Flurry of Food Festivals Strengthen Gurgaon’s Reputation as FOODIE Destination
It's been raining festivals in Gurgaon and it has all to do with food. With over a dozen festivals either executed already or lined up over the next few months, the wide range of gastronomic experiences on offer has further cemented the city’s reputation as a favoured foodie destination.

We bring you an exclusive preview of the DLF Mall of India. The sprawling mall, which opens soon in Noida, is set to change the face of retail in India by offering a larger-than-life shopping experience. In Travel Talk, we find out what feeling on “top of the world” means with a travelogue on Sikkim and Darjeeling.

In the third and last part of our special series, Iconic Panorama, we look at the rich history of Gurgaon and its neighbouring areas; from the legend of Guru Dronacharya’s Gurukul to the majestic Neemrana, from the divine Sheetla Mata Mandir to the ever-popular Surajkund.

City residents, particularly young professionals, have taken to running in a big way to keep themselves fit and healthy. A growing number of running groups which have experienced coaches are helping them along in this endeavour. We speak to some of them in the Sport section.

We continue with our column from the vet’s desk for pet owners, this time focussing on how to keep parasites at bay in dogs and cats

VINAY JHA
Editor
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Feature DLF Mall of India

The mall which opens soon promises a larger-than-life experience and is set to change the landscape of retailing in India.

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RAMLILA
SNAPSHOTS

In a treat, the DLF CyberHub organized a three-day Ramlila by the Charukala Arts Academy which has performed world over, including in New Zealand, Singapore, Dubai, Japan, USA, Germany and Russia.

Last year, the academy had staged the Ramlila, the story of Lord Ram, at the Pinnacle gated community in DLF5. This time, young residents of the upscale condominium complex organized and performed their own Ramlila.

Aditya Verma, a student of DPS Sushant Lok who played the role of Ravana, said, “I am very happy I participated. Last year too our condominium had organized a Ramlila, but it was performed by a professional group. This time we students played all the parts; we practiced for three weeks”.

Harminder Soni, an entrepreneur and Pinnacle resident, said parents returned early from office to enjoy their children’s performance.

“It was a new experience for me. I have never seen anything like this. This Ramlila was definitely different. I loved it and my 5-year-old daughter Sarah loved participating. She made a lot of friends. It is an interactive society”, said Sophie from Ireland, who lives at Pinnacle.

Banwari Lal Saini from the committee said, “It is very easy for everyone to find out information as we have a Facebook page too. Here the Ramlila started on October 11 and continued till October 21 from 9:00 pm to 02:00 am. Audiences came with their families to enjoy the performance”.

Saini said that he has been playing the role of Ravana for the last 36 years. “My name figured in the Limca Book of Records,” he shared.

Shikha Sharma, a class XI student and resident of Old Gurgaon, said, “I and my family love the way our city celebrates festivals, be it Diwali, Dussehra, Navratras or any other. I saw Ramlila for the first time and found it very interesting. I slept at 3:00 am every day after enjoying the entire sequence of Ramlila”.

This year, Ramlila was special in Gurgaon for a number of reasons.

by RAHUL AHUJA

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Just as fireworks lit up the skyline at Park Place’s Dussehra Celebrations in DLF5, the crowd was all set to groove to the music and enjoy the much-awaited Dandiya. The festive spirit was at its peak as people enthusiastically flaunted ethnic traditions in dressing while some relaxed in what they felt cozy in.

As Nitin Gupta, a guest, said, “I am on top of the world. I have been playing Dandiya since 13 years but the energy, turnout and decoration today is just brilliant” to which his better half added, “This is the first time Park Place has done a Dussehra celebration and I have called friends from Orchid Petals and Uniworld”.

The Dussehra Mela had just everything in place. The lavish food arrangement was multi-cuisine and stalls displayed clothes, stationary, craftwork, cosmetic, electronics and the list could go on. The stage performances entertained the audiences before the real fun started and people picked up their Dandiya sticks, all ready to play. With the DJ enjoying the tempo of the crowd, he played the latest music besides those with Dandiya beats.

“I don’t know how to play but I like the sound of the clicks,” said Dolores Montilla, a guest from Spain who had witnessed Dussehra Celebrations for the first time. Her friend Eme Turner from Venezuela however liked garba and was trying to teach her friend since she had played before.

For Neha Saikia, the evening is nice. I don’t know Dandiya but I really enjoyed the Indian Food, the delicious Tandoori Chicken and Dal.

The music also comprised of a dhol wala who ultimately made people dance to his beats creating that extra piece of entertainment. The crowd enjoyed themselves till it was finally time to go back home. “We must have it every year,” concluded Jass Kaur after having a rollicking time at the event.

Dancing to Harmony And Celebrations
by DCN BUREAU
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*At Epicentre, Gurgaon*

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**Saturday, December 19**
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**Sunday, December 20**
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9:00pm (Hindi)

*Producer & Director* Mahabanoo Mody Kotwal & Kaizaad Kotwal

*Writer* Eve Ensler

*Collaboration* Poor-Box Production

*Cast* Rashika Udg, Dilnaz Irani, Mona Ambegaonkar, Dolly Thakur

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Anybody entering Gurgaon over the Dussehra and Diwali weekends would be forgiven for thinking that the cluster of white topped stalls that had magically transformed the previously barren land were a band of gypsies who had set up shop in Gurgaon. They really wouldn’t be too far off the mark as popular hotels, upmarket restaurants and professional caterers all shifted base to the many food festivals that dotted the city.

It was a carnival – of music, colours, and people but most important of all delicious aromas that wafted through the air making the atmosphere chirpy and fun filled. The ‘Mela’ or carnival has traditionally been a merry family outing where food, shopping and entertainment converge and is a highlight of traditional festivities. In consonance with the festive spirit, Gurgaon and NCR embarked on a panoply of festivals with food being the cherry on top of the cake of good times.

**A Time To Celebrate**

Traditional celebrations get a modern twist as a flurry of festivals greet Gurgaon’s foodies this festive season thus reaffirming Gurgaon’s position as the food capital of NCR

by MEENAKSHI SHARMA

Food Rules

From October to December, over a dozen major food festivals have been planned and executed across the city and this is not counting those in hotels and at the innumerable Dussehra and Diwali Melas in the city. Clearly, the festival flavour is that of food and no one is complaining. More events are lined up for November and December with the much-awaited Gourmet High Street, Dine Fest and the Street Food Festival garnering attention.

Such was the excitement generated by the second edition of the Grub Fest which played out at the Ambience Lawns that it attracted foodies even from far-flung areas of Delhi. For Gurgaon food lovers, it was a treat for the senses with some of the best restaurants displaying their signature delicacies over good music and stellar performances. Ishita Aroha, a consultant who works in Cybercity and commutes from Noida, headed to the festivals after work on Friday as she declared, “This is the best time for Gurgaon! Being able to sample the best of world cuisine with so many more attractions thrown in is obviously a treat for a foodie”. There was excitement galore as curious guests made a fascinating climb up the three-tier container which housed pop up restaurants.

Just a short distance away far from the Grub Fest, the ‘Ten Heads Festival’ at Dhanchiri Camp flaunted 10 different zones like the Flea Market, Bachcha Parwati, Dramarama and many more but even here the maximum enthusiasm was undoubtedly reserved for Foodistan. It was almost simultaneously that the Asian Hawkers Market at Select City Walk had leading stand-alone and five star restaurants like Pan Asia, Royal China, Yum yum cha and Fatty Bao dishing out scrumptious treats over three days.

Food will continue to be a highlight at the Gourmet High Street event in December as it was the year before and Leisure Valley will host some of the biggest names in the food business from December to February with India’s best celebrity chefs like Manish Mehrotra, Vikas Khanna, Kunal Kapur; Sarah Todd, Saransh Goila and Anahita Dhondy as well as the finest sommeliers and mixologists charming Gurgaonites with their fare.

When Business Is A Pleasure

The concept and execution of a successful festival is no fluke or ‘luck by chance’ but need months and months of careful planning and years of experience and understanding of public needs. Foodie Atharva Gupta, who is a regular at many festivals, says, “Unless there is a logical and well thought-out plan, one can lose years of goodwill in one stroke”.

One of the reasons for the resounding success of Grub Fest 2015 could be attributed to the understanding of the partners as this is an entrepreneurial
venture of four friends. The four, Aman Kumar, Arjun Jain, Chaitanya Mathur and Manny Singh Cheema, met in Singapore for Formula One and bonded over a common love for food. Grub Fest began its journey from Delhi in the last edition and quite logically and predictably, converged on to the foodie destination of Gurgaon.

The Ten Heads festival may have made a good first attempt to capture the foodie crowd but was unable to fully capitalize as they forayed into too many areas and focused on other attractions, a la the Dussehra festivals. They also had a date clash with Grub Fest and failed to build a publicity blitzkrieg like other fests. Despite these drawbacks, Abhishek Mankad, inceptor of Foodistaan (part of Ten Heads), knows that food remains the mainstay of any good event. “From all our research and knowledge about food festival trends from across the world, the one thing we were certain about was – variety,” he says.

So while variety is the spice of life and the real essence of a food festival, it is important to get the balance right and give the public a wholesome experience and for this the pricing is a huge factor. “To encourage people to try more and more, we kept the portion sizes smaller (so people can sample far more food) and our price-points low,” adds Mankad.

Grub Fest organizer Manveer Singh Cheema, who prefers to be called Manny, believes that foodies generally do not mind a slightly higher price positioning as long as the experience is valuable and people get the wow factor.

Explaining how the idea was born, he says, “When the four of us met, we decided we want to do a grub fest. We did that once in Delhi and now in Gurgaon and we are so happy with the turnout.”

“You can enjoy Sandwiches from Mexico, Kashmiri cuisine and so on as the highlight is on grub explore”, says Manny, who talks at length about how they brought together cuisines from across India and internationally.

While Arjun Jain, Co-Director, believes that the food festival industry has a long way to go in India, he also knows that “it’s a new territory and untapped market” hence strengthening their own chances. This has encouraged them to make strategic alliances across Europe and the rest of the world to enhance the experience for the public and improve the entire infrastructure of the event, he tells us.

Chaitanya Mathur, also a Co-Director, agrees. He adds, “While working on the second edition, it was essential to introduce the food festival to a new market yet ensure our loyalty towards our many fans and foodies in Delhi.” The festival will be travelling to Pune, Bangalore, Mumbai &
Chandigarh, and even Dubai & London. Nikita Bahl and her boyfriend Karan Virk who visited the festival on day one appreciated, “the magical atmosphere, the multi stormed restaurant and beautiful entrance gate and all the great food.” Food bloggers and reviewers also gushed about the Grub Courtyard featuring Chefs of India while youngsters were ecstatic about the performing artists like Parikrama, Astirva, Nikhil Chinapa, Hari & Sukhmani and Vir Das’s Comedy Rock Band.

Family Time During The Festival Season

Finally it is about family bonding says Raul Chandra, Director of 10 Heads Festival. He tells DLF City News that their festivals in India along with recalibrating the vision was to revive the way we celebrate festivals in India. Chandigarh, and even Dubai & London.

Meanwhile Abhishek Mankad explains that the advantages of street food are many – good pricing, great taste and ease of eating being just a few reasons. From Nukkadwala at Sohna Road to Culture Gully at Leisure Valley, streetfood has also seen a reinvention in presentation and packaging. While we all have our own personal favourite streetfood and have loved those ‘Nukkad’ shops where we could get ‘mera wala’ golgappas, chaats, samosas, jalebis, puri-sabzi and chole-bhature, in today’s’ times, street food comes in so many versions and is available in the Asian version or Mexican version among others. The Return Of Street Food

Top chefs, professional caterers and home cooks tickled the Gurgaon palate

One of the distinctive elements of the festivals was the focus on street food. Be it the Grub Fest where the food truck of the Lalit and Egg-jackly as well as Budweiser dished out great hospitality and enjoyed great patronage or the venue of Ten Heads at Dhanachiri camp where What The Truck, Frugetrust and Drifters had people enjoying their fares. Street food ruled the roost. It is comforting, evokes nostalgia and has such a wide repertoire, that there is something for everyone and even though its presentation and packaging has lately turned slick, unless it retains that magical originality, it doesn’t tickle the palate.
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by dcn bureau

**there is excitement in the air as you stop at the gate and ask the guards for directions. once you park and walk into the complex a sense of anticipation greets you – work is on at a frenetic pace all around. this should come as no surprise considering that you are walking into what will be india’s largest mall, the dlf mall of india. spanning nearly 2 million sq ft (GLA) and located right at the beginning of Noida’s popular business district, Sector 18. it will cater not only to Noida but entire Delhi/NCR as it is the first and largest destination mall of the country. The DLF Mall of India will change the face of retail in India, says Pushpa Bector, Senior Vice-President, DLF Utilities Ltd. A walk around the six-level mall proves what she is talking about. The mall will house 450 retail units, including over 300 brands. Not surprisingly, it is being projected as ‘The Future of Retail’, “Everything is on course for the launch,” an excited Bector says.

The Mall of India has been positioned like the sprawling Mall of America (Bloomington, Minnesota) and the Mall of the Emirates (Dubai) and is set to create its own niche on the Asian sub-continent tourism map. A unique zoning strategy with customised levels promises to offer an unparalleled shopping, dining and leisure experience.The Ground and First Levels will be the International Boulevard and will house flagship stores of international brands. The anchor brands include Marks and Spencer, GAP Forever 21, Mango, Vero Moda, Only, Jack & Jones, Pantaloons, United Colors of Benetton and many more. The icing on the cake will be H&M, which will be spread across 74,000 sq ft. The vanilla brands include Promod, Charles & Keith, La Senza, Bebe, Guess, Aldo, Superdry, Steve Madden, Kenneth Cole, GAS, Armani Jeans and many more. Work on the fit-outs are at an advanced stage.

The Second Level is The High Street and Pentagon. This zone will house 15 anchor brands and nearly 130 designer brands and anchor brands like Pantaloons and Lifestyle. The zone, which will be home to the top names in Indian designer brands and anchor brands like Pantaloons and Lifestyle. Other brands on this level include Bombay Selections, Splash, Mamma! Banarasi, Sunstar, Charming, Anokhi, Satya Paul, Biba, W, Anita Dongre and Ritu Kumar.

Planning a complete family outing? Look no further than the Third Level, which is the bright and colourful Family World. This has a section for kids (toy, book and apparel stores like iconic Kids and Mothercare) and a second one, the foodie zone, which will offer nearly two dozen casual dining options including Seda Bottle Opener Wala, Chilis, Cafe Delhi Heights, Nando’s, The Big Chill Cafe, Pizza Express, Made in Punjab & more.

Those looking beyond shopping should head to Leisure Land, located on Levels Four and Five. This will host India’s largest indoor entertainment zone, including the gaming concept Smaaash which has cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar as its brand ambassador. The indoor snow gaming park Ski India, designed on the lines of Ski Dubai, promises to offer a one-of-its-kind experience. “There will be a ski slope inside,” says a member of the DLF Mall of India’s marketing team, pointing to a boarded area behind which this zone is the travelator which will allow for convenience and easy movement of trolleys for the shoppers.

The DLF Mall of India has been planned and designed by the award-winning international firm of architects, master-planners and interiors experts – Benoy. This firm has been behind successful marquee projects like ION Orchard - Singapore, Ferrari World - Abu Dhabi, Westfield London et al. The famous international firm Turner is the project management consultant. It has to its credit successful signature projects like The Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall (Dubai), Madison Square Garden (New York), Yankee Stadium (New York) and Federa
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- Retail Rising Star at MAPIC 2013, the international retail gathering that is held in Cannes, France - the first time any Indian mall has won this award at the history of MAPIC
- Preferred Upcoming Mall of the year at Estate Awards 2013 by Franchise India
- Best Architecture & Interior Design Shopping Centre & Best New Design & Development Sustainable Design at Asia Shopping Center and Mall Awards 2014

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In Art Lies Her Soul...

She paints on silk to create live pictorials that express various emotions. And, at 70 she still has the same zest when she was a youngster. Uma Bardhan, talks to DCN about her eventful journey.

by Reena Dhankher

Uma eye sees, the other feels. Uma Bardhan lives the famous line by the legendary Swiss-German painter Paul Klee. For what she sees finds expression on a canvas. Just that, hers is a silk canvas – a distinctive style wherein a silk cloth is attached to a canvas and then water colours are used to create magic.

Bardhan has always been an introvert but the only medium she most often communicates through is her art. One of the reasons why her paintings more than express themselves is the source of ideas behind them. Bardhan has travelled extensively and is a keen observer of people, their lives, which she depicts beautifully in her silk canvas.

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HOW IT ALL BEGAN

As a child, she was a quiet but observant child who visualised poems by Rabindra Nath Tagore to create her own exhibits. When all her classmates were busy playing in the field, she would sit silently by the window imagining what her fingers wanted to sketch. She loved artistic activities and that brought out the best in her. However, with her parents preferring conventional studies to art and she being the eldest of the siblings, Bardhan did struggle to keep her passion burning.

“Painting is a kind of meditation that brings peace,” she says. And she ensured that she gave painting her everything, from the time she completed her schooling. “For graduation, I insisted on taking art,” reminisces Bardhan. That’s how the seeds of her life’s mission were sowed.

NURTURING HER ZEAL

“I was always curious to learn something new. Painting on silk was relatively a fresh form of art and I wanted to take it up. It was a few years after an early marriage that I joined Birla Swar Sangam, to gain knowledge about the art. I learnt the “Water-colour on Silk” art from Shri Maniklal Bannerjee for almost ten years. I was also keen on teaching children and had opened a small school called ‘Kalanagar,’” recalls Bardhan.

Elaborating about the ideas that influenced her, she says, “I have always been influenced by the rich cultural heritage of our country and therefore culture and mythology have been widely expressed in my work. I have painted Lord Krishna and Lord Shiva in various forms like I have depicted Lord Shiva both as a creator of life in red and a saviour in blue.”

One of her works, which she feels is very special to her, is ‘Vagasa’.” It is a set of nine paintings that depict the hard life of rickshaw-pullers who in extreme circumstances tow people. I had tried to capture their pain,” says Bardhan. “You see when I capture scenes from the daily lives of common people, the paintings are adored by people as it’s the stark reality” she explains.

She adds, “Nature is also one of my favourite subjects to showcase. The beauty of it is ever so appealing.” Bardhan has, in fact, organised many exhibitions and has also been awarded a certificate of merit from the Oriental Art Society.

CHALLENGES EN ROUTE

Every career has its own set of challenges and Bardhan too has faced quite a few. She informs us that one of her initial challenges was to convince her parents to allow her pursue art as a career. “However once that was taken care of, I faced the biggest challenge in commuting to Shri Maniklal Bannerjee’s studio since it was far off from my place. I would spend hours travelling every day but the zeal within me kept getting stronger with each hardship. That apart, as an artist, many a time, you have to invest in exhibitions which may not always reap profits,” she says.

There was also a challenge in this form of painting in the beginning. She used to get silk from Murshidabad in West Bengal, where it is quite famous. “I had to first wash the silk and put it on canvas for a couple of days to allow it to dry and only after that, I was able to use the water colours, which I used to get from Japan. Also, those days, there wasn’t much of acrylic so water and oil colours were being used,” she recalls.

PILLARS OF STRENGTH

In her journey to fulfil her ambition, Bardhan was lucky enough to have had her support system in place. “I had my parents’ support once they saw my passion for art. I was also fortunate to have the unconditional support of my husband and in-laws which made it possible for me to transform my passion into profession,” she points out.

While she relishes her entire journey for her sheer love for art, she feels that the most memorable moment was when in 1987, she won the first prize in water colour section from the Government of Bengal. “It was like a dream turning into reality I will always cherish that day,” she says with a smile.
“Kalaripayattu warriors draw from 2000 years of practice. Catch a bout of living history”
PERFORMING SINCE THE AGE OF SIX, ANNUKAMPA HARSH, DECLARES HER LOVE FOR CINEMA IN “ALL ITS HUES” by MEENAKSHI SHARMA

An Artist and A Muse

She is in her twenties and has been under the arc lights for most part of her life! It is as if Annukampa Harsh, who has been performing Kathak under the tutelage of her guruji-maestro Uma Dogra since 1999, belongs to the stage and the camera. Besides hosting events for renowned artists including Pt. BhumSEN Joshi, Pt. Shiv Kumar Sharma, Pt. Harprasad Chaurasia, Pt. Jasraj, Shubha Mudgal, Ustad Shujaat Khan, Sonu Nigam, KR, Kunal Ganjawala and Sunidhi Chauhan, she has also acted in many short films, TVCs and music videos. A true achiever who has followed her dreams, Annukampa is today a role model for many girls like her.

She recalls the first time she faced the camera for the big screen with Shoojit Sir-car’s Shoebite, along with none other than the legendary Amitabh Bachchan. “It was a lifetime experience,” she reminisces.

Telling us of her journey as an actor and dancer, Annukampa, who recently completed 600 shows of Zangoora, where she plays the lead, says, “I have been one of those lucky few who figured out in their childhood what they “want to be” when they grow up. Having realised my passion as a little girl, my journey as an actress began right in school. From per-
forming before the bathroom mirror, to acting on-stage. From the “Monkey-man” to the amazing artists you see backstage and on-stage. From the “Mooney-man” to the folk dancers, the qawwals, singers, puppeteers, drummers, and even the cooks, you find art in the people, the place, and on your plate. KOD is actually a Kingdom of Talent, and a beautiful destination to spend time in on any given day!”

She knows there are many aspirants to the glamour world and has a message for the young readers who aspire to make a mark in this industry. “Figure out your priorities. Ask yourself why you want to do what you have set out to do. Once the answer to this question is clear in your head, you can make the right choices for yourself. And, of course, give your chosen profession the utmost love and respect. Your experience here will be a reflection of what you send out,” she finishes with the conviction that comes from having worked her way up to where she is today.

She is deeply attached to her mother and recalls her childhood memories fondly as she tells me how from the tender age of five, she was watching movies such as Peau and ChauMohan which she believes shaped her and made her what she is today. “My best memories are of ‘watching movies with my mother. She has been the flame that ignited my passion for cinema and kept it burning through the years.”

Her favourite directors during that time were Steven Spielberg and Mani Ratnam. “I grew up dancing to the latest Bolly-wood hits, as well as to the soundtracks of Mother India and Guide,” she recalls. The first time she performed on a choreographed song was on the classic Hoton pe

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Annukampa also believes she has been truly blessed with opportunities that have been deeply enriching. “I am very proud of my association with Jagjit Singhji. I featured in two of his music videos. Jagjitji was very fond of me, and I carry his love and blessings in my heart till date,” she adds.

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Tell us about your corporate experience.
I started my career with Tata Tea Plantations and served 11 years in Assam and Dooars, West Bengal. I managed large tea factories and plantations which helped me gain experience in areas of manufacturing, manpower management, industrial relations and most importantly, welfare and social responsibilities. I worked with GE for five years and was responsible for projects, setting up new office spaces, procurement and facility management. I joined Dell in 2006 and am responsible for Global Workplace and Environments, supporting the continued growth and success of Dell businesses in the South Asia region.

What do you feel about Gurgaon?
Gurgaon is a unique, vibrant city that is undergoing rapid urbanisation and evolving as a hub for the IT and outsourcing boom in India. The city is witnessing unprecedented growth, and turning home to the fastest growing property prices in the country. More than anything, Gurgaon is a young city with people who want to see and be part of the change. After the success of ‘Raahgiri’, the Millennium City initiated its first Car-Free Day and it was a very successful initiative jointly launched by Nasscom, Gurgaon Police and various corporates (including Dell). Going forward, the city will observe Car-Free Day every Tuesday from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. to encourage people to use alternative modes of transport. Overall, it is a vivacious city that is bustling with energy and development.

What are your interests?
I am an outdoor person and a keen photographer with a passion for capturing the true and real moments of life through my lens. My favourite photo shoots have been in Ladakh and Nagaland. My wish list includes travel to Alaska, Africa and Siberia to enjoy the natural beauty of the destinations and of course, capture shots that can be treasured. I am passionate about sports, enjoy playing golf predominantly and squash, represented Pune University during college days.
COME NAVARATRAS AND GUJARATIS STEP OUT IN THEIR VIBRANT BEST, CELEBRATING LOVE AND FRIENDSHIP. BUT THERE IS SO MUCH MORE TO THE COMMUNITY THAN THE WORLD-FAMOUS GARBA AND DANDIYA OR DHOKLA AND KHANDVI

by REENA DHANKHER

Much of Gujarati food, says Sharma, has a sweet, tangy touch to it. "Kodi paaru (curry leaves) and mansyu (coconut) give it a distinct taste. The Gujarati ladi - a dal base porridge made in jaggery is a favorite with kids and the adalaya is a winter sweet with certain spices that keep you from cold and infection," she says.

Gujarati food, Sharma emphasizes, is not just about the khakras and thchaplas, gathiyaas and jalebis, dhoklas and khandriss that the state is known for. The daily fare of dal, bhata, shak, lassi and a sweet, is just as special, she says.

Devpuri talks about some other famous dishes like Undhiyo, Srikhand and Handwada. "Undhiyo is mostly a dish of winter, when many veggies are used. This dish takes almost 24 hours to be prepared and is rich in ghee."

On Sundays, says Sharma, "we don't like to cook at home and love relishing beet puri or paanii puri or for that matter visit the best of restaurants. Sunday for Gujaratis generally means an outing."

"Being a Gujarati, I personally feel that there is much to explore in Gujarat and it's not just that you go and find out what's there in Gujarat, you end up finding yourself too when you tour Gujarat," says Sharma. Wistfully she lists the many wonders in Gujarat for tourists to explore - from the Rann of Kutch to the temples of Palitana, from Somnath to Dwarka.

"I love the weave of my Gujarat. Each single thread of my life and character was woven here. It has the strength to withstand wear and tear. The likes of Mahatma Gandhi, Sardar Patel are the people Gujarat makes you. The choice is yours - Kuch Din to Gujaro Gujarat mein!" says this enthusiastic ambassador of Gujarati, who has now made Gurgaon her home.
Far from being boring or monotonous, school can be the most amazing and fun place when creativity is encouraged and nurtured. With this aim in mind, Shiv Nadar School in Gurgaon became the venue for an exciting two days of fun, learning and unfettered creativity with the ‘Kahaani Festival.’

Excitement filled the air as some children were seen trying their hands at Vayu Yoga while others were busy unleashing their expression and creativity in the RJ workshop with RJ Sarthak in the sprawling school lawns.

The talented RJ, who was all praise for the event that covered so many art forms and brought the talent and energy of stalwarts like Dadi Pudumjee to the children of this city, admitted it was tough yet fulfilling to work with children.

The two-day event was packed with excitement both for the parents and the children as celebrated actor and writer Tom Alter narrated stories of and about Jim Corbett. He shared some anecdotes from his childhood, his education, his career in cinema and his stints with theatre and enacted scenes from his plays.

Principal of Shiv Nadar School, Monica Sagar said the event was in line with the vision of Shiv Nadar School to promote and nurture arts and add the ‘Aha’ factor to their curriculum. The Kahaani Festival aimed to explore the various forms of storytelling while bringing to life the imaginations of young children through the oral tradition of story-telling, magic, theatre, puppetry, dance, music and so on.

Kids and parents could be seen enjoying ‘Simple Dreams’ by the Ishara Puppet Theatre while Shameem’s Kuch Kuch Puppet Theatre enacted Pinochio and the Patang Bazi Workshop told the story of kites and taught how to make and fly them.

Nathoo Lal Solanki ran a workshop which served as an introduction to Nagada Drums while Jeeva Raghunathan conducted a charming storytelling session.

It was an exhilarating Sunday morning when over 2000 participants took the ferocious Desi Warriors challenge facing over 20 world class obstacles on a five-km battlefield! Organised by Adrenaline Entertainment Ltd, it was the second edition of the Desi Warriors Battlefield with the first one being held in Manesar earlier this year.

Desi Warriors is a tough obstacle run that tests one’s physical and mental limits as participants try to run, crawl, climb, jump, drag, pull and push their way through to clear all the hurdles.

The man behind the entire concept was Samar Shivdasani who has worked with various corporate companies only to find his passion in building greater fitness levels. He informed DCN that the idea behind coming up with the event was to give Gurugamites an electrifying experience. “With 2000 plus warriors who participated, the response was great. We wish to spread this concept to other cities as well. Since there was no element of any competition, the warriors had a good time completing all the obstacles. They also had the option of completing a particular obstacle more than once if they enjoyed it. In fact, the obstacle to jump from a height into water was one which people repeatedly did,” he said.

“We had also come up with a ‘Chota Desi Warriors’. There were obstacles on a one-kilometre stretch which children had to clear, even enjoying yummy food and refreshments and listening to Frisky Pints band music. The idea was to plan an adventurous and exciting day out for the family,” added Shivdasani.

The event witnessed participation of top corporate honchos including Tiger Thyagarajan from Genpact, Aditi Shukla, Vice President, Head of Operations, XL Catlin India; Ashwin Juneja, India CEO of Alianz Global Assistance; Vishal Sinha, COO TUI India and Deepak Verma from NV Vogt Singapore Pvt Ltd. All the participants were awarded medals once they completed their battles.

Flashing his medal with pride, one of the warriors, Vikas Sharma, said, “It was an awesome experience. I took one hour and forty-five minutes to complete the run. I am here for the second time and loved all the thrills and the challenges. After all, we don’t get to see much of this in Gurugram.”
**St. Xavier’s Celebrates ‘Grandparents Day’**

Top: Nicholas Dimes, Principal and co-ordinator Geeta Kanwar at St Xavier’s congratulating winners at Grandparents Day. Below: Children present their exuberant talent in a spectacular performance.

**‘Empower’**

*Let’s Be The Change*

by **BY DCN BUREAU**

‘Woman of substance’ is not just a phrase describing multifaceted women of our society; it also signifies the strength they possess to face hardships and fight atrocities in every sphere of life. But not all women stand up to violence. Though police stations and women cells are today witnessing a spurt in reports of domestic violence, there are still those trapped behind closed doors unwilling to break the shackles of conservative values while at times even protecting their perpetrators.

To sensitise women to raise voice against domestic violence, a novel initiative “Empower” was organised at Leisure Valley recently which was attended by famous personalities who threw their weight behind the cause. Socialite Ramola Bachchan, Padmashree Hari Dang, ex Rector of St. Paul’s School, Darjeeling, was the chief guest for the occasion. He lighted the lamp and the programme began with the traditional ‘tikka’ ceremony and ‘Swagatam- The Welcome Dance’. One of the highlights of the event was when grandparents went down the memory lane and ‘Purani Yaadon ka Jharokha’ and sang melodious songs of yesteryears.

However, the show stealer was when the grandpas and grandmas, in all their retro look of the 1960s and the 70s and walked the ramp.

The inauguration of “Empower” was followed by a session on functional training by an expert. The purpose of the event was to encourage women feel empowered by following proper physical and mental fitness and spread awareness against domestic violence. Speaking to DCN, Nidhi Seth, the lady behind this initiative, said there are so many other causes being spoken about but domestic violence being a sensitive topic is never discussed even though it is prevalent even among the educated strata. “I felt the need to organise Empower when I realised there are women who go through the violence silently for years together. Being subject to mental, physical and verbal abuse also makes women emotionally weak,” she explained.

According to Seth, ‘Empower’ is a movement to sensitise women and make them realise that they don’t have to continue tolerating violence understand its various dimensions,” said Shivani Wazir Paarich, compeer and actress. The inauguration of ‘Empower’ was followed by a session on functional training by an expert. The purpose of the event was to encourage women feel empowered by following proper physical and mental fitness and spread awareness against domestic violence. Speaking to DCN, Nidhi Seth, the lady behind this initiative, said there are so many other causes being spoken about but domestic violence being a sensitive topic is never discussed even though it is prevalent even among the educated strata. “I felt the need to organise Empower when I realised there are women who go through the violence silently for years together. Being subject to mental, physical and verbal abuse also makes women emotionally weak,” she explained. The inauguration of ‘Empower’ was followed by a session on functional training by an expert. The purpose of the event was to encourage women feel empowered by following proper physical and mental fitness and spread awareness against domestic violence. Speaking to DCN, Nidhi Seth, the lady behind this initiative, said there are so many other causes being spoken about but domestic violence being a sensitive topic is never discussed even though it is prevalent even among the educated strata. “I felt the need to organise Empower when I realised there are women who go through the violence silently for years together. Being subject to mental, physical and verbal abuse also makes women emotionally weak,” she explained.
To begin with, when parents Alan (Zafar Karachiwala) and Annette (Anu Menon) visit Veronica (Shernaz Patel) and Michael (Sohrab Ardeshir), the meeting begins awkwardly but cordially. Veronica aggressively touts herself as an exemplary citizen. Her coffee table, with its carefully put together selection of art catalogues, attests to her serious passion for art. Her husband Michael initially plays the yes-man, echoing his wife’s views on parenting. After a watershed moment involving smelly fluids, the civilized meeting dissolves into a fight. Here’s where the play really picks up. Ardeshir superbly transforms from the affectionate, bumbling husband to an ill-tempered individual driven up the wall by his wife’s annoying sincerity and the present situation, which he takes far less seriously than Veronica. The alternating camaraderie and adversarial exchanges between Alan and Michael kept the audience hooked to their seats and made them give the actors a standing ovation at the end!

In fact, most of the plays were worth a watch! The Living Room, the directorial debut of Kalki Koechlin had Neil Bhoopalam, Sheeba Chadha, Jim Sarbh and Tariq Vasanwala as the main leads exploring the themes of time, death and life. Predictably, Ek Mulaqat had a full house as it traces the love story of literary geniuses Sahir Ludhianvi and Amrita Pritam. Starring Shekhar Suman and Deepti Naval as its main leads and directed by Saif Hyder Hasan, the play was replete with exquisite poetry, memories of New Delhi winter evenings and music. Theatre lover Sarita Shahi and her husband exclaimed over the sheer magic and beauty of the play.

Lovers of drama also enjoyed Oh My Sweet Land, directed and written by Amir Nizar Zuabi, which had Corinne Jaber play the main lead and spoke of the grave issue of the Syria conflict through a riveting storyline. Somewhat similar was Spaces with Noor Baig, Rashmi Seth, Mohammad Ali Baig and Madhu Swaminath, against the backdrop of an old haveli and revolving around the conflict between modernity and history.

Indeed, the festival not only remained true to its reputation of being one of the finest in the NCR region but also left the aficionados wanting for more.
**On Top Of The World**


by MEENAKSHI SHARMA

Even before landing at the tiny Bagdogra airport, we got that glimpse of heaven - a stunning view of the snow-capped mountain peaks towering over the floating clouds. And, we were convinced that it was indeed divine providence or the euphemistic ‘call of the mountains’ that had brought us on this week-long journey to the North East.

Kanchenjunga, which means ‘Five Treasures of the Snow’, is the third-highest mountain in the world and the highest in India. It is to Sikkim what Everest is to Nepal and is worshipped and revered.

GANGTOK: FLORA, FAUNA, FOOD & FASHION

Gangtok, which got the award for the cleanest hill station of India at the India Today Summit 2013, is the capital of Sikkim and was established as a Buddhist pilgrimage site in the 1840s. The state joined India in 1975. Well known for its Tibetan Buddhist seats of learning and for being a base for hikers, this location boasts of a rich ecosystem with amazing flora and fauna from the orchids to the red panda, temperate climate that gives pleasant weather through the year, unbelievably picturesque landscape and a rich culture that translates into friendly and customer-centric tourism.

It was a beautiful morning when we decided to take that longish walk from our hotel to the Ridge where one can enjoy the gardens, the stupas and the flower shows. While it is so much easier to hail the many cabs that are easily available at affordable rates, there is something so refreshing about a countryside walk that we continued the trend for the next three days. The well-deserved clean tag, the friendly people and the clear sky made it a perky morning which got a cultural flavour when we followed it up with a Rumtek visit.

About 25 kilometres east of Gangtok and at an altitude of 5,800 feet is Sikkim’s biggest monastery, the Rumtek Monastery. Built in 1740 and rebuilt in 1970, it features a golden stupa containing the relics of the 16th Karmapa, with several other sacred Buddhist artefacts. This monastery is the seat of the Kagyu order - one of the major Tibetan sects, besides rare Tibetan Buddhist objects. Rumtek was the focus of international media attention in 2000 after the 17th Karmapa, one of the four holiest lamas, fled Lhasa and sought refuge here.

It was delightful to savour the ambience, chat with the young students of Nalanda University and share a few moments with the young-at-heart monks who laughed and joked and urged me to light a butter lamp for prosperity. The tiny bookshop became a much loved spot as we picked up artefacts and a book by Sogyal Rinpoche, ‘The Tibetan Book of the Living and the Dead’.

Back from Rumtek and we stopped at everyone’s favourite hangout – the business and leisure hub at MG Road where we rubbed shoulders with tourists and locals and enjoyed delicious local street food including a lip-smacking mushroom roll, the quintessential momo and stir-fry chilli chicken.

The sacrosanct nature of a journey to Sikkim was best explained by German trekker Anna and her British partner who we met at Bakers Cafe on MG Road. Anna claims to have embarked on a ‘trek of a lifetime’ to seven different locations with the focal point being the Kanchenjunga base camp. She was cheerful and boisterous about Gangtok which is both a modern capital with its fashionable and literate populace and traditional with its temples, monasteries and close proximity to sightseeing locations. No wonder tourists choose to linger on enjoying the breathtaking views (the peaks
are visible on a clear day from immem- erable locations) and soaking in the local in which you get perfect views of the snow cre hed plains of Kanchenjunga, Phobjikha and Labrang Monasteries. The ubiquitous cable car or ropeway was next in line and we headed back to our favourite haunt at MG Road to enjoy yet another evening of food and fun.

It was our last day in Gangtok and we chose to visit two beautiful sights – the Banjarkhari Waterfalls and a stunning gla- cial lake called Changu (Tsomgo Lake). Surrounded by beautiful gardens, the wa- ters of Banjarkhari Falls are a treat to the eyes and senses. Tsomgo Lake is a two- hour drive from Gangtok on the Gangtok-Nathu La Highway. About a kilometre-long and 50 metres deep, Tsomgo Lake is popu- lar as a tourist attraction and a holy site as well. It’s encircled by lush green land- scapes on all sides.

A small Shiva temple, some food stalls and several beautiful plants and flowers make it attractive for tourists who can also enjoy a yak ride around the lake. Unfortu- nately we were unable to visit the Nathu La which is considered memorable. We have reserved this for another visit!

**DARJEELING: TEA, TOY TRAIN, TEMPLE AND THE TERRIFIC TIGER HILL**

Day four and we were ready for the town of Darjeeling nestled in the Himalayan foothills in West Bengal. Once a sum- mer resort for the British Raj elite, it re- mains the terminus of the narrow-gauge Darjeeling Himalayan Railway or “Toy Train,” completed in 1881. Famed for the distinctive black tea grown on planta- tions, it boasts of the same backdrop of Mt. Kanchenjunga!

The drive from Gangtok to Darjeeling is delightful as it skirts the mighty Teesta and provides some great photo oppor- tunities. This is quite the favoured spot for rafting and has tiny hits along the rapids. A steady and breathtaking climb brings us to our destination.

We lunched at the legendary Glenary’s – an exquisite bakery and cafe with the most delectable menu of continental and Indian cuisine. We struck many friend- ships with locals and tourists and lingered on till we decided to walk to the Mall and stop for dinner at the centrally located Frank Ross Cafe where we de- voured soup, noodles and spring rolls. It was 3 a.m. in the morning when we got that wake-up call from the hotel. Yes, 3 a.m. and we were excited to jump out of bed in anticipation of that much touted trip to Tiger Hill! At 3.45 a.m., our taxi driver Kumar started the engine and we were off to watch the dawn light break over a spectacular 250 km stretch of Himalayan horizon.

This daily morning spectacle is a major tourist attraction, and we found hun- dreds of ‘jeeps’ leaving Darjeeling for Ti- ger Hill. We arrived at the summit to find that the top was sold out and settled for the middle ones. Far below, we could see young, old and even the infirm jostling for that ringside spot in the open court- yard in front of the pavilion, from where the views are equally grand. You wonder what that fuss is all about even as you gently shudder when the windows open and icy winds brace you for the spectacle that follows.

It started with the faint outline of mountains and we looked excitedly at the false dawn light which covered the skies. Someone squealed and we looked to our left to be transfixed by the glowing orange outline to the mighty mountains. As the glow sparkled, the majesty was revealed just as the sun gently rose and applause broke out. The best was yet to come as we found the skyline dominated by Kanchenchendonga. On either side of the main massif are Kalkura (7381m), Janu (7719m) and Pandim (7691m), all serious peaks in their own right. Far left can be spotted the mighty Everest which looked dwarfed due to its distance and yet maintained its unmistakable majesty.

We were late to leave and lingered on till 6 a.m. when we reluctantly moved back to our vehicles after watching the most beautiful spectacle of nature ever. Such spring trips (usually with a detour to the exquisite Batasia Loop with the same beautiful backdrop of the moun- tain) can be booked through a travel agency or directly with jeep drivers at the Ghumada taxi stand. We returned, rested and had breakfast before begin- ning another interesting day.

The gleaming white pagoda at the Japa- nese Temple built by the Japanese Bud- dhist Nipponzan-Myohoji organisation stands out for its peaceful surroundings, spectacular view and a drumming prayer session where we were offered a hand drum and encouraged to join in the rituals. Next, we visited the zoo and the prestigious mountaineering institute which was founded in 1954 and has pro- vided training to some of India’s leading mountaineers. We felt that surge of pride and the zest at the efforts to reach the summit – some failed while others were successful, which make the memorabilia from the 1922 and 1947 Everest expedi- tions so special. Don’t miss reading the fascinating stories, looking at the models of the ranges and the Carl Zeiss telescope presented by Adolf Hitler to the head of the Nepali Army at the spot where Ten- ning Norgay was cremated, stands the statue of this intrepid Everest summi- toor who lived in Darjeeling and was the director of the institute for many years.

We were now dying to visit the other two attractions of Darjeeling – the famous tea gardens where two leaves and a bud form the core of their existence, thus providing the world high-quality tea and the Heritage Toy Train.

The quaint railway station with its ex- quisite backdrop and old world charm builds that excitement of travelling in the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway, known affectionately as the Toy Train, which was the first journey along its precipice-topping, 2,400 feet wide tracks in September 1881 and is one of the few hill railways operating in India. Listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site, it op- erates like a regular train and we filled the mandatory form and got our ticket for the two-hour steam-powered return trip to Ghoom.

As we boarded the train and the steam engine let out a long whistle, it was a nostal- gia time with the chook chook and the dust cloud flying in the air. The original route has been retained in a remark- able condition since 1881. The railway line basically follows the Hill Cart Road which is partially the same as National Highway 35 as it stopped to fill water at two points and went through the famous Batasia loop, we learnt how innovatively it had been created as one of the main difficulties faced by the DHR was the steepness of the climb.

Features called loops and z reverses were designed as an integral part of the system at different points along the route to achieve a comfortable gradient for the stately train moves forward, reverses and then moves forward again, climbing a slope effortlessly. A steady and breathtaking climb brings us to our destination, a gentle shudder when the windows open, and Tibetan bread before turning in ear- ly for a return flight the next day. The gleaming white pagoda at the Japa- nese Temple built by the Japanese Bud- dhist Nipponzan-Myohoji organisation stands out for its peaceful surroundings, spectacular view and a drumming prayer session where we were offered a hand drum and encouraged to join in the rituals. Next, we visited the zoo and the prestigious mountaineering institute which was founded in 1954 and has pro- vided training to some of India’s leading mountaineers. We felt that surge of pride and the zest at the efforts to reach the summit – some failed while others were successful, which make the memorabilia from the 1922 and 1947 Everest expedi- tions so special. Don’t miss reading the fascinating stories, looking at the models of the ranges and the Carl Zeiss telescope presented by Adolf Hitler to the head of the Nepali Army at the spot where Ten- ning Norgay was cremated, stands the statue of this intrepid Everest summi- toor who lived in Darjeeling and was the director of the institute for many years.

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A two-hour drive from Gurgaon will bring you face to face with the majestic Neemrana Fort and Palace. But not before you have driven through lanes with colourful buildings and villagers dressed in equally colourful attires. The fort itself is a 15th century structure. Together with the renovated palace, it is now the Neemrana Fort Palace Hotel, a heritage property.

A distinctive feature about Neemrana is that from the 16th century till almost Independence, it was dominated by the Chauhans. The cultural heritage gives the splendid feeling of living like a king or a queen, in a property that truly speaks the language of older times. The high ceilings, carved wood furniture, design stone work and just the ambiance of the palace has the royal touch that’s a class apart. The narrow corridors and huge spaces and carvings take you back to the era of architectural designs from the Mughal, Rajput and colonial times.

Today, Neemrana is one of the most exotic weekend getaways that attracts people with its glorious heritage and a rich historical background. At sunset, a beautiful rust hue dominates the Aravalli range on which this impressive structure stands.

Long before the city got its current name, it was known as Gurugram (‘guru’ - teacher, ‘gram’ - village). It is said that the name is derived from the city’s association with Guru Dronacharya. Several accounts credit the royal guru from the Mahabharata as the one who founded a Gurukul on land provided by Dhritarashtra, the king of Hastinapur. It was here that he provided training in the art of warfare to the Kaurava and Pandava princes.

It is said that Gurgaon’s Guru Dronacharya College is at the exact spot where the Gurukul once existed. A statue in the college campus stands testimony to Guru Drona’s contribution. A temple of Guru Dronacharya, perhaps the most ancient temple in the city, is located close to the college. Area residents also point to a very old pond, the Dronacharya Tank, which is now dry and partially buried. A more recent tribute to the teacher comes in the form of the Guru Dronacharya metro station.

Other accounts say that the name came from the size of the village. The village (gram) was considered big (guru) and hence the name. But the theory that the city owes its origins to Guru Dronacharya’s Gurukul remains the most enduring one, prompting suggestions every now and then that Gurgaon should be renamed as Gurugram.
Gurugram's association with Guru Dronacharya brings us to another famous city landmark, the Sheetla Mata Mandir. Legend has it that Mata Sheetla Devi, the daughter of a rishi, was born and brought up in Gurugram. Bheeshma’s father, King Shantanu, came across Krupi, as Mata Sheetla Devi was known in her childhood, and her brother in the forests close to Gurugram. He took both of them to his palace and brought them up.

King Shantanu is said to have arranged Krupi’s marriage to Guru Dronacharya and she came to stay with him at the Gurukul. Over time, she became a mother figure for the Guru’s pupils and started being referred to as Mata Sheetla Devi. She spent most of her life on the banks of a pond, where the Sheetla Mata Mandir now stands in Old Gurugram.

Sheetla Mata’s idol is said to have been found from the pond after the temple was made, following which it was consecrated in the temple. Known as a ‘Shakti Peeth’, the temple sees a large number of devotees during the Hindu month of Chaitra (March and April). The deity is highly revered and was earlier invoked for curing smallpox. The peace and serenity at the dazzling white and saffron complex has to be experienced to be believed.

Anyone who has lived in Delhi-NCR for a while or visited often is sure to have seen Surajkund, made famous by the popular crafts mela (fair) which attracts artisans and performers from India and abroad. The Surajkund Crafts Mela is held every year in February and sees a huge crowd. For the rest of the year, the complex located in Faridabad is a popular tourist destination, thanks also due to the luxury hotels which have come up in the vicinity. It is less than an hour’s drive from Gurugram and is located just across Delhi’s southern border, close to the Tughlaqabad Fort.

But there’s more to Surajkund than just the crafts fair and its ability to attract tourists. Literally meaning the ‘Lake of the Sun’, it is said to be an ancient reservoir dating back to the 10th century, just a few kilometres away from where a dam was constructed in the 8th century. It is believed to have been constructed by a Gurjar king who was a Sun worshipper and remnants of what some have described as a Sun Temple have been found along the lake’s bank.

The kund itself is shaped in the form of a rising sun and has stone-paved, stepped embankments where visitors often sit, admiring the beautiful surroundings.
Mrs. Sheila Dixit conferring the Award to Nurturing Talent Programme Team

Mr. P.K. Joseph, Director-Programmes, speaking at the occasion

DLF FOUNDATION WINS

Award For Best CSR Practices In Education

INNOVATIVE CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CSR) INITIATIVES INCLUDE FINANCIAL SUPPORT, MENTORING AND COUNSELLING SESSIONS.

by DCN BUREAU

DLF Foundation’s Nurturing Talent Programme was conferred the second Pt Madan Mohan Malaviya Award for Best CSR Practices in Education in a prize distribution ceremony held at the India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, on September 10th.

This was in recognition of the Foundation’s innovative CSR initiatives of providing scholarships to poor and meritorious students. Not only does the Foundation provide financial support to such students but also holds regular mentoring and counselling sessions to ensure that the scholars have a solid foundation.

The CSR Times, a monthly English publication on Corporate Social Responsibility, instituted the awards in memory of the late philanthropist - Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya. The awards are aimed at recognising the efforts of those who strive to improve the quality and state of education in India.

The awards were presented by Mrs. Sheila Dikshit, former Chief Minister of Delhi and H.E. Mr. Felix Ngoma, Ambassador of The Republic of Congo in India.

The Income-Cum-Merit Scholarship Programme, known as “Nurturing Talent Programme” is not just a mere scholarship programme but a unique talent grooming programme that aims to give access to quality education to bright students hailing from marginalised families. Adopting a unique methodology, the programme picks up poor talented children from rural and urban villages and nurtures them to become successful professionals depending on their unique aspirations and abilities; and converts them to leaders of tomorrow in various professional fields. Under this programme, the DLF Foundation is currently supporting 860 bright underprivileged students (626 students at the school level and 234 scholars at professional courses level).

Lt Gen Rajender Singh (Retd), CEO, DLF Foundation, said, “We are excited and honoured to be the 2015 recipient of this prestigious award and I would like to extend my thanks to CSR Times for establishing this award. The award will go a long way in helping us identify effective strategies for improving the career prospects of poor and meritorious students.”

While being committed to raise the level of education in India, the Foundation’s initiatives seek to ensure quality education for disadvantaged children so that they can realise their full potential and take part in India’s economic growth.

Yoga For All At DLF Foundation’s Wellness Centre

A yoga session in progress at the DLF Wellness Centre

E veryone benefits from yoga and DLF Foundation’s completely solar operated wellness centre in DLF City Phase 1 offers a no-frills approach to yoga that is catching on fast among residents.

The yoga school, which opened a month ago, has more than a dozen-odd residents practicing yoga between 6 am and 8 am and 5 pm and 7 pm. “There is a very calm feel to the centre and a range of classes to choose from, suiting all styles,” said Kavya Jha, a resident in her thirties, who recently resumed yoga at the centre after leaving it years ago.

For many of the residents, who are in the age group of 25 and 50 years, the centre serves as a spiritual oasis in the heart of Gurugram. “Taking yoga classes from an experienced instructor is the best way to begin and sustain a yoga practice,” said Juri Malhotra, another student.

Jayashree Basu, who learnt yoga for about 10 years, speaks highly of Yogacharya Manoj Chandra, the instructor at the centre. “Teachers tend to give too many instructions. But our trainer lets the yoga conversation unfold. He watches his students to see if they have understood and assimilated the instructions before moving on to the next asana.”

According to Yogacharya Chandra, yoga, as part of a comprehensive treatment plan can lessen not only pain and morning stiffness in people suffering from knee arthritis, but also anxiety and blood pressure as stated in a recent Indian study. He further added that many of the residents who have joined the centre for pain relief and controlling high blood pressure.

“Yoga combines stretching, balance, muscle strengthening, and meditation — all of which can make one feel better, healthier and more energetic,” said Yogacharya Chandra, who learnt the ancient Indian science of exercise and healing at the Patanjali University. “Yoga is not just about working out, it’s about a healthy lifestyle.”
Gurgaon’s Running Passion For Fitness

As an increasing number of Gurgaonites take to running, DCN catches up with fitness freaks to find out what drives them. Is it just fitness or is there more to it?

by Reena Dhankher

At 37, Siddhartha Ghosh, a cancer survivor shocked his friend preparing for a 21 km marathon by completing the same in just 2 hours and 45 minutes, that too without any practice! “I have been into sports throughout my life so it was not very tough for me though I realised that it did take a toll on me since you do not run for 21 km every day. Subsequently, I started preparing and that’s when I discovered running is an integral part of my lifestyle.”

Like Ghosh, many across the Millennium City have taken to running, not just for fitness but because they share a healthy passion for this activity. As a result, several running groups have emerged in Gurgaon today which are also giving an opportunity to fitness freaks to bond together socially.

A Fitness Tool

There is no denying the fact that running as a sport has captured both the imagination and interest of Gurgaonites. The frequency at which the city plays host to marathons bears testimony to it. A major reason why running is getting increasingly popular is because of the fitness revolution the Millennium City is going through.

Manu Kalra from Gurgaon Group Runners (GGR) elaborates, “The craze for fitness has surely given runners a big boost. A lot of people, particularly in their 30s, have started taking to it though youngsters aren’t too much into running as it requires a great amount of discipline and passion”.

Ramanpreet Shergill, a senior manager with Ericsson, believes that movies like Lagaan, Chak De, and Bhaag Milkha Bhaag have also been instrumental in promoting such healthy practices though architect Tarun Walecha disagrees. “I won’t attribute the trend to movies though the adrenaline rush they infused cannot be denied,” says Walecha. Talking about his driving force, he goes...
“Believes that movies like Lagaan, Chak De, and Bhaag Milkha Bhaag have also been instrumental in promoting such healthy practices though architect Tarun Walecha disagrees.”

RAMANPREET SHERGILL

on to add, “Running wasn’t my forte but a look at my friend’s picture flaunting a medal from the Airtel Delhi Half Marathon (ADHM) 2010 got the better of me and I too decided to take the plunge. In 2014, I started picking up the nuances of running with the help of various coaches and since then there has been no looking back.”

Shergill, on the other hand, was introduced to a running group, Reebok Running Squad (RRS) through a friend. Since she was always interested in sports, she did not take any time to decide. “Running has many advantages. It not only leads to better blood circulation, metabolism, development of neurons, good body and health, it also increases the elasticity to handle stress. Running groups run by Reebok offer a great platform to newbies and experienced runners because they not only make running easy, they help bring in discipline in life too,” she points out. Walecha, in fact, feels running is the new golf that gives one a personal sense of achievement, where each run is a new challenge and there is always scope to get better. “Having spent all my life with some or the other form of sport, running as a fitness regime seems to be the most holistic,” he adds.

However, running for sure is not an easy exercise. As Joginder Chandna, who is with the Indian Navy, explains, “Rome was not built in a day and so one cannot become a great runner in one day. I know a number of cases where ‘beginners’ enthusiasm’ coupled with ‘peer pressure’ have become a recipe for disaster for runners and their journey has also stopped abruptly due to serious injuries. It is all about developing a very strong foundation for yourself and then building on it, brick by brick.”

Bonding Together

Thanks to the growing number of running groups, people are also bonding socially! “Running together helps people with common passion connect with each other and it literally takes seconds to communicate with strangers. It’s like a family,” explains Sureesh Singh of the RRS. Kalra goes on add how members of different groups also organise events and parties to let their families meet and interact “We have those golgappa parties with families which are like crazy. In fact, while all of us seriously focus on running throughout the week, during weekends, we come up with fun activities. Be it playing kho kho or having

“The biggest problem is, people don’t want to work out so we give them a small work-out programme which they can do on their own. We push people by extrinsic motivation giving them sippers and t-shirts. At times, some of them want to play certain games but they are unable to play because of fitness levels and it becomes a big challenge. Also we have to take care that people with ailments like diabetes do not exercise without eating anything, those with asthmatic tendencies carry inhalers and finally those with heart ailments consult their doctor before taking up running.”

What is the role of diet in exercise? We get so many alarming diseases at such an early age today and unhealthy food is one of the contributing factors. Diet plays an important role in exercise and we should not be putting kerосine in our Ferrari’s. So if you want to walk or run, you should eat good food. We must have two or three different colour fruits everyday and we should change our fruits every third day. The ideal option is to have two balanced meals which should include rice or chapattis with vegetable, dal and curd, a portion of chicken or meat.

Tell us about the injuries involved in running.

Runners get injuries often. Since it is an easy doable activity, people tend to overdo it. You need to focus on certain recovery tools like theraband, foam rollers and start using them in the beginning of the regime so that you are physically active throughout the year. Also you need to do some stretching and yoga exercises.

What are the challenges you face as a coach?

“People Are Becoming Extremely Conscious About Fitness”

Interview with Gagan Arora, Coach Reebok Running Squad

What is the importance of running today?

If you look at the working population today, we see them having a hectic life which involves sitting before a computer with no physical activity. Hence, out of the simplest exercises to do is running. In the last five years, I have seen this trend where people are becoming extremely fitness conscious and hence they are taking to running, which they can do at their own convenience.

How to start running?

It has to take place gradually and carefully. One needs to begin with walking, for about 30-40 minutes and three to four times a week. One should also do some strengthening exercises. Generally, when you are sitting, your muscles are in sleeping mode so you have to activate and strengthen them with walking. The supporting exercises can include push ups, squats, spine bridge, bird dog and planks, which can be done as per the body type but only two to three times a week to support your walking and running regime and stay out of injuries.

People today understand the importance of being physically active and that is a healthy sign. Even women, be it homemakers or those working with big corporates, are taking out time for running. It shows their focus.

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SIDDHARTHA GHOSH
With the growing number of running groups, people are also bonding socially! “Running together helps people with common passion connect with each other and it literally takes seconds to communicate with strangers.”

SURESH SRINIVASAN

breakfast together, we create opportunities for social interactions. As it is running helps to de-stress and these events with families strengthen the bond among members,” he points out.

Shergill agrees as she says, “When you meet fellow runners socially, you not only get the opportunity to develop better friendships, you also learn about varied subjects expanding your horizons beyond limited topics”.

But then one wonders, isn’t there a sense of competition among runners too? Srinivasan clears this aspect as he explains, “Running makes you shed your ego. Runners would always be humble and helpful. It’s a selfish lone sport that makes you selfless. I have a tattoo on my leg that says keep running and exploring”.

Delirious Passion Levels

The more passionate you are, the more you learn. Ghosh, who makes it a point not to miss any marathon in the city to-day, elaborates, “Once you feel passionate about running, you start focusing on aspects that can make you a better performer like what kind of shoes and clothes you should wear, what should be your running style and diet, how much should you run and so on”.

Srinivasan talks of the ‘runners’ high’, which leads to the release of endorphins. “There is no better feeling than reaching the finish line. When the kids give you a high five, saying bravo bravo….all you want to do is improve”.

Chandna believes that a certain amount of competitiveness is also good. “It makes you put in that extra effort, which helps you transform from an ordinary runner to an ‘extra’ordinary runner. However, competing against yourself will give you the flexibility to reset your goals depending on the ever dynamic situations. It will also give you much more satisfaction and a feeling of pride. At the end of a run, at the end of a day or an event, there should be a smile on your face, in your heart or soul,” he explains.

Each runner has a target. While Kalra mentions about a friend who goes for an hour-long run after each late night party, his own target is to complete a 10-kilometre run in 47 minutes. For Walecha, it is about being on the course for hours together and still remaining motivated.

As Srinivasan sums it up, “my race, my pace,”; Gurgaon is definitely running towards a new horizon of fitness levels at its own confident pace!

“We have these golgappa parties with families which are like crazy. In fact, while all of us seriously focus on running throughout the week, during weekends, we come up with fun activities.”

MANU KALRA
Dr. Manoj K. Goel is Director and Head, Department of Pulmonology, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine at Fortis Memorial Research Institute (FMRI). He has always been part of the organizing committee of all major conferences, workshops and symposiums in Delhi related to Pulmonology, Bronchology, Critical Care and Sleep Medicine. Dr. Goel is amongst the first to introduce pulmonary interventions, non-invasive ventilation and sleep medicine in India.

With the change in weather, what are the precautions asthmatic patients need to take?

Patients with known asthma must take preventive or controller medicines as prescribed by the doctor every day, even when they feel alright. Please remember that these medicines are the safest and most effective when taken in the form of inhalers. One can reduce asthma symptoms by avoiding triggers and substances that irritate the airways. Avoid perfumes, body sprays, talcum powder and other smelling substances. Remove carpets and keep the house clean to reduce the possibility of dust mites and cockroaches as their body parts and droppings can trigger asthma attacks in some people. Eliminate tobacco smoke and avoid air pollution, industrial dust, and irritating fumes as much as possible. Please do get vaccinated against influenza and pneumonia as per the advice of your doctor.

What is the vulnerable age group in such cases?

All age groups are vulnerable, especially those having a history of asthma in the past. However, studies have shown that school-going children are more vulnerable because they are still in the development stage of their immunity. Those who have a family history of asthma, smokers and workers at construction sites or other polluted workplaces are also at a higher risk of developing asthma.

Why do asthma and other breathing problems get triggered with the onset of winters?

Because of increased level of pollution, fog, suspended particulate substances in air, increased pollens in atmosphere, low atmospheric temperature, more chances of common cold and chest infection and more prevalence of house dust mites which infest the linens and blankets.

What precautions can be taken for people with known histories during the forthcoming Diwali to avoid a possible asthma attack?

Besides the usual precautions that I mentioned earlier, one needs to avoid crackers and smoke in any form including due to candles and ‘diyas.’ There may be allergic substances in adulterated sweets which can also trigger asthma attack. Avoid overeating as this can cause acid regurgitation from the stomach to trigger asthmatic attack. It is advisable not to smoke and avoid the use of perfumes, deodorants and room fresheners if there is a history of asthma.
As kids, we have savoured moments playing football in the pouring rain. As teenagers in love, we have often walked barefoot on the lawn, hand in hand, gazing into the eyes of our beloved. As parents, we have run after our toddlers in public sand pits. You must be wondering what these select memories have in common? Believe it or not... parasites!

Like us, our pets too pick up unwanted companions of their own that tend to cause a lot of nuisance and affect their health. Dogs and cats are prone to exter compose several species of internal scavengers as well as a plethora of internal parasites like ticks, fleas and lice, as well as a plethora of internal scavengers broadly termed as worms.

Worms are mainly of three types, in colloquial terms - flat, round and tape. Different species of the animal kingdom are host to a variety of specific worms. Puppies are affected primarily by common roundworms - hookworms (Ancylostoma sp.) and whip worms. Toxocara sp. of round worms is endemic in both pups and adult dogs in the Delhi-NCR region. Tapeworms (Dipylidium caninum and Echinococcus sp.) are generally found in the gut of adult dogs. However, Spirocercus lupi occurs in the oesophagus of dogs. Cats also harbour various species of specific worms such as Toxocara cati. Worms have a complex life cycle that involves a vector (transmission agent like a flea, mosquito, etc) and a host (eg: dog or cat). Generally, adult worms live in the gut of the host and eggs are passed out in the host’s faeces. These eggs are picked up by pets on their routine walk, trip to the yard or sometimes even by licking other pets. Concurrent tick, flea or lice infestation predisposes companion animals to worm load, as they serve as a vector.

Helminthiasis (clinical term for worm infection) is manifested through clinical signs like scooting, dragging the hind quarters across the floor, diarrhoea with possible blood streaks, vomiting, severe anaemia (especially in puppies), and weight loss. It also decreases the pet’s immunity and can cause concurrent gastrointestinal and skin infections.

External parasites (ticks, fleas and lice) cause annoyance, alopecia, allergic skin reactions and can also spread life threatening diseases like tick fever characterized by constantly high fever and alarmingly decreased platelet counts. Animal helminths are of zoonotic importance and can pass over to humans in close contact with pets. Cutaneous and visceral larval migrans are two diseases in humans caused by animal worms in their non-specific host (man). They spread through skin penetration. Toxocara sp. may cause abortion in pregnant women.

Diagnosis is mainly by stool tests. Oesophageal worms are diagnosed by endoscopy, as done at CGS Hospital. Regular and correct deworming in consultation with your vet is the prime donna of treatment and prevention. External parasites can be warded off with regular anti-tick washes, application of an anti-tick and flea spot-on or spray. Few ticks can be manually picked off the body on a daily basis.

PARASITE -O-MANIA:

- For every flea on your pet’s body, there may be 100 in the environment! Each tick can suck up to 0.1 ml blood!
- Puppies can pick up worms from their mothers! So, vaccination plus deworming is important.
- Let’s try to worm our way out of this wormy situation! Cheers to good pet health! ’

(‘The author is a meritorious postgraduate in Veterinary Surgery and Radiology and is currently practising at CGS Hospital, S-25/2204, DLF Phase-II, Gurgaon. Tel: 0124-4115580. www.cgshospital.com Stay tuned for our next article highlighting cardiac problems in pets.)

A Wormy Affair!

By Dr. SALISHA WHITNEY CORREIA
PANDIT Bishambar Lal was not only the Pujari, he also doubled as the Shastri and read from the scriptures every afternoon. He wasn’t there because he had bribed any high-powered managing committee or because his father—before him—had done the same job. He was there simply because the people of Sargodha loved and admired this humble man, who was their friend, philosopher and guide in many difficult situations.

Panditji—as he was fondly called by everyone in the town—had been the pujari for five decades. He took care of the mortuaries in the sanctum sanctorum, while his wife—the Panditayan—swept and scrubbed the rest of the modest temple. He was there when the people visited the temple early in the morning; applying tilak on their forehead and giving out channamrut and prasad. Later, he would make offerings for various weddings, births, deaths, where he was needed. Afterwards, he would again try to dissuade her to delay the cremation. They would again try to dissuade her once she came out. One of the ladies went and informed the Panditayan and the one-person committee had done the arrangements. “Give me a few minutes to get to the cremation ground. “Give me a few minutes to get ready”, she said and went into her room.

People were aghast. Women did not go with funeral processions those days. Yet, she had asked them to wait, so they didn’t have a choice. Half an hour passed but there was no sign of the old lady. All arrangements had been made and they didn’t want to delay the cremation. They would again try to dissuade her once she came out. One of the ladies went and knocked at the door. There was no response. She knocked again, still no response. She pushed the door gently; it was open. Inside, the Panditayan sat in Samadhi. As she touched her shoulder the lifeless figure just rolled onto the floor. The woman shrieked and more people rushed inside. Someone felt her pulse for the pulse; there was none. The lady had indeed succeeded in ‘accompanying her husband’ to the cremation ground. “Give me a few minutes to get ready”, she said and went into her room.

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CELEBRITY CHEF SANJEEV KAPOOR, WHO WAS IN GURGAON RECENTLY, ASCRIBES THE SUCCESS OF HIS ICONIC TV SHOW ‘KHANA KHAZANA’ TO THE FACT THAT “WE NEVER TRIED TOO HARD!”

by MEENAKSHI SHARMA

It was the evening of a popular food award function in Gurgoan and the place was swarming with the bigwigs of the culinary world, from celebrated chefs to successful restaurateurs to well-known food critics and reviewers, when in walked the affable Chef Sanjeev Kapoor and there was respectful silence.

Chef and entrepreneur, Kapoor who, in 2011, launched Food Food channel, has been the star of ‘Khana Khazana’, the long running show of its kind in Asia. The show was the platform which catapulted him into public eye and made him a brand to reckon with.

Born in Haryana, Kapoor spent most of his childhood in Delhi. He completed a Diploma in Hotel Management in 1984 and very soon became an Executive Chef at The Centaur, Mumbai. In 2001, he unveiled his first restaurant, The Yellow Chilli, which soon became an Executive Chef at The Centaur, Mumbai after which my TV programme Khana Khazana took off. I have been advocating that home food is best and there should not be any fear in cooking for the family. When I was growing up, I saw my dad cook delicious food for the family. My training at IHM taught me about ingredients, cooking techniques and I became very confident about playing around with flavours and creating something new. I had a long stint as Executive Chef with Hotel Centaur in Mumbai after which my TV programme Khana Khazana took off. You are so loved on television. What do you think was the reason for your success?

Simplicity. We never tried hard at all and that I believe is the secret to our success. I simply gave my audience what they wanted. My passion for making Indian cuisine the number one in the world is the main driving force. I have been advocating that home food is best and there should not be any fear in cooking for the family. I try to ensure that if somebody watches my programme and uses any of the information I give them, it really adds to their success in cooking. I give them confidence and experience in the kitchen, and help them achieve their goals so that they are constantly challenged and satisfied. My teaching style has been well loved and I cook food that is not difficult for the viewer.

Another advantage I have is an understanding of the market. Whatever you’re doing, you have to really know who you’re doing it for—and once you start understanding your audience and thinking about things from their perspective, they start to respect and believe in you. Suddenly, you realise there’s a huge network of people who have become your community, your fans and your faithful supporters.

Indian cuisine has always been popular and now there is a surge of popularity for street food. What is your observation?

Indian cuisine is first and foremost home cooking. From there came the need for survival from the food business hence the evolution of street food. And then with passage of time, some foods became specifically ‘street foods.’ Ardent cooks love to emulate the taste of this same street food at home too. Typically, Indians do enjoy eating out but after a few meals, they all come back to their comforting home cooked dal-chawal or roti-sabzi.

What do you know and love about this city of Gurgoan? What are your hobbies?

I must confess that I hardly know Gurgoan but now that I have come for the Big F Awards, I like this city as it celebrates food. Of course, my sister lives in Gurgoan, so I am now becoming familiar with the place. I have not visited many restaurants here as I am happy with my simple home cooked meal but it is fascinating to see the love for food here. Other than cooking, music is definitely at the top of my list of hobbies. My younger daughter is an athlete and I love to run with her and spend time with the rest of my family.
I Avoid Love Like The Plague, Says ‘Love Story Specialist’ Imtiaz!

Believe it or not, the master ‘love’ storyteller of Bollywood Imtiaz Ali feels the word ‘love’ is taboo for him! “I avoid it like the plague. It’s the most confusing thing to me. It means different things to different people, and acquires different meanings through the day. I use more specific terms like affection,” the famed director was quoted saying in a recent interview.

His upcoming film Tamasha, starring Ranbir Kapoor and Deepika Padukone, is all set to hit screens on November 27. Being touted as one of the most awaited films of the year, Tamasha is about a guy who grows up in a world of stories and is very curious to know what the story of his life is going to be. No wonder, the film has an interesting tagline, “Why always the same story?”!

In the film, Ranbir completely transforms into an outgoing, charming guy on a vacation to Corsica, when he meets Deepika and falls in love with her. However, when they return, he jumps back into his normal skin, which he tells her, is actually quite “boring”, but the real him. Imtiaz, who shares a very friendly rapport with Ranbir, is confident that the actor will once again impress fans and critics with his performance. In fact, he sincerely believes that Ranbir’s growth as an actor is unusual. This is Imtiaz’s second film with Ranbir after Rockstar.

Meanwhile, the makers of Tamasha have recently released two music tracks from the film, Matargashti and Heer Toh Badi Sad Hai. All the songs have been composed by AR Rahman. Both the songs have been well received by the audience. But music isn’t the only reason for which the film is trending on social media at the moment. If sources are to be believed, Ranbir and Deepika share an intense raw and lengthy love-making sequence in the film, the kind, the two actors have never done before in their respective careers! So much so that inspired by the film trailer, Katrina Kaif has asked the makers of the film Jagga Jasoos to up the ante on her ‘chemistry’ factor with beau Ranbir in the film! Do we smell something burning?
King Khan has always been considered a trend-setter for his dressing style and it seems his son is no different. The super-star’s kid Aryan Khan has been grabbing headlines for all the right reasons. He will be turning 18 this November and his chiselled features and well-honed physique have already transformed him into a debonair. The shutterbugs clicked him and sister Suhana at the Mumbai airport and all eyes were on Aryan Khan as he stepped out of the airport in a black t-shirt teamed up with a leather jacket and a pair of lowers.

Beyonce’s Age Under Scrutiny!

Beyonce, who seems to be accused of lying about her personal life every few months, has once again hogged the limelight and this time for her age! Beyonce’s age has been called into question after her father, Matthew Knowles, said during a radio interview that his daughter was the same age as Pink, who is 36 years old. The singer is listed as being born in 1981, which would make her 34 years old. Earlier in 2006, TMZ also ran a story claiming that the pop star was seven years older than she claimed - citing a document from the Texas Department of Health. It is not uncommon for celebrities to play fast and loose with their birthdates. Jessica Chastain was caught lying about her age in 2012 and she eventually came clean with no consequences for her career.
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