

More than 20,000 patent applications piled up at Chennai office, severe shortage of examiners

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More than 20,000 applications, scores of them are from abroad, for patent registration for pharmaceutical and biotechnology inventions are pending with the Patent Office in Chennai. Shortage of examiners is the main reason for the delay in disposing of these files, according to V Rengasamy, Deputy Controller of Patents & Designs, IPR, Chennai.

The Patent Office in Chennai, which has the jurisdiction of four southern states and the Union Territory of Pondicherry, is getting over one thousand files for patent registration every month. Seventy Five percent of these applications are from foreign countries. But the office is capable of granting patent registration only for a few applications. It is experiencing severe shortage of examiners for the last two years. According to sources, this is the same case with other patent offices in the country.

The office in Chennai, until last month, has received over ten thousand applications, but only one thousand of them could be disposed of so far. The deputy controller said his office requires at least 100 examiners to process these files as one day-full is necessary to examine one application. Currently the Chennai office has only 18 examiners and all over India the number of vacancies is 257. However, he said the vacancies will be filled up in a few months and the backlog clearance be done after the allotment of staff. "If we get sufficient staff, all the process will go smoothly and no industry will be affected", he added.

While interacting with Pharmabiz, Rengasamy said the applications for patent registrations are filed on inventions in the field of technology, biotechnology and pharmaceuticals. Patent or the exclusive right is granted to the applicant by the office for his/her invention for a limited period of time in lieu of full disclosure of it. The right is granted on condition that the invention should be novel and capable of industrial application.

When contacted, P Lekshmi Narayanan, the secretary of Tamil Nadu Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association (TNPMA) said the delay in granting of patents will not affect the Tamil Nadu pharmaceutical industry as majority of it is small scale units. However, to an extent it may affect the medium players, he said.

J Jayaseelan, secretary of Tamil Nadu IPA responded that patent registration is always against the growth of SMEs and it will help only the multinational companies.