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India foils UK co's ginger-patent bid

Kounteya Sinha | TNN

New Delhi: India has foiled an attempt by a British pharmaceutical company to claim 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

Remedy Rebound

► Nicholas John Larkins claims as its novel and unique finding the usefulness of ginger (*Zingiber officinale*) and kutki plant (*Picrorhiza kurroa*) to treat cough and lung diseases

► Opposing it, dept of Ayush and CSIR cite 18th century Ayurveda and Unani books, that talk about ginger and kutki being used to treat cough, bronchial asthma and lung diseases



► Books referred as evidence: 'Ilaaj-al-Amraaz' (18th century), 'Bhaisajya Ratnavali' and 'Bharata Bhaisajya Ratnakara' (1000 BC), 'Bayaaz-e-Kabir' (1938 AD), 'Muheet-e-Azam' (19th century) and 'Khazaain-al-Advia' (20th century)

► Ginger has been a popular Indian home remedy for treating cough and cold. The high concentration of vitamin C in ginger tea improves resistance levels, lowers toxicity of infection and reduces duration of cold

unique finding.

However, Indians have been gulping down steaming

hot *adrak chai* for centuries to cure a bad cough or cold.

The department of Ayush

and Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) intervened and provided evidence from age-old Ayurveda and Unani books, dating back to the 18th century, that talked about ginger and kutki being used alone or in combination with other ingredients for the treatment of cough, bronchial asthma and lung diseases.

► Knowledge library a boon, P 7

"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.

Knowledge library a boon for India

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New Delhi: 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.

The Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (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.

They have also been translated into five international languages — English, Japanese, French, German and Spanish — for intellectual property rights and as reference points whenever an application for a patent comes up "from Western bio pirates".