

India foils UK firm's ginger cure patent bid

New Delhi: India has foiled an attempt by British pharma company Nicholas John Larkins to claim patent on the usefulness of ginger in treating cough and cold, reports Kounteya Sinha. The firm had filed a patent plea on March 16, 2006, claiming that it had discovered the effectiveness of ginger and the kutki plant in treating cough and lung ailments.

However, the department of AYUSH and the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research intervened, providing proof from 18th century ayurveda and unani books detailing the use of ginger and kutki in curing cough, asthma and lung problems. Within 15 days of the evidence being presented, Nicholas John Larkins's claim was struck down. TNN **P15**

THE TIMES OF INDIA, MUMBAI
WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2012

TIMES NATION

15

UK co bid to patent ginger cure foiled

India Cites Age-Old Texts To Deny Firm's Claim On Healing Cold

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: India has foiled an attempt by a British pharmaceutical company to claim a patent on using ginger for the treatment of cough and cold.

Nicholas John Larkins, London, filed a patent application (no. GB2436063), titled, "Pharmaceutical composition for the treatment of excess mucous production", on March 16, 2006, at the British patent office. It claimed the usefulness of ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) and kutki plant (*Picrorhiza kurroa*) for the treatment of cough and lung diseases to be its novel and unique finding.

However, Indians have been gulping down steaming hot *adrak chai* to cure a bad cough or cold for centuries. The department of Ayurveda, Yoga & Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha and Homoeopathy (AYUSH) and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) intervened and provided evidence from age-old ayur-



GRANDMA'S REMEDY

veda and unani books, dating back to the 18th century, which spoke about ginger and kutki being used alone or in conjunction with other ingredients for the treatment of cough, bronchial asthma and lung diseases.

"Within a period of two weeks of India providing evidence, the five-year-old attempt to pirate India's traditional medicinal knowledge was struck down by the UK patent office in 2011," a health ministry official said. The books that were referred to as evidence by CSIR included *Ilaaj-al-Amraaz* (18th Century), *Bhalsajya Ratnavali* and *Bharata Bhalsajya Ratnakara* (1000 BC), *Bayaaz-e-Kabir* (1938 AD), *Muheet-e-Azam* (19th century) and *Khazaain-al-Ad-*

via from the 20th century.

"India through the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) submitted its prior art evidences on April 25, 2011. The examiner terminated the patent application before grant," added the official. Ginger has been a popular Indian home remedy for treating cough and cold. Ginger tea consumed hot is known to provide relief to the throat. At times, it is mixed with lemon and honey. The high concentration of vitamin C in the drink improves resistance levels, lowers toxicity of the infection and reduces duration of the cold.

Till about 10 years ago, about 2,000 wrong patents concerning indigenous systems of medicine were being granted annually at international level due to lack of evidence provided by India. TKDL has been a real boon for India. Over 2.26 lakh rare medical formulations which were part of the ancient Indian texts have been dug out, transcribed, documented and digitized into the path-breaking TKDL to protect them from bio-pirates.

This includes 1.22 lakh unani, 90,000 ayurveda and 15,000 Siddha formulations, which have been transcribed by the department of AYUSH and CSIR from ancient Indian texts written originally in Sanskrit, Arabic, Urdu, Persian and Tamil.