

think!

WELLNESS

MIND.BODY.SOUL



TECH MEETS TRADITION

■ A unique exhibition on health promotion was set up during the Commonwealth Games at Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga on Ashoka Road, Delhi. PHOTOS RAJ K RAJ

OLD AND NEW An interactive digital museum showcases Yoga and Ayurveda for contemporary audiences

Sanchita Sharma
sanchitasharma@hindustantimes.com

As ancient meets contemporary at Planet Health, the interactive digital museum on yoga and ayurveda at the Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga in the heart of New Delhi. Close on the footsteps of the international museums veering towards participatory displays to engage the new tech-savvy generation with no patience for one-dimensional gallery exhibits, the Union Ministry of Health has set up, what it calls, "the first of its kind museum on traditional medicine".

The displays fuse traditional art and craft with modern computing imagery, touch-sensitive sculpture and interactive installations.

"Nobody has the time for scriptures. We have presented traditional knowledge in a modern format to intrigue people enough to want to know more," said S. Jalaja, secretary, Department of AYUSH (Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Naturopathy, Siddha and Homeo-

opathy) under the Union Ministry of Health.

And intrigue it does. Arushi Khandelwal, 15, jumped back in surprise when the carved lotus on a pedestal she accidentally touched, triggered off an audiovisual commentary by Swami Niranjanananda, chief patron of the Bihar School of Yoga in Munger.

"I knew the museum was interactive, but the location of touch sensors is far more innovative than the red and black buttons that say 'push me' at science museums," said Khandelwal, a student of DPS R K Puram, New Delhi. The displays are by Ranjit Makkuni of Sacred World, whose team has also done installations at the Eternal Gandhi Multimedia Museum at Gandhi Smriti in Delhi.

"The word, Yoga, has a Sanskrit root, *yuj*, which means to unite or join. Even though the presentation is in an interactive three-dimensional exploration format, the exhibits rely on scientifically-validated concepts and traditional manuscripts," said Dr Ishwar V. Basavaraddi, Director, Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga, which has a



■ "The exhibits rely on scientifically-validated concepts and traditional texts," said Dr Ishwar V. Basavaraddi, Director, Morarji Desai National Institute of Yoga

faculty of 20 to teach yoga to 500 students, including 120 diploma students.

"The present venue for the exhibition is temporary—it's at the Institute of Yoga till October 31—but we hope to find permanent display for it at the National Museum," said Jalaja, who conceptualised the project.

This is not the Department of AYUSH's first encounter with tech-

nology. Drawing lessons from the long-drawn battle over neem and turmeric patent infringements, India set up the world's first Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) database to stop bio-piracy way back in 2001. The ₹7-crore TKDL project took nine years to list 2,00,000 formulations from Ayurveda, Unani and Siddha schools of medicine in over 30 million pages

from texts in Sanskrit, Hindi, Arabic, Urdu and Tamil, to name a few. TKDL makes the information available in five foreign languages: English, Japanese, French, German and Spanish. "This is just the beginning. We put together Phase I focusing on Yoga and Ayurveda in a rush to meet the Commonwealth Games deadline. The complete museum will be a mine of information," said Jalaja. We'd like to wait and watch. Or, in this case, touch and participate.



"THE LOCATION OF TOUCH SENSORS IS FAR MORE INNOVATIVE THAN THE RED AND BLACK BUTTONS THAT SAY 'PUSH ME' AT SCIENCE MUSEUMS,"

ARUSHI KHANDELWAL, visitor