BioSpectrum the business of Bio & Health Sciences ASIA EDITION

Japan creates sperm bank for endangered species

September 18, 2013 | News | By BioSpectrum Bureau



Singapore: Researchers at the Institute of Laboratory Animals, Graduate School of Medicine, Kyoto University, Japan, have preserved sperm taken from two endangered primates and a type of giraffe.

The team, which was led by Dr Takehito Kaneko, mixed the sperm with special preservation liquid and freeze-dried it in a way that allows them to store it at just four drgree centigrade.

The temperature used by the scientists is much higher and less energy intensive as compared to conventional ways of storing sperm. There is presently no human application for the technology that is being used by Dr Kaneko, however, it is an avenue that may be explored in the future.

Dr Kaneko said that, "In this way, scientists will be able to obtain genetic information more easily, which means we could help to preserve endangered animal species. This may sound like a dream, but we could in future take genetic information into space."

Dr Kaneko further said that the challenge now is to develop a way to apply the method to the other side of the procreative equation. "Now we have to use fresh eggs or those frozen conventionally," he said. "We are studying methods to freeze-dry eggs as well," he said.