

India fights patent claims on traditional remedies

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New Delhi, May 1 -- India has challenged 36 attempts by international companies to get patents on Indian traditional knowledge at the European Patents Office (EPO) over the past one year. The applications were from the US, the UK, Italy, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Netherlands, South Korea, China, Kenya and India. While the EPO set aside two cases - on the patents of pistachio and musk melon - 11 patent applicants have withdrawn their application when offered data from India's Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL), set up after the India's long battle over neem and turmeric patent infringements. "In the remaining 23 cases, we expect the EPO to reject the applications or the applicants themselves to withdraw," said S. Jalaja, secretary, department of AYUSH, Ministry of Health. Other patent applications before the EPO include use of Bengal gram to treat obesity and diabetes (China), turmeric, cumin, ginger and onion as slimming agents (Denmark), using aloe vera to treat obesity (Germany) and arjuna as an anti-ageing agent (Germany).

The Rs 7-crore TKDL project took nine years to list 2 lakh formulations from Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha schools of medicine in over 30 million pages.