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The Doon School
WEEKLY

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Midterms

Techno Trippi ng

Sumit Dargan reports on a trip to Mayo College Boys' School and the IT facilities there

The trip to Mayo College Boys' School at Ajmer was an event I had looked forward to since the time the Headmaster had returned from his goodwill mission to the place. We left Dehradun early morning with a slight drizzle, and after running past humid Delhi to dust-storm-ridden Jaipur, we reached Ajmer in the midst of a slight drizzle. It was a long journey by road, passing through a multitude of tollways with varying charges ranging from Rs. 55 for a 40 km stretch to Rs. 5 for a 30 km stretch with equally varying quality quotients.

Having been responsible for IT facilities in school for the past seven months and the eager demands of the insatiable DoscOs; I was more than keen to find out how a school older than ours in this league dealt with these challenges.

The Oman Guest House was teeming with a populace of debaters (who were excitedly engaged in discussions over the topics which had just been given to them), and we, too, were initially assumed to be participants. The dismay and disappointment was apparent when we clarified that neither were we here for the debate, nor for the quiz!

We were met by Mr. Sriram, who has been with Mayo for 18 years and is the Head of their IT Department. He graciously took us to Stow Club (their staff room) where dinner was laid for us along with the debating teams'. The dinner was warm and very fresh (it had been made a second time, we were told) as the first preparation had got wet in the unexpected evening shower! Blame it on DoscOs who brought the rain...

Shoumit and Naman were visibly impressed by the AC guest rooms and the 'yellow' light put Mukho to sleep instantly after the growls in his tummy were silenced.

The next morning I began my day early with an unguided tour of the campus. Five times larger than Doon (340 acres) or more, I found the place calm, serene and very inviting. The little nip in the air definitely helped. I wandered past three separate dining halls, several boarding houses (including J & K houses!) and numerous sports facilities (among them horse riding and a shooting range). I returned, not yet familiar with the academic facilities. A quick shower, two wakeup calls to the boys and a working breakfast later, led us in the direction of the IT department. Housed within the Academic Block (where all classes take place) this facility comprises their labs for teaching and the server room.

We spent a good deal of time looking at the infrastructure and mainly the software solutions in use with the school for academic, administration and financial areas. With the sharp and precise answers from Mr. Sriram and support from Kalingasoft personnel on their ERP package, we were all set to attend the JTM Gibson Memorial Debates. As we reached the pavilion, confirmation that S & Sc forms of Mayo Girls' College were there too, brought an extra bounce to the strides of Mukho and Naman!

The MCGS vs. MCBS debate was perhaps the most contested for all the right reasons, and inputs from guests later added value to what the youngsters had put out for and against the topic, '*The threat of Islamic terrorism has curbed the freedom of expression*'. The debate was eventually won by MCGS, who made it to the finals.

After lunch we managed to skip out to Mayo College with Mr. Bedotiya, who kindly showed us his school campus and IT facilities, despite it being a holiday. Their push to bring Linux and Open Office in their lab and encourage young minds to respect free/open source software rather than pirated Windows etc. was most appreciated. Even more creditable is the effort to produce books for the students to use (since help books on these are largely unavailable) – a set of these were officially launched by KPB during his visit last month!

On the way back, Mr. Bedotiya gave us a whirlwind, motorised tour of MCGS, and surely my friends were not complaining! In the afternoon, the boys preferred spending time with friends from the various debating teams who were also put up at Oman Guest House while I made a quick visit to the dargah at Ajmer Sharif... for once, a place where, despite the hustle and bustle, peace prevails! The evening was reserved for the 12th Gibson Quiz and the host school's quiz-master definitely stole the show with his exuberance and style! A feature unique to this quiz was the Science round wherein live experiments were performed on stage, and questions related to inferences put to the teams. While MCBS remained steady and ahead right through to win it; they passed on the trophy to Scindia, who emerged a distant second only in the last rapid-fire round. (Incidentally, Scindia also won the Gibson Debates).

Dinner for all teams, escorts and us was at Stow Club. Conversations and discussions went on till around 4 am when we decided to call it a day as we were to meet Mr. Sharma, the Mayo Headmaster, at nine in the morning and then head for Doon.

REGULARS

RANG DE SOCCER

The following boys have been awarded soccer colours this year:

Full Colours: Arjun Anjaria, Zain Rehman, Rohanjit Chaudhury, Abhimanyu Raj Singh

Half Colours: Akash Maheshwari, Adil Boparai and Akaash Pathaare. Congratulations!

DEFYING GRAVITY

Colours in gymnastics have been awarded to the following:

Full Colours: Vijai Atal, Ajai Atal.

Half Colours: Ambar Sidhwani, Naman Goel (reawarded). Well done!

PLAY BALL!

Rishabh Bir Singh, Ayyappa Vemulkar, Pranay Kapoor, Samridh Agarwal, Dhruv Singh and Suryavir Madhav represented Dehradun in the **5th Uttarakhand State Basketball Tournament** held at Haridwar from October 1-3, 2006. The team emerged winners after beating Mussoorie by a score of 60-31.

Keep shooting!

JERSEY HONOURS

The following boys have been awarded the **PT Jersey**:

Rohanjit Chaudhry

Zain Rehman

Himanshu Mishra

Chirag Nangia

Shoaib Ahmed

Akash Maheshwari

Adil Boparai

Akaash Pathare

Kudos!

Unquotable Quotes

Martina Higgins is a great tennis player.

Indresh Pathak serves a good one.

How was your homeward journey back to school?

KLA makes himself 'at home.'

Mosquitos breed in damp water.

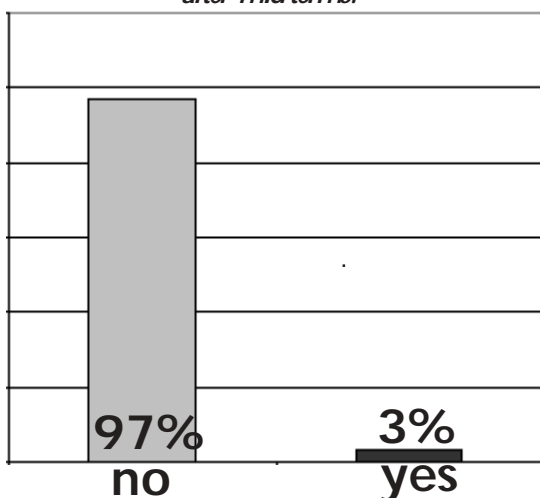
Vikram Kejriwal, public health expert.

I am not a joker doing jokes for you.

NTC, clowning around.

OPINION POLL

Did you get enough time to prepare for test week after mid-terms?



Next Week's Question: Do you think that North Korea's testing of the nuclear bomb has put the world at greater risk?

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Fair Play

The school has prided itself in offering a wide range of co-curricular and sporting activities and competitions. The school is known for the all-round development of its students. It is famous for winning a lot of competitions. Yet, our school often backs out of competitions just because we don't have a good chance of winning. This is not something that projects a good image of the school. The school should be known not for just winning but also for losing graciously. If a school participates in a certain competition, it should participate every year, and not only when we have an exceptional team.

Moreover, it is particularly unfair that teams in some fields go for a lot of competitions while others hardly go for any. For instance, the school gymnastics team has not participated in any inter-school competition for the last few years just because we do not have a good chance of winning. On the other hand, the school swimming team has gone for many competitions even when it was known that we would have a very limited success rate. I am not saying that the school swimming team should stop going for competitions, but only that even the gymnastics team should be given such an opportunity. Moreover, all sports should be given equal recognition in school.

It is a known fact that in any competition the seniors usually have an edge. So every junior waits for his S or Sc form to go for a competition and represent the school. When the student finally reaches a senior form he is very disappointed if the school does not participate in the competition. After his Sc form, the student will obviously never get the opportunity again. Nor can he add to his curriculum vitae.

The excuse made for the cancellation of competitions sometimes is that it is clashing with an inter-house competition or test week. But truly speaking, except for trials, there is actually nothing so important that it cannot be adjusted. DoscOs can certainly cope with a few missed days of school. The school debating team goes for innumerable debates and virtually spends half the time away from school but they still keep up with their studies and other activities well enough. On the other hand, the musicians and artists in school hardly go for any competitions. And even if a student has to miss a particular activity, it should be, eventually, his own choice.

In conclusion, I hope this letter helps to serve its purpose, and increases the number of competitions we take part in, and the number of boys that go for them.

(Naman Goel)

CAREER CALL



The careers' notice board will furnish details on the engineering entrance examinations - **JEE** and **AIEEE**. All aspiring engineers should take notice.

Prejudice & Penalty

Rijul Kochhar supports the argument for the repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code

What you, perceptive readers, are now going to read may, in the beginning, seem shocking. You may denounce me as not mature enough to speak on such issues. Indeed, you may not agree with me. But the fact is that I care about my country; I care about its space in today's pluralistic world; I believe that anything that adds to the bulk of the already heaving system needs to be done away with. In short, the fat needs to be trimmed.

What I am referring to is the imperial monstrosity that still exists in our system; something that the majority of the world has done away with; something that affects a minority community to such an extent that its very existence is a witch-hunt, an inquisition for the authorities to undertake; something that subdues them to levels below the most unfathomable depths. It is something whose existence is a shame in the cultural mosaic that is India. It is the 1861 Victorian prejudice against gay people—the Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.

You may argue by saying that this does not affect most of us in this largely heterosexual society; that it is a defunct law that hurts nobody and does nothing except sit in the thick book of Indian laws. But take a deeper look. It is a law that wipes out a minority group completely. They cannot adopt, legalise their relationships or lay claim to another's will or property or both. In short, they are illegal. What's more, they are not a minority for the law, they are criminals.

Speaking of criminality then seems to be the right thing to do. A criminal is someone whose actions harm another; someone who is a potential threat to his surroundings; someone who robs you or cheats you or assaults you. Think clearly, and you will see that homosexual acts between consenting adults harm nobody. Both parties that have consented to this accord are adult enough to choose their lifestyle. Who are we, or who is the law to decide what to do with individuals who choose a lifestyle that is different from the supposedly 'normal' one? Morality has no yardstick to be measured with; what is moral for one may not be for another. And it is this diversity in opinion that is intrinsic to a pluralistic democracy. How then can an obsolete and draconian law (Britain repealed it in 1967) be used to criminalise law-abiding citizens, purely on the basis of choices—choices that harm nobody? Surely, this

How can an obsolete and draconian law be used to criminalize law-abiding citizens, purely on the basis of choices—choices that harm nobody. Surely, this is against the fundamental right on which our society rests

is against the fundamental right on which our society rests.

Because there is no plausible reason to 377, its proponents will come up with a variety of arguments which lack credibility.

Some people argue that Indian society is not ready to take such a drastic step. I believe that that this as an argument is hypocritical. India gave the world *Kamasutra*; India is a land which is a confluence of many cultures; it comes into contact with instances of live-in relationships, relationships that have no legal validity. There are also common cases of sex-change operations. Why,

then, are homosexuals being targeted and hounded?

Some people say that Section 377 doesn't really matter. This is my favourite, because it highlights the fact that the supporters of this outdated shame are running out of choices. They say that Section 377 is not strictly enforced. So why all this hoohah and *tamasha*? People who look the other way will continue to do so, with Section 377 or without it. Why make a fuss about an obsolete Raj-era law?

The fact is that the fuss *is* required. Think of the several million gay people who live with the knowledge that the Indian state considers them to be criminals who deserve a sentence ranging anywhere from 10 years RI to life. Think of all the people who the police can lock up lawfully, but are left free as a 'favour' from the men in khaki. Think of all this, and you will realise the injustice that is being meted out to this community.

Others will argue that India has other important issues on its agenda, such as infanticide, dowry deaths, farmer suicides, economic depravity, the nuclear deal, terrorism, etc. But I believe that a law that treats so many millions of its citizens as common criminals, a law that condemns innocent people to be equated with common murderers, rapists etc., needs to be done away with. It is for us to protest and question if we want India to shine; an India where all men and women are equal in all ways. Because if we don't, then ideals of pluralism, equality and liberalism become mere jargon. As Vir Sanghvi puts it, "As long as Section 377 exists, as long as we fall back on the colonial law book to discriminate against our own citizens, and as long as we deny a fundamental human right to a large section of our people, we lower ourselves as a nation." It is high time that we stopped lowering ourselves; it is high time that we deposited Section 377 to the place where it belongs—the dustbin.

A Tale of Three Cities

Dhruv Velloor recounts the B form historical midterms

This year's B form historical midterms comprised three groups: two going to Lucknow, Varanasi and Allahabad and one going to Delhi, Agra and Sikri. Group 1, our group (self-proclaimed 'The Group' by KAR), was escorted by KAR, STB and ABC. After a gruelling 18-hour journey by train, we reached our first stop – Allahabad. It captivated us at once. Though not as big as Delhi, Allahabad certainly seemed as busy. This gracious city is most famous for being the home of the Nehru family. Swaraj Bhavan (where Indira Gandhi was born), was more a museum than a house. The main Allahabad museum was also fascinating with its many ancient and religious artefacts from all over India, including Mohenjodaro and Kaushambi, an excavation site 60 km away. The medieval Akbar Fort, overlooking the Sangam, where the Ganges, the Yamuna and the mythical Saraswati meet was awe-inspiring and another tourist draw. Rudyard Kipling's old house, where he penned *The Jungle Book* was a place of great serenity. We made a short stop at Alfred Park where Chandrashekhar Azad was cornered by the British and sacrificed his life for our independence. The best part of our tour was the Khusrau Bagh tombs where Jehangir's estranged son, Mughal prince Khusrau, his mother and his sister lie buried. All three tombs are built in distinctly different styles. This protected site is perhaps the finest example of Mughal architecture, along with the Taj Mahal.

Varanasi was a completely different scene. The oldest continually inhabited Indian city is steeped in religion and is everything the tourist guide-books write about it : the teeming lanes and bylanes, equally shared by two-legged and four-legged creatures, the feeling of antiquity that pervades the ghats, the dirt, neglect and general disintegration of historic structures that seems to be accepted as a matter of course- all add up to the aura that is Kashi. The 84 ghats we saw while floating on a *bajra* on the river Ganges at dawn, were each unique and beautiful. We stepped off the boat to visit the Alamgir Mosque constructed by Aurangzeb. We then visited the Kashi Vishwanath temple which, thankfully, was not too crowded, although the numerous stringent security checks made it a surreal experience! The same evening we visited the Ramnagar Fort, residence of the erstwhile ruler of Benares. As it was Dusshera, we were lucky to see the jewel-bedecked ruler being driven out in a horse-drawn carriage with great ceremony. It was like stepping into the pages of a history book. Our accommodation at the Benares Club was a dream come true as we were provided with everything a travel-weary student could ask for.. Sarnath was a different experi-

ence altogether. Buddhist and Jain architecture was on display. We saw Ashoka's Dharma Chakra Stupa looming up from the flat lands, the Shri Digambar Jain Temple and the Mulagandha Kutiy Vihara. The museum there was an air-conditioned treat and is home to Ashoka's Lion Capital. We left Varanasi wishing that we had a couple of more days to spend there.

The last stop on our trip was the land of nawabs and kebabs: Lucknow. It was here that our insatiable appetites were finally sated. Of course, Lucknow also had lots to offer in terms of history. The Rumi Darwaza, Bada and Chota Imambaras were splendid examples of Awadhi architecture, and we had lots of fun negotiating the Bhulbhulaiyah (the labyrinth in the Bada Imambara, with identical doorways and arches). The La Martiniere College looked more like an old European castle than a school. We spent some time looking for AAQ's name on the steps, but in vain. We learnt a lot about the nawabs and badshahs from the Picture Gallery and the Armoury. We watched a spectacular and moving sound and light show at the ravaged Lucknow Residency, where the British residents of Lucknow were besieged in 1857.

Looking back it can be said that this midterm was both intriguing and fun. This was one midterm that nobody disliked. We felt sad that such an opportunity would never come our way again. And now all we have left with us are our photographs, our extensive notes and our memories.



WISECRACKS



Never underestimate the power of very stupid people in large groups.

If you can't convince people, confuse them. It's not the fall that kills you. It's the sudden stop at the end.

I couldn't repair your brakes, so I made your horn louder.

In a country of free speech, why are there phone bills?

The trouble with being punctual is that no one is there to appreciate it.

If you tell a man there are 300 billion stars in the universe, he'll believe you. But if you tell him a park bench has just been painted, he has to touch it to be sure.

If you keep your feet firmly on the ground, you'll have trouble putting on your pants.

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