

Toddler addicted to world's hottest chilli

A 17-month-old toddler in Assam happily devours the locally available scorching Bhut Jolokia, recognized by the Guinness World Records as the hottest chilli on earth.

The parents of Jayanta Lahan of Romai village in Dibrugarh district, 495 km east of Assam's main city of Guwahati, say the child gleefully munches a handful of Bhut Jolokia, the world's hottest chilli, without batting an eyelid.

'Yesterday (Monday), he ate some 50 Bhut Jolokias in about three to four hours without showing any signs of tears or burning sensation in his stomach,' the child's father Ritul, a farmer, told IANS.

The child, nicknamed Johnny, became hooked onto chillies when he was just about eight-months-old.

'I was cooking in my kitchen and Johnny was crawling on the floor when he laid his hands on some chillies and ate them. I cried for help but the kid was fine,' his mother Rupjyoti said.

Since then, little Johnny's appetite for chillies has grown and today he gobbles up handfuls of the fiery peppers with no effect on his health.

'When we visit homes of friends and relatives, the host offers Bhut Jolokia to the kid instead of toffees. If someone offers him a toffee, he pops it into his mouth and instantly takes it out,' the disbelieving parents said.

Even so, Johnny's parents are concerned and try to keep him away from his favourite munchies.

'We try to divert his mind away from chillies. At times it works but it seems he cannot live without eating it. We have consulted several doctors and carried out medical tests but we were told he is healthy and absolutely fine,' his father said.

The illiterate parents don't want to risk their child's health by going for world records.

'I am concerned about his health although doctors said his weight and growth is quite normal for his age. He even smears the chilli in his eyes without any problems,' Rupjyoti said.

The Bhut Jolokia, brought to Guinness's attention by a horticulture professor at New Mexico State University, rates at slightly more than one million Scoville units, almost twice as hot as the previous reigning champ, the Red Savina Habanero at about 580,000 units. The Scoville scale, developed by a pharmacist in 1912, is a measure of the ratio of water required to neutralise the pungency of a chilli.

The ghost chilli grows mostly on hilly terrain and is considered a staple of every meal in the northeast. 'I am not surprised at all by the kid's chilli eating habit. In fact, what I feel is that child's body system is been able to accept the heat and hence eating the Bhut Jolokia without any problems,' Annindita Tamuly, a 26-year-old record chilli eater, told IANS.

Tamuly, who hails from Titabor town of eastern Assam, is headed to London at the invitation of the

Guinness World Records to see how many Bhut Jolokia peppers she can eat in one sitting.

Tamuly believes she will have little trouble in beating the previous record set by South African Anita Crafford who ate eight Jalapenos in a minute in 2002.

'I have already created history on Indian television by munching 60 of the chillies in two minutes. I am more than confident of creating a record once I reach London,' she said.

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