

# Oxygen bars in France send officials sniffing

**Paris:** As oxygen bars begin to pop up across France, health authorities are beginning to question the merits or otherwise of sniffing O<sub>2</sub>.

Supposed to improve health and well-being, oxygen bars date back to the late 1990s, spreading from Canada to California and to Britain and Japan, in nightclubs, health clubs, airports or even trade fairs.

But Paris' first oxygen bar opened only last week. Flagged as "a revolutionary anti-fatigue, anti-stress and anti-depression concept", the city's maiden O<sub>2</sub> bar is housed in an up-market beauty institute owned by no less than the wife of top French publicist and political "kingmaker" Jacques Seguela.

Seguela has been very much in the news recently for bringing together President Nicolas Sarkozy and his new wife Carla Bruni around a dinner table, a coup that comes almost three decades after helping propel leftwing leader Francois Mitterrand to the country's highest public office.

So the opening of his oxygen taps a stone's throw from the Champs-Elysees attracted a bevy of French celebs and



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**SMELL OF HEALTH?** A woman inhales concentrated oxygen inside the first oxygen bar in Paris. As oxygen bars begin to pop up across France, health authorities are beginning to question the merits or otherwise of sniffing oxygen

political high-fliers from across the spectrum.

"This is the first time you can legally shoot up!" said Seguela, showing his VIP guests the rows of oxygen bottles lined up in different parts of the salon.

But the politicians — including a current cabinet member and two ex-ministers — were cautious.

"It has more of a psycho-

logical rather than a technical effect," said former leftwing culture minister Jack Lang after inhaling a dose of oxygen flavoured with essential oils bubbling in a jar.

The oxygen bars offer sniffers an increased percentage (up to 95%) of oxygen compared to the normal atmospheric content of 21% — lower mostly in cities because of severe pollution. *AFF*