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SUPER SUNDAY

After months of rehearsals, time to savour memories



Students of NP girls' school who were part of Swagatham. PREM NATH PANDEY

MAROOŞHA MUZAFFAR
NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 6

WHEN Rajni Tiwari (16) returned home after her performance at the XIX Commonwealth Games opening ceremony, her mother Damyanti could not hold back her tears. Her daughter had done her "proud". During the telecast on Sunday, she sat in front of the TV waiting to see her daughter onscreen. "She had, after all, worked so hard."

Rajni is one of the thousands of schoolchildren who brought the opening ceremony alive with their performances. Most were from government schools across the city. A couple of days after their big day, these children have returned to their usual lives — studies and homework.

While they still talk excitedly of their performances — dancing to *Swagatham* and the mehendi formation — memories of the ceremony when they "heard loud cheering and whistles from the spectators" will remain etched in their young minds. "Just before the ceremony, I was feeling a bit nervous. I was worried about the dance," said Rajni. "But everything went well."

A student of Class XI at NDMC's NP Girls Senior Secondary School in Gole Market, Rajni says she loved Keshava, the

seven-year-old tabla prodigy who mesmerised everyone with his performance. "We waved to him so many times, he was very cute," she chuckled.

The CWG Organising Committee had conducted auditions in January to select children for the ceremony. Rajni and her friends were the "lucky ones". The selected children then underwent rigorous rehearsals for more than three months. "When the auditions took place in our school, I was in Class X. The rehearsals began after our exams in March."

"By the time the rehearsals began, we were in Class XI. And the rehearsals would take place during the school time," said Rajni. "Is saal toh padai ho hi nahi payi (This academic year, there has been no studies)," said Vaishali Sharma, a Class IX student who participated in the ceremony. The children even missed their first term exams.

However, the children also have some complaints. "I wanted to see the whole show but we were asked to leave immediately after our dance ended," said Madiha Malik, another student from the NP Girls Senior Secondary School. "They did not give passes to our parents," said Neha Thapa, as others around her nodded in agreement. "I hope they give us a CD (of the event) at least."

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