

The curious case of Gurgaon's tiny teens

They look like kids but Azad & Laxmi are 18 and 16 respectively

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in Gurgaon

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TO THE casual eye, Azad Singh and Laxmi come across as archetypically adorable tiny tots with school bags slung over their shoulders. Only, looks are literally deceptive in this case.

The teenage brother-sister duo — Azad is 18 years old and Laxmi two years younger — are afflicted by a not-so-common hormonal deficiency that has stunted their growth.

That, though, hasn't deterred father Bahadur Singh from chasing dreams for his children. He tried to get them admitted in a private school, but institutions turned the children down one by one citing their condition.

A labourer from Ahirwada village at Badshahpur, Bahadur finally managed to admit them in a government school in the area. Azad and Laxmi have now reached Class X and Class VIII, respectively.

"Their classmates and friends at the Badshahpur government school used to pester them initially. But things improved after a teacher was specially tasked

They suffer from growth hormone deficiency

with ensuring that my children aren't harassed by anyone," said Bahadur. "My friends are tall but they don't tease me," Azad reaffirmed.

Bahadur said he talked to several doctors. "They said my children are normal and don't have any disease," he said.

"There are two main reasons for a condition such as theirs — constitutional short stature and genetic short stature. But the main reason for this condition is growth hormone deficiency. A person suffering from this deficiency stops growing in height after three to four years," said Dr Sanjeev Bagai, director and head of paediatric department of Rockland Hospital.

"This condition is a little different from dwarfism. The only treatment of this condition is growth hormone replacement therapy, but that can only be



LOOKS DECEIVE: Azad Singh (left) is a Class X student while Laxmi studies in Class VIII.



WHAT'S GHD?

■ Growth Hormone Deficiency (GHD) is a condition where the body doesn't produce enough growth hormone which is responsible for stimulating growth and cell reproduction

■ It can be classified into childhood and adulthood GHD, the former being more common

■ Childhood GHD usually has no identifiable cause

■ Poor growth and/or