

“Exercising Is Just Like Eating... Your Body Needs It Everyday”

MOHAMMAD AZHARUDDIN, the blue-eyed boy of Indian cricket for 16 long years is now making waves in the political circles of the country. Elected to the Lok Sabha from the Moradabad constituency in May last year, Azhar brings to the cause of serving people the same unbridled enthusiasm that characterized him during his days of cricketing glory.

In a conversation with BEENUM YADAV and MUGDHA MISHRA, AZHAR, a fitness freak and an athlete to the core, talks about sports, politics and his fitness secrets...

HI: After a long innings as the most successful captain of the Indian cricket team you have now embarked on a career in politics. How do you plan to play it out on the political field?

Azhar: It's all Allah's grace. When I first went to Moradabad after joining the electoral fray as a candidate from this constituency, the amount of love and affection showered on me was overwhelming... I don't have words to explain what it felt like. No plans as such... It just feels very good when you do something for your country and people.

HI: Right from your 'All Saints' days, what would you say are your most enduring memories?

Azhar: Well, the first three hundreds that I scored for India will always stay in my mind. The number of wins for India that I played a part in is the second thing. And of course the third thing would be if my sons play better than me.

HI: How easy or difficult is politics for a sports person?

Azhar: I am still getting the feel of it. It is not easy but I think if you are willing to learn, things become easy. It depends on you entirely. It is all about how you take it. If you attend the Parliament just for the heck of it, it is no use. Many people don't visit their constituencies regularly and show up just before elections. That is certainly not good. You must attend parliament sessions regularly, learn and understand that there is no point in sitting idle there. You should be pro - active and you should make a difference. Otherwise it is useless.

HI: Staying fit is of course very important for a sports person. How important do you think it is for a politician?

Azhar: Staying healthy and fit is important not only for politicians and sportsmen... It is important for everyone. I would go to the extent of saying that it is everyone's duty to stay fit. If you are healthy you have so much to look forward to. If you are not, you might be a millionaire or a billionaire it won't matter. Again, if you are not healthy it becomes that much more difficult to shoulder responsibilities. If there are people in the family who depend on you and you are not fit you won't



be able to shoulder your responsibilities. As a result your family gets affected and the whole situation might spiral out of control.

Exercise, I think is a life – long habit. It is not an instant thing. There are people who think that if they work out for 10 – 15 days, they'll lose weight and all will be OK. It doesn't happen like that. Exercising is just like eating... Your body needs it everyday.

HI: What is your daily routine like and what is your fitness mantra?

Azhar: I never miss my daily workouts. Sometimes I do it for an hour and sometimes if I feel up for it and if I think my body needs it, I might do it for an hour and a half. I never overtrain, though. Once you get into the 'over training zone' no exercise is helpful. It ends up being a futile effort. It is very important that you learn to adjust to the needs of your body. And as far as overtraining goes, the body does give you signals. You've got to learn to recognize those signals. You have to look at the vital signs.

90% to 95% of the people who hit the gym overtrain. They don't understand that half an hour of proper training is enough. You should hit the gym with set targets and laid down objectives and try to achieve them in a systematic manner instead of wasting time.

HI: How would you define healthy eating?

Azhar: I think eating healthy depends, to a large extent on what your digestive system can or cannot take. So it is largely pick and choose depending on what suits you and what does not. Just because a particular foodstuff works well for someone doesn't mean that it will suit you as well. For instance if I can't digest mutton properly I shouldn't be eating it simply because someone I know has benefited from eating it. You have to understand the needs of your body, prepare the right module accordingly and find out the right food for yourself. Otherwise it's just going to damage your body.

HI: Professional sport means a lot of stress... So does politics. What's your stress buster?

Azhar: I never let stress get to me. I am a very relaxed kind of a person and always happy with whatever I have. I take things very positively irrespective of what life throws at me. I think patience is one of the most important things in life. Patience, they say is a bitter plant with a sweet fruit.

Ups and downs are a part of life. With a little patience one can easily tide over one's difficulties. Be patient and respect time and almighty Allah will come to your

rescue. He always pulls the strings. So don't worry. Do your best and everything will work out well eventually!

HI: What are your plans about promoting sporting activities in your constituency?

Azhar: People generally want things to happen in cricket. But I want to promote other sporting disciplines in my constituency. It should not always be about cricket. Hockey, for example needs far more attention than it has so far received. However, I do not see this happening anytime soon for there are more pressing problems to tend to at the moment. Education, electricity and unemployment, for instance warrant immediate attention.

HI: Who do you think is the fittest person in the Indian Parliament?

Azhar: Hmm... it's very hard to say or maybe I never thought of this. Next time if you ask me this question I think I will be able to answer it readily..... On second thoughts I think young parliamentarians like Sachin Pilot, Jitin Prasad and Bhupender Hudda are quite fit. I think they take good care of themselves.

HI: Any messages for our health conscious readers?

Azhar: Just want to say that fitness is very important... It is a way of life. Make exercise a lifelong habit, eat healthy, take good care of yourselves and your families and don't worry. ☑

