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A Critique of Dan Brown's *Inferno*

Anvay Grover and Arnaav Bhavanani

Before we begin, it's important to note that this article (sadly) functions as a spoiler alert for those who have not read the book and plan to. For those who have, we hope that this critical evaluation of *Inferno* serves as the much needed opposing argument to Brown's solution.

In his book, Dan Brown presents a potential solution to the problem of overpopulation faced by us in the 21st Century. The antagonist in his book, Bertrand Zobrist, creates a vector virus that makes approximately a third of the world's population sterile. This solution is endorsed by many around the world, and a majority of readers accepted the solution as necessary and humane. By readers, we refer to Doscos whom we have spoken to as well. However, very few people actually thought about the consequences of this kind of a solution or critically analyzed it. Through this piece, we will attempt to talk about some possible flaws in using this kind of a vector virus and make those who endorse the solution think again. Before moving on, it should be perfectly clear that we do not deny the enormity of the problem of overpopulation. In fact, we will emphasize on this very enormity, as it forms not only the crux of Brown's solution but the flaws in it as well.

In the development stages of this piece, we found it surprising how well received Brown's solution was, but in hindsight, it really isn't that surprising simply because to people, his solution seemed the simplest, the one we were craving, as it offered an easy way out of the population conundrum. It is imperative to understand that in a problem like overpopulation, there is no easy way out. To clarify why, we'll start with the math.

Zobrist's solution deals with a simple method: the vector virus wipes out the fertility of one third of the population. To simplify, let us take a group of 1000

Indian women of child-bearing age. By 2013 World Bank estimates, these women would give birth to around 32 children in total. If Zobrist's solution makes one-third of these women go sterile, then the number of fertile women will drop to 667, and the birth rate will go down to approximately 21. From the remaining 646 women,

“ It is exceedingly likely that political campaigns would be run and elections would be fought on the basis of child and birth security agendas, because that would be the need of a third of a nation's population. ”

how hard is it to convince 11 women to give birth to another to bring the number back up to 32?

It would become especially easy to bring the birth rate up to 32 given the likely reaction of governments all around the world to a virus of this nature. There would be an immediate political tendency to start new social security schemes in order to encourage a higher birth rate. Surrogacy, a controversial issue in many corners of the world, would probably be made more profitable to offset the effect of the virus. It is exceedingly likely that political campaigns would be run and elections would be fought on the basis of child and birth security agendas, because that would be the need of a third of a nation's population. In a country like France, which has adopted a pro-natalist policies and gives incentives like maternity leave and tax benefits to encourage more births till today, the situation could be even more extreme. In totalitarian regimes, people might be forced to copulate in order to fuel the nation's need for people to support its economy.

The social implications of the occurrence Brown speaks of could extend to creating divisions between people. Unfortunate people on whom the virus acts will be forced to identify with being infertile, and this will impact

(contd. on page 3)



Regulars

Cricket

The School Cricket Team played against the Old Boys on Sunday, the 19th of April. The School team lost the match by 51 runs. Sambhav Agarwal took four wickets and Manan Dhandania took three wickets.

Well tried!

Basketball

The Doon School Basketball team played a friendly match with the Indian Military Academy on the 19th of April. The team won by 64-51 points.

Well done!

Music

Mr Deepak Castelino, composer of film scores, and guitarist and banjo player with the internationally renowned Sufi and Fusion music group, 'Char Yaar', conducted a band ensemble workshop in the Music School on Sunday, April 19. The workshop was attended by members of the House popular bands in preparation for the Inter-House Band competition to be held at the end of term.

WEEKLY SELECTS

The Lost City of Z

New Yorker

Duel in the Sun

Runner's World

Lagos Must Prosper

Granta

The Assistant Economy

Dissent

Into the Black

Spin

The Master Writer of the City

New York Review of Books

The Sinking Isle

The Guardian

Life is what happens when you are busy making other plans.
John Lennon

UNQUOTABLE QUOTES

Lock the key.

Saatvik Chaudhari, holding the key to success.

I just saw him passing away in the corridor.

Varad Singh Mann, oh dear! We are sorry.

Why are you so ignoring everyone.

Ritzy Rajaswi, this is the exact reason why.

Do not think I am incapable!

Shashwat Arya, you have proved it.

Listen it carefully.

Aradhya Singhal, read this first.

Please awake me.

Nikhil Bansal, the enlightened one.

Wear a shins.

Dhruv Johri, preferring safety over English.

Figure out it.

Naman Agarwal, we are still trying to.

Give it me!

Shiven Dewan, we will.

This Week in History

753 BC: Rome was founded.

1014: King Brian of Ireland was brutally murdered by the Vikings.

1564: William Shakespeare was born in Stratford,

1689: The Siege of Londonderry began.

1824: Lord Byron died in Greece.

1861: General Lee resigned from the US army.

1915: Germans introduced poison gas, which was later used against the Jews in concentration camps.

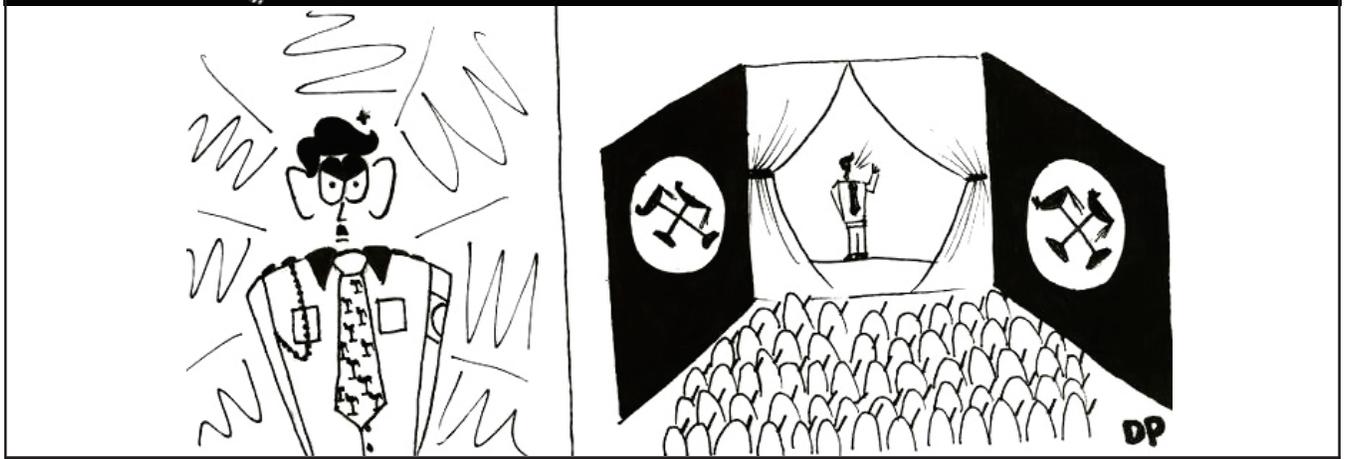
AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 WORDS

Mohamed Mursi, Egypt's first freely elected president, was sentenced to 20 years of prison without parole on charges arising from the killing of protestors. President Barack Obama has stated that the US government has warned Iran not to send weapons to Yemen that could be used to threaten shipping traffic in the region. Back home in India, 32 people were killed and over 80 seriously injured by a storm that ravaged Bihar on Tuesday, destroying thousands of crops and huts.

Dosco Doodle

Heil Führer

Dhruv Pais



(Contd. from page 1)

how they live. It might prevent them from getting married at all, divided as they will be from the 'fertile' section of society. The identity of these people will be reduced to that unfortunate occurrence, and hence deprive them of being anything more than that, of leading a normal human social life. This will impact worst on the lower economic strata of society, though the effect on the upper class cannot be casually discounted. Such divisions caused by the virus would likely lead to violence in certain countries which are economically backward and thus unable to deal well with the situation. Although some would argue that violence might contribute to a higher death rate, this would defeat the entire point of having a humane solution to overpopulation.

Another shortcoming of this solution, which was the only one acknowledged by Brown in his book, is that the virus can be potentially weaponized. Since the virus is a vector, it spreads incredibly fast and according to the book, affects people randomly. However, if a situation were to develop (and this is highly likely) where somebody weaponized the virus and programmed it to target certain people, or certain ethnic groups, there would be an entirely new form of biological warfare. It would be invisible and untraceable, since such weaponization can easily be attributed to the development of virulent strains, which is also another frightening possibility. In essence, such a situation would develop biological warfare on an unprecedented scale, and possibly lead the world to another World War. Hardly humane, is it?

To conclude, it might seem like our arguments and observations are hypothetical and inconclusive, but believing that the solution Brown endorses can or will exist is a hypothesis in itself. The math itself, on the other hand, is conclusive. Scientists posit that the world's population will reach 9 billion by 2050. According to our calculations above, this mark will only shift forward by a few years. This only reflects the enormity of the situation at hand. Despite the terrifying solution that Brown presents, we will still be left with a big problem if we consider that the nine billion mark will only be delayed by a few years added to the social problems that might emerge. Instead of helping, the existence of such a virus would make the world's situation worse both in the short run and long run. It's time we understood that curbing population growth on a global scale is not just hard but increasingly impossible. A humane solution like Brown's seems all well on paper, but it does not hold well in the real world.

MCGS MUN '15: The Third Win

Chaitanya Kediya and **Madhav Singhal** report on the recently concluded MCGS MUN '15

A delegation comprising fifteen students, one master and a wobbling trophy set forth for Ajmer on the 13th of April for the coveted Mayo College Girls School Model United Nations, 2015. The pressure was palpable, having won the Best Delegation trophy for the past two years. As we left the gates of Chandbagh a sense of anticipation and anxiety overwhelmed us (a major part of this anxiety consisted of the worry of getting the trophy repaired!). The barren Aravalis and a dusty ground greeted us as we exited from the railway station after an exhausting journey of sixteen hours. As soon as we reached our hotel, all hell broke loose. DoscOs were seen running around with loosened ties and dangling belts. Furious debate and intense discussions were in full swing over which tie complemented which shirt, and resolutions over various dress-combinations were taken into consideration until they were unanimously passed. With shoes polished and hair combed, DoscOs arrived in front of the gates of Mayo College and displayed great grandeur as they stepped out of their auto-rickshaws. In a sea of aspirants, we truly stood out.

Committee sessions were convened and our delegates got down to their actual work- lobbying. Committees such as the Disarmament and Security Committee, the Joint Crisis Cabinets (Syria, Iraq and the USA) and the Historical Security Council (1998) addressed global issues ranging from the annexation of Crimea to the increasing threat of the ISIS. Just as soon as we thought our tiring day was finally going to end, an unexpected crisis came out of nowhere: we were supposed to put up a dance performance! As part of the cultural event 'Global Kaleidoscope', all delegations were expected to represent their schools. Our experienced dancers took the lead and in less than half an hour we came up with a two-minute routine. And then, on 'Uptown Funk', a group of skilled dancers, backed by a few who suffered from dyspraxia set the stage on fire. The squeals of the cheering ladies said it all. "Humble and victorious" in the hearts of people, we returned to our hotel, only to research further and prepare for the next day. The second day passed quickly as everyone was engrossed in their respective agendas and busy hunting for a date to go to the Delegate Dance with. This is an event without which no MUN is complete, and it was truly enjoyed by one and all.

The third and the final day came and the event that we were all dreading dawned: the Closing Ceremony. Whatever could be done, had been done. We all sat together with fingers crossed and hands on other's shoulders. Fortunately, the results were in our favour. With two Best Delegates, four Outstanding Delegates and everybody else receiving a Verbal Commendation, we were all ecstatic. In the end, as we walked onto the stage to receive the Best Delegation trophy (which, thankfully, had been repaired), we felt proud.

We also went on a short post-conference tour around Ajmer for the next two days. DoscOs were seen worshipping on the banks of the river chanting incoherent mantras. After all we were all grateful not only for our awards but also certain endeavours that proved to be successful!

We returned home with renewed expectations and desire to repeat the feat(s) stronger than ever.

The Ride To The Top

The Doon School Weekly *recently interviewed Mr Shiv Inder Singh, the CEO of Firefox Bikes.*

The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Could you please tell us a bit about yourself?

Mr Shiv Inder Singh (SIS): I passed out of School in 1965 with many memories of my formative years. A particular one would be our adventurous private outings, when we would traverse the Yamuna in rustic wood rafts and cycle back after. Not long after I left School, I joined the IIT and graduated with a Civil Engineering degree. Unfortunately, there were very few jobs available for Civil Engineers in India back then. This prompted me to pursue an International Marketing degree at the Indian Institute of Foreign Trade in Delhi. On completion, I started work at a firm contracted for the export of clothing and textiles of the Delhi Clothing Mills Group. In 1980 I resigned and left India for Hong Kong to work for the Kishanchand Chellaram Group. I spent the next thirteen years working for the firm at various divisions across South-Eastern Asia. In 1993, I came back to India in order to expose my children to Indian culture and tradition, preventing them from developing an attitude foreign to their origins. My return also led to a joint venture between me and a Danish firm, where we would export indigenous lampshades.

Eleven years later, I sold back my stake in the firm to start my own bicycle manufacturing company- Firefox. Ever since then, I have served as its chief executive, working to expand the business across India and abroad.

DSW: As an entrepreneur, what problems did you face while establishing yourself in the automobile sector?

SIS: Let me clarify. *Firefox Bikes* is a transport and mobility sector firm, unlike the automobile sector which is marked by motorized vehicles. The latter was to serve as the foremost challenge in our firm's establishment. Around ten years ago, the entire automobile sector underwent a massive change with the entrance of new retailers (especially foreign ones) into the country. Because of this, the demand for quality bicycles had declined tremendously. No adult wanted to cycle because of the new supply of motorized vehicles. Even children, the traditional target age-group, were switching from cycling to the quicker and faster competitor. We felt that this sector required a fresh influx of quality products in order to rejuvenate cycling in the Indian populace. However, selling the product was not easy, for we had to market ourselves in a way to compete with the powerful automobile sector, which had the upper-hand in all conventional aspects of a cycle; a slower, strenuous and less convenient yet cheaper alternative. Even marketing firms we hired for assessment gave discouraging reviews on our revenue targets.

Those were our preliminary challenges, which we overcame mainly through our gut. Entrepreneurship isn't so without risk-taking. Our remedy was to invest in better stores and target consumers in areas where cycling was feasible, a risk on which we rode the path of success.

DSW: Being an IIT alumnus, what is your view on the government's creation of new IITs?

SIS: You can quote me on this – the government is crazy. It's similar to saying “I want to create a hundred Harvards, Stanfords and Oxfords all over the world.” It doesn't work that way. It so happened that five proper institutes were miraculously created because of one man's vision: Jawaharlal Nehru's. Presently, you cannot create new, inferior quality IITs just to spread the brand name across India and the world. Recently I heard of a student receiving an Ivy League offer after his acceptance into an IIT was confirmed. This stellar reputation is a result of producing quality alumni who are leading in their respective fields. Now they're devaluing the brand by blatantly creating more.

Bricks and mortar do not make an institution entirely; it is mainly excellent people who do so. Ergo, these facilities are lacking good faculty; which is, to an extent, present in other IITs as well. When I was in IIT Delhi, 50% of the professors were very poor and encouraged rote learning. The few overseas professors who taught there were the only ones who made learning seem worthwhile. Therefore, if we are to create new IITs, we must find suitable professors to staff them with, for as Rachel Zoe rightly said: “It is better to have fewer things of quality than too much expendable junk.”

DSW: Finally, do you have any advice for the young Doscocs?

SIS: We always put a lot of stress on education; marks specifically. Like I mentioned in my talk, education can be a double-edged sword. All those additional qualifications at college and skills you learn in school can equip you for a great managerial career. The educated though, are at times too cautious of their actions; assessing every nook and cranny of the job for potential failure based on history, which is instinctive with the western-styled education you have. Steve Jobs once said “Most cannot connect the dots in the future; they always connect the dots in the past.” My ultimate advice would be: 'Don't get caught up in studies and education alone.' Treat it as a tool but don't become obsessed with excellence.

Most importantly, devote that time to other holistic and benevolent activities, for the best managers are those who are lateral thinkers. Later on in life, you will be faced with problems in both the former and latter. Have you ever thought about why India makes great software engineers? You're sitting in a fancy car with the air conditioning on and a beggar woman approaches the window, asking for money. Before giving her a couple of rupees you must laterally analyze that woman and her problems, and make the instantaneous switch afterward. You're moving horizontally in different spheres. One is destitute poverty, and the other is technical knowledge and brilliance. That's a classic example of a charitable yet elite person. While you're in school, make that a pattern in your lives: it will surely bear a positive fruit in the future.

Swar Yatra to Varanasi

Advait Ganapathi reports on the music tour to the Sankat Mochan Festival held at Varanasi this month

From the snows of Tungnath, where we spent our midterms, to the teeming streets and bylanes of the historic city of Varanasi, was a long way to travel— both literally and figuratively. But journey's end more than compensated for our tiredness— eleven aspiring musicians, escorted by music masters PCH and PRY, were bound for the famous music festival held annually at the Sankat Mochan temple in Varanasi. It is an unusual, indeed unique setting for concerts, and is attended by devotees of this most divine of the arts in large numbers. When we took our places around the low stage (after much pushing and jostling) we realized that the festival was a truly interactive one, with a most knowledgeable and appreciative audience . The welcome accorded each eminent artiste was with a rousing 'Har, Har, Mahadev' in tribute to the spiritual aspect of music, embodied in the performances of these great maestros of their particular craft.

Another unique aspect— an entirely new experience for us— is that concerts begin late in the evening and culminate at dawn. For four days we became nocturnal creatures, sleeping by day and emerging at sunset! The very first day saw us enthralled by the melodious rendition of Raga *Durga* by flute legend Pt. Hariprasad Chaurasia, who played traditions *bandishes* (compositions) of the *Maibar gharana* (stylistic school). The concert that followed immediately after that was by the 'ghazal king' Ustad Ghulam Ali Khan— an event that was keenly awaited by the audience. The Ustad had us all in raptures by rendering his best-loved ghazals like 'Hum tere shahar mein...' and 'Chupke Chupke, raat din...'. But, giving us a glimpse of his versatility , he also sang a light classical *thumri* in the dialect of the area: Avadhi, based on Raga *Pilu*. He won all hearts with his humility and his music.

We then witnessed an electrifying performance by the young sarod players, Amaan Ali Khan and Ayaan Ali Khan, with a virtuoso , beautifully coordinated rendition of Raga *Malkauns* in *Tal Dhamar*, followed by the famous nationalist song of Rabindranath Tagore 'Ekla Cholo Re'. They then announced that the " real concert will begin now", and to thunderous applause, the great master, their father, Ustad Amjad Ali Khan took the stage. His improvisations on the two *bhajans* 'Vaishnav Jana' (which is Song no 12 for Doscoc) and 'Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram', showed us how much creativity and deep understanding of music can transform a simple melody into high art.

On the second day, our evening began with a boat ride from Kedar Ghat to the famous Dasashvamedh Ghat to attend the spectacular evening 'aarti', after being treated by PRY (whose home is in Varanasi and who knows the city inside-out) to fresh, piping-hot (yes, hot) rasagullas! Seasoned concert-goers by now, we joined the throng heading for the concert, which began with Pandit Bhavani Shankar on the pakhawaj along with Ustad Fazal Qureshi on the tabla playing a composition based on the sixteen-beat *teental*. This was followed by a performance of Pandit Vishva Mohan Bhatt on the instrument 'created' by him: the Mohan Veena, which is like a slide guitar with sympathetic strings. His Grammy-award –winning composition, which he played for us was one of the highlights of a memorable evening. Pandit Krishna Mohan Bhatt played a duet with him on the sitar, with a composition based on Raga *Madhuvanti*. They were accompanied by the renowned tabla player Pandit Anindo Chatterjee. Shortly before dawn, the stage was graced with the presence of one of the living legends of music-- Pandit Jasraj. The astounding power and resonance of his voice, given his frail stature and great age, was nothing short of astounding. The depth with which he explored the Raga *Bilaskhani Todi*, was greeted by the audience with repeated 'Har Har Mahadev's'.

The performances of the third day began with Dr. Yella Venkateswara Rao on the Carnatic percussion instrument, the mridangam, performing a composition based on the *adbitaal* similar to *teental* and also a rare *taal*, which had 110 beats. He was accompanied by the violin and a vocalist and is known for holding the world record for playing the mridangam continuously for 36 hours. Joking with us all, telling us anecdotes and then, performing his wizardry on the mridangam, made for a wonderfully inspiring and entertaining experience for us. It certainly woke up those of us who were beginning to feel the lack of sleep!

There was also a performance on the tabla by three generations the renowned Khan family consisting of Ustad Ashmati Ali Khan, Ustad Akaram Khan and the ten-year old Zargam Akaram Khan, playing a composition based on *teen taal*.

The performances on the last day started with Pandit Satish Vyas playing an *Alap* and a fast composition based on Raga *Bageshree* on the santoor. As someone who is learning this beautiful instrument, I found this performance a riveting one, especially as I had *my* guru, PRY, sitting next to me to point out the nuances of technique and style. Another valuable musical lesson was provided through the performance of the great Kolkata-based singer, Pt Ajay Chakraborty, whose rendition of Raga *Kafi*, showed perfect unfolding of the different elements of the raga, from *alap* to *drut* (fast) *kbayal*. Structure, idiom, style and creativity met in this one performance!

The last and most memorable performance of our trip was by Pandit Niladri Kumar on the *sitar*. He played a composition on Raga *Kaushikabanda* and was accompanied by famous tabla player Pandit Vijay Ghate.

During the concert we were exposed to various *gharanas* of Indian music. We gained more knowledge on Indian classical music during this trip and our interest in this field also increased. Despite our late daytime rising, we also got to have animated discussions with PCH and PRY about music over chaat, badam milk and lassi, and to see places like the Vishwanath temple and appreciate the vibrant culture of a city where music reigns— from the ringing of the temple bells, to chants of devotion, to inspired musical performances. An enduring message came from all the maestros who took the stage when they spoke of the great unifying power of music in a world that in being increasingly divide by war and strife.

The Week Gone By

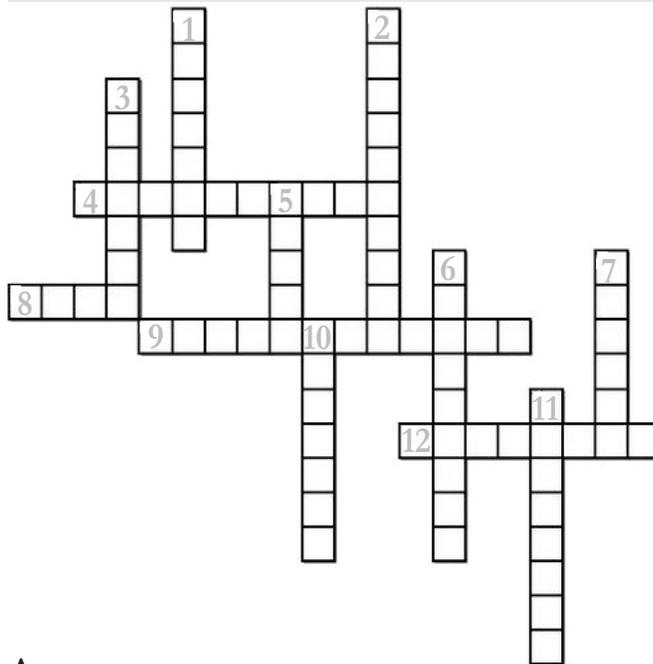
Rishabh Agarwal

The first day of this week saw the official enactment of the so called 'Martial Law' and now the students seemed to be lined up for breakfast even before the first slice of bread is toasted. This could also have something to do with the students wanting to devour every last flake of cereal, a result of the appetite created by the strenuous P.T. that begins before the crack of dawn.

An unusual number of boys can be seen running around in School with anxious expressions on their faces and a constant look on their watches, from practice to practice. From the P.T. that denies the students, especially the seniors, the necessary amount of sleep to the play practices that can be identified by dialogues being projected across houses amidst the howling of the jackals. Hockey that goes on in the afternoons and the dance and music practices that are squeezed in somewhere in between, all keep the students extremely occupied. Speaking of hockey, the grass on the fields has been perfectly kept and the goal posts have been set up in order to facilitate house practices. The school team has started with their set of matches and tournaments with the Council's Hockey Tournament and we shall hopefully see a very successful season this year.

On the cultural front, the School hosted a grand Literary Festival this week and invited a number of eminent literary professionals including Ananya Vajpeyi, Amish Tripathi and Suhasini Haidar. It was a captivating, enlightening and intellectually exciting event and the audience had a riveting time at the various venues that the event was conducted in. There program included a range of activities such as talks, panel discussions and play performances. The School conducted a Trinity Music Examination this week for those of the rock and pop persuasion. The students are also preparing sincerely for the upcoming events of the Inter-House Music Competition, and we should hope to have enjoyable performances. The school debating team has also been working silently and has given smashing performances at other schools in the town (with situations where the opponents surrendered to their intellect and reasoning). This week also saw a number of the Ivy League institutions and other major universities visiting school and interacting in informative sessions with students from within school and outside. Mostly these interactions were a realization on our part as to why these colleges were labeled 'Dream Colleges' so aptly by our counselors. The School on the whole has an air of exhaustion, and that should definitely subside within the coming week, with the numerous activities coming to a seasonal halt.

Crossword



Across

- 4. The first planned city in post-independent India.
- 8. This British civil servant inspired the formation of the Indian National Congress.
- 9. He painted the frescos of the Sistine Chapel.
- 12. The border line between India and China.

Down

- 1. The headquarters of Microsoft is located in this city.
- 2. The Baikonur Cosmodrome, Russia's main space launch facility, is located in this country.
- 3. This author claimed Joseph Anton as his nickname.
- 5. He discovered Neptune.
- 6. The first ODI match in India was played in this city.
- 7. The Greek God of Music.
- 10. This country claims the largest number of registered ships.
- 11. He was the shortest serving American President.

Note: All names in this crossword refer to the person's surname

| | |
|---|---------------|
| Answers to This Week's Crossword | |
| Across | Down |
| 4. Chandigarh | 1. Redmond |
| 8. Hume | 10. Liberia |
| 9. Michelangelo | 11. Harrison |
| 12. MacMahon | 2. Kazakhstan |
| | 3. Rushdie |
| | 5. Galle |
| | 6. Ahmedabad |
| | 7. Apollo |

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