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 debaters. 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. House 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, administrative 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 truncated 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 Mayoor 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 Pathare. Congratulations!

**DEFYING GRAVITY**

Colours in gymnastics have been awarded to the following:
- **Full Colours:** Vijai Atal, Ajai Atal
- **Half Colours:** Ambar Sidhwa, Naman Goel (reawarded).

Well done!

**PLAY BALL!**

Rishabh Bir Singh, Ayyappa Vemulkar, Pranay Kapoor, Samridh Aparwal, Dhruv Singh and Suryaiv Madhav represented Dehradun in the 5th Uttaranchal State Basketball Tournament held at Haridwar from October 1-3, 2006. The team emerged winners after beating Muskoorie 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.’
- Mosquitoes breed in damp water.
- **Vikram Kejriwal,** public health expert.
- I am not a joker doing jokes for you.
- **NTC,** clowning around.

**Opinopal**

Did you get enough time to prepare for test week after midterms?

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<th>97%</th>
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Next Week’s Question: Do you think that North Korea’s testing of the nuclear bomb has put the world at greater risk?

**Career Call**

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

Rijul Kochhar supports the argument for the repeal of Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code.
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 Kausambi, 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 brother 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 teems everywhere. While ruler of Benares. As it was Dusshera, we were lucky to see the jewel-bedecked ruler being driven out while ruler of Benares. As it was Dusshera, we were lucky to see the jewel-bedecked ruler being driven out. 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. 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. 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. 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.

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 Rumia Darwaza, Bada and Chota Imambaras were splendid examples of Awadhi architecture, and we had lots of fun negotiating the Ruhbilubalayah (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.