

ESTABLISHED IN 1936

# The Doon School WEEKLY

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## THROUGH THE SANDS

### Prabhsharan Singh and Atrey Bhargava

Seventeen boys and three masters reached Bikaner on the 13th of December, determined to face all the hardships that the unforgiving Thar Desert could throw at them. Upon arrival everyone checked into the famous Raj Vilas Palace, and soon after lunch we went to see the old and reputed Bikaneri Fort. The sheer size of it took us by surprise. We saw the old and rugged rooms in the palace as well as the newly built museum downstairs.

The scenic beauty along with the doves and pigeons flying over our heads added to the beauty and royalty of the place. At night we went and had good Rajasthani food-*Dal Batti Choorma*. With curiosity building up it seemed almost impossible to sleep, but our wearied bodies soon got the better of us.

Next day we started our trek at around 11 a.m., teeming with enthusiasm and led by our mentors and adventure aficionados, Dr Shukla and Mr Pankaj Joshi. We were travelling with a caravan of twelve camel carts carrying our luggage and provisions. After twelve kilometers or so we stopped at Merasar for lunch. That day (and practically on every other day) we had interactive sessions after lunch, conducted by our masters, on how to interact with people and thus strengthen our friendships. Trekking after lunch, with the sun shining bright right over our heads was a daunting prospect and therefore we tried to cover most of the distance before noon. On an average we trekked twenty-five kilometers every day in about six hours. The major problem we seemed to face was not that of water scarcity, which is the first thing that comes to mind when one thinks of people travelling across a desert but the varying temperatures and the short days and long nights which gave us a limited time to trek. We stopped around sunset everyday, which was at about five in the evening.

We then pitched our tents all by ourselves, and had ample pleasure in just sipping our beaten coffee after a long strenuous day. Everyday around seven in the evening we lit a small bonfire and eased our fatigued



bodies, hoping that the Sanchu Border (our final destination) was not very far. At eight we had a bowl of soup along with a small crispy *papad*, which was followed by dinner. After dinner Dr Shukla gave us a briefing about the next day and everyone listened attentively, hoping to see a different terrain than the same sandy one. In those seven days we observed a variety of flora and fauna, from the common camels to the rare *chinkaras* and *neelgaiys*, and also the various types of desert plants such as cactus, tumba and many other shrubs. The next day we started our trek at about nine in the morning, our fatigued bodies moving languidly, and luck being on our side, we were able to trek on the road (since walking on the road was much easier than on the sand). We walked through the desert later that day and the residents of the local village eyed us suspiciously, as if we were invaders trying to take over their land! What amazed us was how these people could live in the middle of the desert, without any electricity and scarcely any water, and still be happy. This was indeed an important lesson to learn and one to take forward in life.

Soon enough we had our lunch and continued with another three hours of rough walk through the hot but beautiful desert. Contrary to our expectations we caught phone signals almost everywhere in the desert and saw patches of vegetation interspersed between undulating lines of the sand dunes. On the third day we started our trek on the sand, but just after a few kilometers we saw the Indira Gandhi canal which seemed to emerge out of nowhere. Due to the availability of water, there was a lot of greenery in the area around the canal which made it seem more like a forest than a desert. At night we stayed at a somewhat dilapidated guesthouse, but it seemed

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## Regulars

### SPORTING PROWESS

The School Basketball team played a friendly match against **Raja Ram Mohan Roy School** on Saturday, February 1, 2014. The School team **won** the match. Congratulations!

The School Cricket Team played a match against the **ITM Academy** on February 2, 2014. The School **won** by 56 runs. Ashwin Agarwal scored 65 runs, Raghav Bansal took 3 wickets, Rishav Raj Das and Siddharth Sarin took 2 wickets each. Well Done!

The School Junior Cricket team played a match against **Kasiga School** on February 2, 2014. The School **won** by 16 runs. Congratulations!

The following boys represented the **IPSC** at the **59th National School Games** in Table Tennis. Raghav Kothiwal and Shivaan Tandon comprised the **Under-19** category. Ishan Jhavar performed in the **Under-17** category. Well Done!

The following boys participated and qualified for the **57th National Shooting Championship**: Samarjit Singh, Arjun Singh Mann, Naadir Singh, Kismat Chopra and Rishabh Badhwar. Congratulations!

Anish Bhide and Tanay Gopal Agarwal represented the IPSC team in the **SGFI National Swimming Championship** held in Pune. Well Done!

### APPOINTMENTS

The following are the appointments of the **Music Society** for the year 2014:

**School Music Captain:** Yuvraj Nathani

**School Orchestra Leader:** Mrigank Khemka

**School Percussion Leader:** Aditya Gupta

**School Popular Band Leader:** Aditya Bhattacharya

**School Dance Captain:** Abhinav Kejriwal

**Secretary of the Music Society:** Vrindam Nagpal

**Boy-in-Charge of Trinity Music Examinations:**

Madhav Goel

Congratulations!

Ashim Bansal has been appointed the **Boy-in-Charge of the Boy's Bank and Tuck Shop**. Well Done!

The following are the appointments on the **Editorial Board** of the **Infinty**:

**Editor-in-Chief:** Sabhya Katia

**Chief-of-Production:** Pranjalya Shukla

We wish them a fruitful tenure!

### UNQUOTABLE QUOTES

*We should help practice the house in cricket.*

**Dhruv Kharabanda**, how about grammar practice.

*I'll wake up you.*

**Aryaman Agarwal**, an Avicii fan.

*It's paining too hard!*

**Pratyaksh Parmar**, English is too hard as well.

*Glass the pass to me.*

**Anvay Grover**, a little too thirsty.

*The following boys please meet outside the lunch.*

**Aditya Bhattacharya**, getting used to the podium.

*Both of two of you.*

**Madhav Singhal**, has too many juniors.

*I will fielded well today,*

**Sarvagya Dhiman**, indeed you did!

*Eight times doing I the course!*

**Yasharth Goyal**, the "boards effect".

*I am sorry for what I have did.*

**Harshit Bansal**, are you sorry about this too?

*I have not already fielded today.*

**Madhav Mall**, expressing disappointment

*The fan is too colding for me.*

**Ashish Verma**, how about the heater?

*Why you making noise, so much?*

**Ajitesh Gupta**, controlling noise pollution.

### AROUND THE WORLD IN 80 WORDS

Satya Nadella, of Indian origin, has been appointed as the new Microsoft CEO. A gunman killed a watchman and took 20 children hostage in Moscow. Eight bodies were recovered after a fire in a gold mine in South Africa. Philip Seymour Hoffman, an American actor was found dead in his apartment in Manhattan of drug overdose. The Pakistani government is holding talks with the militant group, Tehreek-E-Taliban. North Korea is threatening to cancel family reunions with South Korea for its people.

### HIGH INTELLECT

Salman Mallik scored the highest marks in Science in the national level **ASSET Test**.

Congratulations!

The Doon School won the **Creative School Award** in the **National Creativity Olympiad 2013**.

Well done!

There was a record number of 47 students who gave the **Above Level Asset Test** in November 2013. 18 boys from School have been invited for the **Duke TIP's Residential Summer Studies Program** in May 2014.

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more like a luxury to us. That evening we played cricket with a small branch and a Cosco ball. By the fourth day many of us started having body aches and rashes from the strenuous trek in the sun, but we didn't give up and carried on with the same determination we had when we started our journey. That day, while walking by the canal we saw a baby goat stuck on the other side of the canal, bleating helplessly and trying to climb over the concrete borders of the canal. Saving the goat was not only a Herculean task but also required the 'milk of human kindness', especially as Tushar and a master from Pinegrove, Mr. Sachin Devgun had to walk an extra two kilometers to accomplish this highly creditable task. Like I have mentioned before, the temperatures varied dramatically so that in the beginning few days of the trek we were almost bare bodied, but towards the end we were layered up in woollens even during the day while a dense fog enveloped us and the poor visibility slackened our pace. When we finally reached the Sanchu border, smiles spread across our faces and we had a strong bittersweet feeling. We were happy because we had ultimately accomplished our goal but to reach the end of such an enriching journey also made us sad. We were told to write our afterthoughts and answer certain questions on a notepad. After reaching the Sanchu border we traveled by cars for about an hour to get to the Maruti border. At the Indian post there, which was our final destination, we could see the border separating India and Pakistan. It was a patriotic sight to see the Indian flag waving high in all its glory. We soon left the premises and were on our way back to Bikaner.

Though the main purpose of this trek was to test our endurance and mental tenacity, it also changed us all in different ways and left a lasting impact on us. It also gave us a hint of how the sky was the limit as far as human capability is concerned and stretched the boundaries of what can be made possible in our lives.

| Interview |

## TRADING THOUGHTS

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The Doon School Weekly interviewed Mr Shishir Priyadarshi (*Ex. 394-H, 73'*), an LAS officer, who is currently the Director of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Geneva.

**The Doon School Weekly (DSW): Could you tell us a little bit about yourself and your memories of School?**

**Shishir Priyadarshi (SHP):** I was in School from 1968 to 1973; I did a bit of everything in School – I enjoyed cricket, swimming, hurdles, debates, was a Scholars blazer holder; and yes, was a great movie buff! In our time we were allowed out once a month, and I do recall trying to squeeze in a movie at every such outing. I have some very pleasant memories of School, and somehow these have not faded with time. Each time I have gone back, I have found that even though there have been many changes, which I am sure make the School even better, the 'sound' and 'smell' of School has not changed. After passing out of School I went to St. Stephens, and later went on to join the Indian Administrative Service in 1980. I was posted in many places, including a really memorable stint as the District Magistrate of Dehradun. This was a period when Garhwal witnessed one of the worst earthquakes ever. In fact I remember that the President of India was in Dehradun that day for School's Founder's day, and I had to rush to Circuit House in the middle of the night to check whether he was alright! Later, I was posted to Geneva to represent India at the World Trade Organization (WTO), an Organization I subsequently joined. I have now been working in the WTO for more than twelve years and currently I am one of the Directors of the Organization.

Incidentally, I have two Masters Degrees - one in Nuclear Physics, from Delhi University, and the other in Developmental Economics, from the UK. I am still involved with academics; I teach in a number of Universities and Business Schools all over the world. My courses are on international economics, international organisations, on WTO and its implications for business, and on the art of negotiations. I have been living in Switzerland for the last 16 years. No doubt it is a great place to live in, (it has just been rated as the third happiest country to be in) but to be honest, I do miss India, which is perhaps the reason why I travel to Delhi as often as I can.

**DSW: For our uninformed readers out there, what exactly is the WTO?**

**SHP:** From the late 1940s to the end of 1994, international trade was monitored and structured by the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, more commonly known as GATT. However, towards the end of the 20th century its members felt that global trade needed to be governed by an Organization rather than a Treaty. It needed to be more universal in its membership and in its coverage of trade related issues. It was in this context that the WTO came into being in 1995. Today its main goal is to regulate trade between countries, to facilitate negotiations of global trade rules which seek to bring down the barriers to trade, in particular duties and tariffs, and settle trade disputes between countries - and believe me there are many of these. In some ways, therefore, it has two main objectives – one, to help liberalize trade through different rounds of trade negotiations, and two, to

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act like a trade “umpire” between 159 countries, which are members of the WTO. Considering that these member nations represent upwards of 95% of the world's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the WTO plays a defining role in today's day and age.

**DSW: How are disagreements settled in the WTO's trade 'rounds'?**

**SHP:** As I mentioned, “Dispute Settlement” is one of the primary foci of the work of the Organization. More often than not, these disputes are between two nations, and revolve around a broken promise or negotiations that aren't agreed upon by both parties. In such cases countries present their case to a quasi-judicial panel of three global trade experts. Disputes could be about any facets of trade- trade in goods, trade in services, remedial measures such as anti-dumping or countervailing duties etc. This panel then adjudicates on the dispute and its ruling is binding on the countries. This is a precondition to joining the WTO, which is that countries have to accept, and comply with, all decisions of dispute panels. And the system is very fair – something which is borne out by the fact that the two biggest trading blocs, the US and the EC, have lost more cases than anyone else.

**DSW: So, in terms of the work of the Organisation, where do you come into the picture?**

**SHP:** I am over all in charge of the Development Division of the WTO. Considering the fact that I come from the biggest developing democracy, I guess I'm able to assess issues from an appropriate development perspective, per se. My years in the Indian government have also played an important role in shaping my views and writings, especially during the trade conferences. I was extremely involved in the recent, rather contentious, Ministerial Meeting held in Bali on the Doha Round of negotiations. The Development Division's mandate is to facilitate talks over appropriate provisions and opportunities that are provided to developing nations. The last decade has seen the global attention shift, with economic powerhouses such as the BRICS nations surging ahead. Put very simply, a large portion of my job is to maintain a fair playing field, by ensuring that developing countries are better prepared for both the challenges and the opportunities that are thrown up by the multilateral trading system.

**DSW: The WTO is very often criticised as being authoritarian. Is that true? Are countries better off being a member of the WTO?**

**SHP:** I get this question very often, but I'm genuinely surprised that the Weekly is putting this to me too; just shows how well informed you are! Let me answer the first question by telling you a fact that is not widely known. All decisions in the WTO, whether big or small, have to be necessarily taken by consensus; that is all members have to agree. Sounds intriguing and puzzling – but yes, it is true. Even if one country, irrespective of its share of world trade, doesn't agree, and all the other 158 countries agree, the proposed decision cannot be adopted. So in effect, each country has a veto power on all issues. So to call it authoritarian is factually incorrect. As far as the advantages of being a member is concerned, perhaps the biggest benefit countries get once they join the WTO, is that they get access to all other WTO members' market, at the most favourable nation terms of trade. Countries cannot apply different duties on the same product being imported from different countries. For instance the US cannot levy a higher duty on import of cigars from Cuba, than what it does on the import of cigars from Spain or Mexico!

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## World Wetlands Day

To celebrate the occasion of World Wetlands Day a group of twelve boys went on a bird watching excursion to Asan Barrage accompanied by two prominent ornithologists and two masters. The team came across some rare aquatic birds such as the Ruddy Shelduck as well as the elusive Pallas Tern. Under the guidance of the group leaders, we also observed the territorial behavior of Little Egrets and the feeding behavior of the Red Crested Pochard. Watching a school of birds swimming nonchalantly just a few meters away was also a highlight for the boys. The team was also taught about the research techniques used by ornithologists and were given a briefing on the reason behind 'ringing' birds. The boys learnt a lot from Dr Bannerjee and Mr Panwar from ARCH, an NGO propagating Action and Research for Conservation in the Himalayas.



*Little Egrets indulging in a territorial fight*

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