

# Tough case wins city cardiologist US award

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Mumbai:** When 48-year-old Bhadresh Naik arrived here from Valsad with a heart problem, little did he know that he would go down in medical history as one of the most challenging cases ever. Saving Naik, in fact, earned a city-based cardiologist from the civic-run KEM Hospital and Asian Heart Institute an award for the most challenging case of 2004 from the Cardiovascular Research Foundation, USA, last month. A first for an Indian case study.

"I couldn't even stand or walk even a few steps. I used to gasp for breath and feel very tired," recalled Naik, who in July 2004 underwent a common procedure under uncommon circumstances.

In medical terms, Naik was showing the classic signs of a florid heart failure. His body was retaining a lot of fluid, his liver was enlarged and his blood pressure was at a worrying low.

Naik had undergone a bypass surgery at Asian Heart Institute in 2003. "But an echocardiography report showed that his condition was not related to the surgery," said Dr Prafulla Kerkar, who won the award among eight contestants from across the Asia-Pacific region.

An echocardiography at Asian Heart Institute showed the reason for this — a

"communication" had opened up between his aorta and the right atrium while normally there is no such route in the circulatory system.

"This was obviously a congenital weakness that had resulted in this opening," said Kerkar. While surgery was an option, Naik's condition didn't permit it. The non-surgical option of cardiology was thought to be a better option. "We decided to pass a tube through his groin and push up an umbrella device that we normally use to close holes in the heart.

Only, this had never been used for such an anomaly," added Kerkar.

By chance or skill, the umbrella covered the defect perfectly. "We got him for a follow-up visit a couple of months ago and found that the device was doing well. There is no residual flow of blood."

It was this presentation that won Kerkar the award in Washington DC on October 18 in front of an audience of 11,000-odd cardiac specialists. In Val-

sad, Naik today thanks his stars. "It seems like divine intervention that I landed in Mumbai at the right time and my in-laws took me to the right doctors," he said, savouring his daily walks and yoga sessions. "For a man who could not even walk to the verandah of his own house, I walk a few kilometres every day," he added.

## HEART OF THE MATTER

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