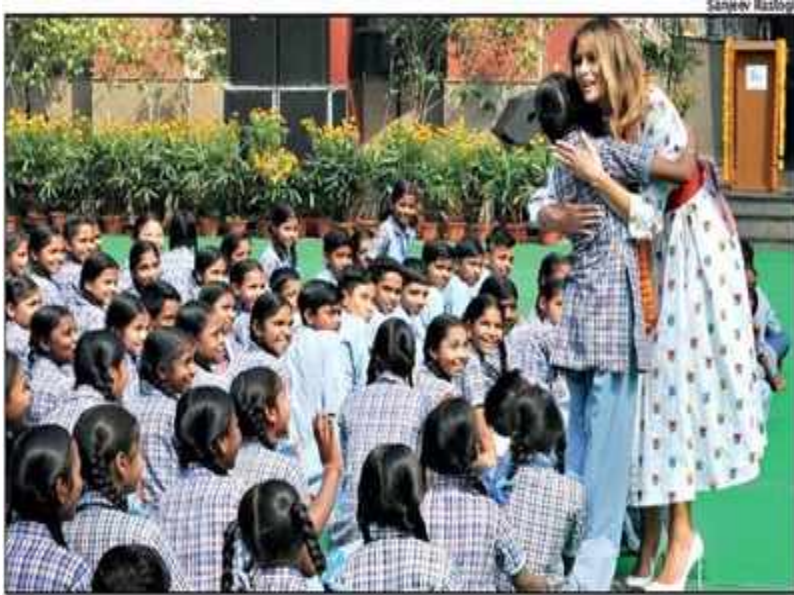


Delhi school's happy hour with Melania

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NEW DELHI: For a week, students and staff of Sarvodaya Co-ed Senior Secondary School in Moti Bagh II, Nanakpura, had been preparing in earnest to welcome the US first lady. They decked up the hallway with rangolis, coloured the blackboards, rehearsed dances, pretty much everything in order to put their best foot forward. And they did on Tuesday as Melania Trump arrived.

She walked in amid welcome notes played by bagpipers and was given a traditional Indian welcome with tilak and a floral shower. The flowers went well with her white dress that had floral patterns on it.

The kids then regaled the first lady with a cultural performance. One Class VI student Gagandeep Singh, who was sitting in the audience, broke into an impromptu jig. This drew the attention of Melania's security detail but only momentarily. The child later innocently said that he felt like dancing when he heard the music. The first lady seemed to have enjoyed this spontaneous reaction. She expressed her joy by hugging many children there, and they loved her back.

At the reading and activity room for pre-primary classes, Melania was subjected to questions like how big is America, how far it is, etc, by the curious kids. At a happiness class for Class V students, which she next attended, she participated in a 'mindfulness activity'. "Mindful breathing, telling a story to a friend, listening to a classmate or simply connecting to nature, I cannot think of a better way for all of us to start our day," she said.

Nisha Kumar, a Class V student who was watching her, later said that the first lady felt “very relaxed” doing the activity. But what struck her the most about the first lady was how “she is very beautiful”. ‘Beautiful’ was also the larger comment of the first lady for the school. “I learnt that your school’s name is Sarvodaya, which means prosperity for all. As I walked around, I was able to see how the concept exists in the curriculum, in the leadership of teachers, and the spirit and enthusiasm of the students,” Melania said.

She also spoke about her own ‘be best’ initiative and said the ‘happiness curriculum’ reaffirms its values. The school gifted Melania three Madhubani paintings. Her parting message to the children was to be good always.