

Where business shakes hands with spirituality

TYCOON A chess and music lover, he dreams to produce a Nobel laureate

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BHOPAL: Eighty-four-year old Laxmi Niwas Jhunjhunwala, the patriarch of the LNJ Bhilwara Group discusses his expansion plans, plays chess, learns music and regularly visits the Ramkrishna Mission ashram.

This octogenarian lives with a noble mission—to produce another Nobel laureate from India.

"I am really working on this. Whenever we spot some potential talent in our Ramkrishna Mission, we try to train him accordingly. It would be the happiest day of my life if someone from the Ramkrishna Mission University is one day decorated with this award."

Business expansion does excite him. But more than the commercial expansion, what keeps him kicking is an expansion of his music, spiritual and literary vocabulary.

"Even when I was full time involved in my business, I would always balance it with these activities. For success in business it is not essential to drown yourself into it. What matters is the intensity of involvement."

A gold medallist in Maths from Kolkata, Jhunjhunwala wanted to become a scientist.

VISIT TO THE CITY

LN Jhunjhunwala and his son Ravi Jhunjhunwala are in Bhopal for two days as a part of the golden jubilee celebrations of their company LNJ Bhilwara Group.

But fate had a different script in store.

Jhunjhunwala's love for music blossomed early. "As a child I used to listen to music being taught in school in Kolkata. I found it not just entertaining but also uplifting. I started learning music and have even learnt from Dagar Saheb."

Music he says has a healing effect. "A month back I was unwell. Music helped me gain back my health."

He says, "In 1947, I started going to the Ashram at Narendrapur simply to filter out the business tensions. I used to stay there in the night, interact with Swamis and come back refreshed."

Even today, Jhunjhunwala visits the Ashram in Delhi thrice a week and talks to Swamiji everyday on the phone.

And his daily routine?

"I get up at 5 am, read for an hour. I have just finished reading the Land of Two Rivers. Then I go for a 45 minute walk,



LN Jhunjhunwala with son Ravi Jhunjhunwala. PRAVEEN BAJPAI/HT

come back and do some stretching exercises, meditate, have my breakfast, do my riyaz."

And over the years he has read more than 12000 pages of Vivekanand literature. "The pleasure that I get reading this literature is unparalleled. It is much more than the pleasure I

get on my business expansions."

An entrepreneur, chess player, singer and a spiritual seeker—all merged in one.

"I am a businessman just by chance," he says.

But sometimes one chance can change one's life. This is what he did.

Bhilwara group's scion talks expansion, culture

Ravi Jhunjhunwala may not share the interests of his father LN Jhunjhunwala. But his involvement in his father's activities is more than skin deep. Jhunjhunwala who is the Group Chairman of HEG Ltd shared with HT his expansion plans and foraying into cultural arena.

Any expansion plans for HEG Ltd at Mandideep?

We are planning to scale up an investment of additional Rs 245 crore by mid next year. By then the company shall start producing 80000 MT graphite electrodes per annum, making it the world's largest integrated manufacturing plant. The company recorded a turnover of approx Rs 1300 crore during the financial year 2010-11. With this installed capacity, we are the world's largest single site producers of Graphite Electrodes. After the current expansion plan, the gross investment figure at Mandideep will be Rs 1368 crore.

Does your company organise any kind of cultural events?

Yes, we started the Bhilwara Natya Samaroh two years ago in which 40-50 plays are staged. The plays are judged by the

group of experts. This year, two plays from Bhopal notched the first two places in the competition.

We also propose to start the Bhilwara Sangeet Samaroh in Delhi from next year. This will be a two day function which will bring on stage many music maestros.

There is recent spurt in the tendency of business houses going for philanthropy.

Yes. There comes a point in business, when we think of giving back what we have got.

Are you planning to make new investments in MP?

No we do not have an immediate plan for new investment. But we would be expanding our companies in the state in terms of both investment and production.

What do you have to say about the 50-year journey of your company?

It is a momentous occasion for us. Building on the strong foundation of traditional values of our group, we have forayed into new areas of business. We are committed to take the group to new heights.