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THE TIMES OF INDIA, KOLKATA  
SATURDAY, MARCH 3, 2012

## India foils milk bio-piracy bid

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: India has successfully foiled a bio-piracy bid by a Swiss multinational firm to patent an age-old Indian home remedy — the use of milk as a laxative.

Nestec SA had filed a patent application at the European Patent Office (EPO) on May 12, 2009, claiming the usefulness of cow milk for the treatment of constipation to be its unique finding.

However, cow milk is being used alone or in combination with other ingredients to treat constipation or as a laxative in Indian medicine systems for hundreds of years.

The Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the Union health ministry's department of Ayush sent the EPO references of the remedy from several Indian texts dated between the 5th and the 20th century. This led to the applicant withdrawing its patent application on January 24.

A health ministry official said: "Within 16 weeks of In-



GRANDMA'S RECIPE

dia providing evidence, the nearly three-year-old attempt by a Swiss multinational company to pirate India's traditional medicinal knowledge was struck down by the European Patent Office."

Nestec SA had filed a patent application (EP2251029) under the title "Lactoferrin and gut neuronal health in adults and/or elderly".

The books belonging to the Indian systems of medicine that were sent to the EPO as evidence included *Astanga Hridaya* (5th century), *Vanagasena* (12th century), *Rasendracintamanaih* (16th century), *Siddhabhesajamanimala* (19th century) and *Khazaainal-Advia* (20th century).