

Girl power rules in spelling contest

Only four boys made it to mega-finals of Mother Dairy Challenger 2005

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LIKE most girls, they love Barbie dolls and chocolates. But they love challenges too. So when Amrita Bhardwaj (15), Youthika Chauhan (14) and Anaisha Jaykumar (15) were declared winners in the month-long Mother Dairy Challenger 2005 spelling contest held in Mumbai late last month, they were ecstatic.

With 31,000 schoolchildren from Mumbai's 117 schools participating—55 per cent of participants were boys—winning wasn't easy. "But that's what made it interesting," quipped Bhardwaj, a Std X student at Maneckji Cooper Education Trust School, Juhu.

"I would call it girl power. We can certainly beat the boys as we work harder and study more," said Chauhan,

a Std X student from St Gregorios High School, Chembur, who along with fellow student Jaykumar won the runners-up trophy.

The results support Chauhan's claim—girls outdid the boys right from the elimination round to the finals. The mega-finals had 13 finalists with just four boys. And the winners—a champion and two runners-up—were three girls.

Project head Maitrayee

Sirkar, who analysed the data that emerged from the contests held in Delhi and Mumbai, said: "The trend of girls outshining the boys was not visible in Delhi where the winners and runners-up were boys and so were a large number of Round 1 winners."

Held for the first time in Mumbai, the contest will move to nine other cities including Pune and Chandigarh later this year.