multi-disciplinary research organization catering to the regional aspirations and exploiting the plant and microbial biodiversity of the natural wealth in this region of the western Himalayas.

However, over the last few years, the institute has focused more on herbal drugs and in developing technologies, drugs and products of high standard, acceptable

in national and international markets. Keeping this in view, some less-productive departments, projects or areas of research, such as minerals and composite materials, cellulose, paper and pulp, fur technology, entomology, silk and silk products and food technology have been closed down.

To face the new and contemporary challenges and to meet its more focused requirements, the institute has also set up new R&D facilities such as bio-organic chemistry, organic synthesis, anti-infective research, and quality control and quality assurance.

Abhay S. D. Rajput

IUCN's 2008 Sabin Award for Amphibian Conservation

The \$25,000 Sabin Award for Amphibian Conservation for the year 2008 was recently presented by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to S. D. Biju, Delhi University on 17 September 2008 in New York. This Award recognizes Biju's studies and research work on amphibians (especially frogs) and their conservation.

Biju's main thrust area of research has been frogs of the Western Ghats. During his research work in the last 15 years, Biju has discovered more than 100 species of frogs, four new genera and one new family, the Nasikabatrachidae. He had also discovered *Nyctibatrachus minimus* – the smallest Indian frog – in 2007 in the Western Ghats of Kerala. The frog is only

10 mm long. Biju also discovered the first Indian canopy frog, *Philautus nero-stagone*. His discovery of the Indian purple frog, *Nasikabatrachus sahyadrensis* in 2003 led to the creation of a new frog family, the Nasikabatrachidae, which according to experts is 'a once in a century find'.

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The Champalimaud Vision Award 2008

To confront blindness and provide maximum support for the fight against blindness, the Champalimaud Foundation, designed the Antonio Champalimaud Vision Award in 2006. This Award is also supported by the World Health Organization's Vision 2020 – the Right to Sight initiative. The former President of India, Dr A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, while presiding over the inauguration ceremony in 2006, referred it as the 'Nobel Prize for Vision'.

The prestigious Antonio Champalimaud Vision Award 2008 was recently awarded jointly to Dr Jeremy Nathans and Dr King-Wai Yau, both faculty members at Johns Hopkins University in Baltimore, MD, USA.

The Award, carrying a cash prize of Euro 1 million (US\$ 1.4 million), is the largest monetary prize in the field of vision and one of the largest scientific prizes in the world. The prize money will be divided equally between the scientists

and they can use it freely for their research.

The research done by Nathans and Yau uncovers the fundamentals of vision having clinical applications, thus helping in the fight against blindness.

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