



## I want to be a Taekwondo, says 3-yr-old world champ

**Not old enough to string together a sentence, Hriday Patel has won numerous gold medals at int'l contests**

● Regina Gurung

**T**HREE-YEAR-OLD Hriday Patel returned home, last month, after bagging a gold medal at Chuncheon Korea Open International Taekwondo Championship held on July 8 and 12, despite being denied a scholarship.

Hriday's parents claim that they had approached a youth association to help sponsor the trip to Korea as Hriday was representing India. "I was told that the minimum age to avail for a Taekwondo scholarship is six-years," says Pinkal Patel, Hriday's mother. "So only I and Hriday went to the championships," she adds.

Hriday was enrolled in Taekwondo class in November last year and the only reason he was sent was because he is "too naughty", according to parents. "I wanted him to channel his energy elsewhere, because he was too restless," says the mother.

After Hriday participated in a district-level competition, international championships came his way. Hriday is headed to another Taekwondo Championship in Malaysia in September.

"We were invited to contests in China as well but since we will be going there on our own, we decided to pick Malaysia," says Pinkal. "I will ensure he goes to at least one championship a year," she adds.

Hriday's category of participation is called Poomsae, which is a demonstration and not a fight. "No beat anyone up... I did Taikondo Phoomsae," says the three-year-old Hriday, who can barely form a full sentence.

Hriday won a gold in the below six category in the international championship, where there were over 60 participants from all over the world. Besides the international championship he has won gold in district-level competitions. The only silver medal that he has is when he was in a fighting category. "We did not even expect silver when a six-year-old won him in the fight," shares Pinkal. "I have only one belt and that is green



Hriday Patel (centre) after winning the gold at Chuncheon Korea Open International Taekwondo Championship

belt," says Hriday.

According to Pinkal, Hriday won hearts in Chuncheon because many started clicking pictures with this youngest participant. But Taekwondo has not made Hriday any less naughty, says Pinkal.

"He still keeps jumping all the time," she adds. When he grows up, Hriday will decide what he wants to, but Pinkal hopes that one day he will make it to the Olympics.

However, three-year-old Hriday is determined to be what he wants to be as he tells *City Express*, "I want to be a Taekwondo".

