

Fast-hungry Mataji's claim endorsed

AHMEDABAD: The miracle fakir of Gujarat, Prahlad Jani, 82, popularly known as 'Mataji', who claims to live without the urge to eat or drink water — and without the need to pass urine or stool — has had his claims endorsed by Defence Institute of Physiology and Allied Science (DIPAS).

In an update posted on the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) website, the agency said Jani enjoys some extreme form of adaptation to starvation and water restriction, as evident from his serum leptin and ghrelin levels. Leptin and ghrelin are metabolic hormones. When a person eats, leptin flashes the message that the body is satisfied; ghrelin, on the other hand, stokes a person's hunger.

Mataji was the subject of a fortnight-long study conducted (between April 22 and May 6) jointly by DIPAS and Sterling Hospital, along with SRISTI.

DIPAS investigators have said that during the study, a protocol of strict round-the-clock surveillance was followed with the help of CCTV cameras and human observers. Mataji's every movement — for example, when he was taken out for MRI, ultrasound and X-Ray procedures — was recorded on tape. Periodic clinical, biochemical, radiological and other examinations were carried out on him.

“During the observation period, Prahlad Jani has not consumed anything and has not passed stool,” the update said. “The only contact with fluid was during gargling and bathing periodically during the study, beginning from the fifth day of the study. Also, Jani has not passed urine during the observation period.”

The DIPAS stamp of approval should silence Jani's detractors who had doubted the veracity of the claims made by the medical team which had first conducted tests on Jani in 2003.

The DIPAS update said that more studies were being conducted to secure answers to important questions, including: how is metabolic waste material being eliminated from Jani's body; from where does he get energy for sustenance and survival; and how is he maintaining his hydration.

“The study is ongoing and we will jointly work to unravel the secret of Mataji's survival,” said Dr Sudhir Shah, a senior neurophysician who leads the medical team. “Our aim is to determine the metabolic pathways and genetic modifications which allow a person to survive, so that soldiers and those working in extreme conditions, where food resources are limited, can be helped.”