

The Doon School WEEKLY

"I sketch your world exactly as it goes." -Arthur Foot
October 30, 2021 | Issue No. 2623



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Unsung Heroes

Armaan Rathi writes about the hardships the support staff face.

Although we are back in School, these are still unprecedented times. However, School is slowly stepping back into the shades of normalcy, with the mandated winter uniform for S and Sc forms to House practices being conducted with full fervour. At the same time, the signs of the pandemic are also equally prevalent. The morning temperature taking, face masks, regular RT-PCR tests and the unusual routes around the Campus are all reminders of a past lifestyle of remote learning. Amidst this unusual situation, our inherent self-centred nature often prevents us from looking past our privilege. We must, therefore, make a deliberate effort to direct our attention to the situations of the House Bearers and Security Guards - the backbone of School's support system - who suffer the brunt of these circumstances far worse than we do. House Bearers and Guards have been going above and beyond their regular role to help us transition smoothly into this term. The House Bearers have had to adjust to in-House dining and laundry on top of their already-busy days filled with hard labour. Moreover, they have been staying away from the comforts of their homes and families to uphold the integrity of our bio-bubble.

The work, for us, has changed drastically over the last four months or so due to the ongoing pandemic. As the CDH is shut and the House is a makeshift dining hall, we get no time between meals to rest like we used to. Everything, from setting up the cutlery to keeping the food warm for the kids, requires a lot of effort from everyone in the linen room staff. On the days that the laundry arrives, the workload skyrockets. As a group of support staff, our work has increased exponentially, to say the least. However, the boys being around us motivates us to do it regardless of how tiring it is. In many cases, the Senior boys take the initiative to help us along with a few junior boys. Back in September, we had to wear PPE kits while moving back and forth between Houses, which was one of the toughest times for us. Another thing that is challenging is staying away from our families. I do miss them, but the boys make sure that our days are well spent.

-Sunil Maurya (House Bearer)

The Guards around Campus have also experienced a change in their regular role. Normal protocols have been abandoned because of the need for new ones that ensure our safety. For instance, they have to record their movements and wear PPE kits.

During COVID, our jobs were extremely variable and subject to change. Sometimes we would be called into work for seven days in a row and then not get called in for the next four. Our work has drastically changed since School reopened on August 22. Before COVID, our primary jobs were to make sure that children didn't get hurt in the Houses, that they didn't make too much noise, and if anyone did, we simply made a report to the Housemasters. Now, it has become our responsibility to escort students to and from certain areas on Campus and to make sure that they remain away from areas of School in which people are entering from the outside. Since School has started, we have had to have RTPCR tests done every week, we have had to track our own movements and make entries all around Campus, we have to write where we came from, and we have to be sanitised before entering School. Earlier, we were allowed to move between Houses in case others needed assistance

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or even just to talk to somebody, but now that has also stopped. It gets a little lonely at times but that's part of the job.

- **Purushottam Hukumchand (Security Guard)**

A lot of their stellar support and efforts go unnoticed, unacknowledged and unappreciated. I write this in hopes that Doscos learns to look past their privilege and begin to appreciate and celebrate the ordinary heroics of those that make our stay at Chandhbagh comfortable. Leaving any kind of extra work for House Bearers and Guards is adding to an already insurmountable pile. I write this in hopes that you'll think twice before making a mess in the pantry or carelessly throwing away face-masks and leaving coffee mugs on window ledges. I urge you to be kind, appreciating and most importantly proactive; to be an "aristocracy of service inspired by the ideas of unselfishness".

Is Spending Billions on Space Exploration Justified?



Tarun Doss

Our Earth is being sucked dry of most essential resources our race depends on, and if we keep burning fossil fuels at our current rate, it is generally estimated that all our fossil fuels will be depleted by 2060. With this in mind, the most sensible idea would be to explore this vast black void that fills all this space around us that could potentially provide us with the solutions to all our answers. (No risk, no reward!)

Humanity as a race is ranked at roughly level 0.75 on the Kardashev Scale, a technique of rating civilizations based on their energy use. If progress continues, and we, though highly unlikely, don't make Earth uninhabitable, we will become a full Type 1 civilization in a couple of hundred years - meaning we will, as a civilization, be able to harness all the resources of our planet to its fullest potential. Any Type 1 society will inevitably look outside their home planet, as we will most likely remain true to our nature - curious, greedy, and expansionist. Transitioning to a Type 2 civilisation - attempting to change and harvest other planets and cosmic bodies for energy - is the next logical step. The faster we begin, the sooner we can achieve these goals.

One may argue that space exploration is merely for scientific development and substantial advancement in research, but it is important to understand that what

space keeps hidden from us may as well be the key to such unbelievable and pivotal discoveries that could potentially extend our time here in this world. From the discovery of new infinite resources of energy for advancements to new medicinal discoveries that may as well cure any and every disease humans face. All this and so much more is within our grasp as long as space exploration programs continue to receive sufficient funding from big countries, which in turn would lead to great profit and development for the country itself.

In conclusion, space exploration is an investment that will pay out handsomely. It's not just about what we learn about ourselves in space, or how to be better

Whatever we spend on space exploration is a bargain, and we will be repaid many times over in terms of both quantity and quality.

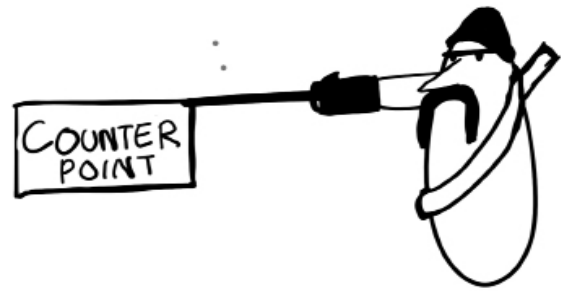
stewards of our wonderful planet. It's about how we live together on this planet and what kind of future we want for our children and ourselves. Space exploration is the only means by which we can improve our lives here on Earth, or very soon - elsewhere. Whatever we spend on space exploration is a bargain, and we will be repaid many times over in terms of both quantity and quality. From my perspective, we are getting this value at a bargain.

Countries, with the help of funding from organisations, invest billions of dollars per annum in space exploration. From making instruments to launching spacecraft, every cost needs to be covered because one error could lead to greater expenses to amend for malfunctions. But while it seems justifiable that we as mankind want to get into space, the question remains - is it smart to continually reserve so much money for space exploration? Could we perhaps defund such programs and invest funds into more pressing

We should look to spend this money on areas of more pressing development needs of society. Poverty or water crises are serious concerns that need to be addressed immediately

problems on Earth first?

In my opinion, space exploration organisations and government-controlled administrations should be defunded as they are receiving continual funds of which not 100% are being utilised for productive purposes or immediate actions. To understand this, we must observe and comprehend the division of money, from the input to the output. NASA's yearly minimum budget stands at approximately 22 billion dollars receiving a majority of this amount from the annual Federal budget approved by Congress. However, looking globally beyond NASA, a lot more is spent on space exploration. Here we are talking about other major space administrations, both government-run and private.



Avi Bansode

Thus, we can see that a lot of money is invested in this sector of possible development - but one must ask themselves the question - is it worth taking such a big risk or should we play it safe? The primary purpose of space exploration is scientific development and substantial advancement in research. For instance, if a country successfully sends people to space and discovers something incredible, it benefits everyone on a global scale. Of course, the country gets its own exclusive benefits because they can safely take responsibility for the discovery, but in essence, everyone benefits so there isn't much of a gain for that country in the unceasing international 'space exploration competition'.

We should look to spend the funds invested in space programs on areas of more pressing developmental concerns. Poverty or water crises are serious concerns that need to be addressed immediately, while space exploration is merely an advancement, a future need. Once we have spent enough money on basic development, we can look to strive further to secure our distant future. We must learn what to prioritize, we cannot blindly spend tons of money on anything that seems unnecessary as compared to something we should spend on urgently. Therefore, I believe that the money invested in space exploration should be reduced - not at an absolute level where our global society is deprived of astronomical knowledge or resources but to bring about a balance where money can be distributed to mitigate existing problems.



This Week in History

1814 C.E.: The Demologos, the first steam-powered warship, launched in New York City.

1904 C.E.: The New York Subway opens for the first time

1917 C.E.: Communists stormed the Winter Palace in St Petersburg and deposed the Russian Tsar

1929 C.E.: Black Tuesday--the most catastrophic day in stock market history, heralding the Great Depression.

1969 C.E.: First computer-to-computer link; the link is accomplished through ARPANET, forerunner of the Internet.

READER'S CHECKLIST

What the members of the School community have been reading this week.

Uddhav Goel (S form): *Nausea* by Jean-Paul Sartre

Pranav Lohia (Sc form): *Anandamath* by Bankim Chandra Chatterjee

DKM: *Tamas* by Bhisham Sahni

“

“It is in the nature of democracies, perhaps, that while visionaries are sometimes necessary to make them, once made they can be managed by mediocrities.”

—
Ramchandra Guha

THE WHO?

Who is Alicia Augello-Cook?

Rohan Kailath: A Chef

Aaron Ashdir: A pianist.

Maadhavan Gupta: A singer

Alicia Augello-Cook, or **Alicia Keys**, is an **American singer-songwriter**, who is known for songs such as “If I Ain’t Got You” and “**Empire State of Mind**”. Over the course of her career, she has earned over **10 Grammy Awards**. She also founded a skin-care company and is the co-founder and **Global Ambassador** of ‘**Keep a Child Alive.**’

SINEWS OF STEEL

Nairit Pattnaik, Shaurya Pratap, Krishna Agarwal, Samar Kumar, Avyukt Kochhar, Kanish Agarwal, and Shaurya Sharma were awarded the **Games Blazer**.

Congratulations!

Around the World in 80 Words

Twelve people were injured in clashes between protesters and the military forces in Sudan’s capital, Khartoum, in the wake of a reported military coup in the country. As a result of the Delta variant, China imposed another lockdown after reports of a new COVID outbreak, which has affected thousands. Hurricane Rick headed towards Mexico’s Pacific coast. In record-breaking fashion, Pakistan beat India in the T20 Cricket World Cup. Manchester United suffered defeat at the hands of a 5-0 Liverpool masterclass.

Dosco Doodle

Big Boys

Rohan Taneja



The Moral Consequences of Profit

Aryan Baruah *comments on the Facebook's recent controversy around ethical practices versus profit.*

'Frances Haugen' and 'whistle-blower'. Most of you have probably heard all three words, and clicked on links that bear them. And, more often than not, you have done so in succession - Frances Haugen and whistle-blower - over this term and over the past weeks. What these names have in common is that both are related to technology giant Facebook and the major issues which its platforms are currently facing.

One of the first major issues that Haugen released to the press had to do with the xCheck files. These files allow certain users with large followings such as politicians, reality television stars, and actors to bypass Facebook's regulatory policies, which include guidelines such as bans on hate speech, incitement of violence, and sexually explicit content. People with these advantages are internally 'whitelisted' people upon whom the above policies and standards are not imposed. This has understandably caused an uproar since one of Facebook's claimed missions is to provide an equal voice to everyone. A very disturbing example of this can be seen in the American federal and state elections, in which it is often the case that those running for office for the first time are not 'whitelisted' whereas the incumbents and some of their opponents are. This places the incumbents at an advantage and has led many to accuse Facebook of favouritism. Facebook has publicly stated that they have begun to actively work on phasing out the process of 'whitelisting' from their systems.

The second major issue has to do with mental health in teenagers. A Wall Street Journal review revealed that Facebook has conducted unreleased research that has revealed that Instagram (a subsidiary of Facebook) is responsible for making one-third of teenage girls feel worse about their bodies. Comparisons on Instagram can change how young women view and describe themselves. The tendency to share only the best, often artificially altered, images of one's physical appearance has created a pressure to look perfect. A relentless need to conform to these standards of perfection can send teens spiralling into an unhealthy sense of their own bodies, eating disorders, and depression. Although some people, especially those in developing countries where the attitudes tend to be more conservative, may dismiss these self-image issues as hormonal mood swings or serotonin deficiencies, Dr Jean Twenge, a leading American psychologist, has stated "We're looking at clinical-level depression that requires treatment. We're talking about self-harm that lands people in the ER." The seriousness of the

situation cannot be more clearly enunciated.

The third issue has been Facebook's apparent negligence towards COVID-related information, particularly with regard to vaccines. Although Facebook was praised at the beginning of the COVID crisis for the policies it implemented and the causes it pledged resources towards, it has now been found, through numerous internal memos dated as early as August 2020, that their pledges have actually had the opposite effect than intended. Facebook researchers found that comments on vaccine-related posts, often factual posts of the sort Facebook sought to promote, were filled with anti-vaccine rhetoric aimed at undermining the organization's stance. The comments ranged from personal objections to the vaccine to now-debunked falsehoods and conspiracy theories. Facebook actually implemented a program to sort through 'anti-vax' content, but this did not apply to comments. The viewership of comments everyday on Instagram is around 775 million people, which has only increased anti-vaccine sentiment across many countries.

There are, however, always two sides to every story. At the core of these arguments is the fact that Facebook is a profit prioritising company which has deprioritised both the mental wellbeing and health of its users. However, there are many arguments against this notion, an extremely significant one being the introduction of 'Meaningful Social Interactions' to Facebook. Under this policy, the tech-giant began to propagate fewer viral videos and instead increased content from people's family and friends. While this obviously meant that people would be spending less time on Facebook, they still implemented it. Would a company focused on profits take such an action?

The argument that Facebook pushes content that makes people angry in the name of profit has certain holes. Advertisers are particularly focused on not being painted in a negative light and thus do not want their advertisements next to negative or hateful content. Therefore, it is unlikely that Facebook would allow such controversial comments at the risk of losing copious amounts of money in advertising fees. Furthermore, regarding the effects on teenage mental health, the Wall Street Journal exposé showed that many teenage girls who struggled with loneliness, anxiety and eating disorders also claimed that Instagram alleviated their depression with positive content rather than aggravating it.

We must understand that Facebook is a tool which

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has advocated for the advancement of human welfare through the act of connecting people. The entire company is founded on the human need for social interaction. However, the negative effects which have made themselves evident over the years could scarcely have been predicted.

CLARIFIED



Indian Coal Crisis

Recently, India has been experiencing an energy crisis, with numerous states across the country having major coal shortages. As time progresses, the situation is looking increasingly dire in India.

Coal accounts for 70% of India's electricity production. However, even around October 20, 80% of India's 135 coal-powered plants had less than eight days of supplies left, with some having even less. Government-run Coal India, which accounts for 80% of India's coal output, said that they currently have 22 days worth of coal stock, but that supply is expected to rise with the government recently ramping up coal supplies to 92 lakh tonnes.

This problem began when India saw a spike in the demand for power between April and August, following the second wave of COVID. A combination of falling imports - due to soaring international prices - and other factors also contributed to this crisis. It was not, however, due to a shortage of domestic coal production, since over the past two decades, coal production in India has continued to rise exponentially. Moreover, thermal power companies did not expect this shortage, and other sources of energy, such as hydroelectric, gas and nuclear have also seen a decline in production. Hydroelectric power was affected due to an unevenly distributed monsoon season, affecting the production capabilities of some places that did not receive enough rain. Another problem is that Indian coal has a lower heating value - meaning that more of it is needed to substitute imported coal. Non-power industries such as aluminium, steel, cement and paper typically burn large quantities of coal to produce heat. Moreover, Coal India has been accused of failing to stockpile sufficient energy supplies to meet the predicted rise in demand during the pandemic.

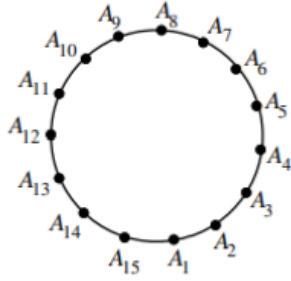
The consequences are that states including Rajasthan, Jharkhand and Bihar have been experiencing power cuts lasting up to 14 hours, and others, such as Maharashtra, have shut down 13 thermal power plants and urged people to use electricity sparingly. Also, the import price of Indonesian coal jumped from \$60/ton in March 2021 to \$160/ton (in September/October 2021). The more pressing consequence is that, with the festive season fast-approaching in India, power consumption is expected to increase, and the situation could be exacerbated if global demand for Indian exports increases substantially.

Some states are even imposing rolling power cuts or load-shedding, and selling power at higher prices to energy exchanges, rather than selling power directly to their customers. Since power is subsidized for most farmers and many households in India, the burden of higher coal prices will mainly fall on industrial consumers who account for only 25% to 30% of power consumption.

So what are some possible solutions? The obvious solution would be to increase the production of coal. India already has plans to boost its domestic coal production to 1bn tons by 2024. However, expanding coal mines would threaten the livelihoods of tribal communities, who live in forests, most of which cover large coal reserves, who have already been affected by the environmental damage of coal mining.

Another problem with this solution is that India has to meet its climate goals in the coming years and these can only be achieved by weaning off coal, which is already such an integral part of power production. With most experts saying that if the government had focused on increasing the capacity of renewables such as solar, wind and hydro, this crisis could have been avoided, since renewable energy would have met the rise in demand, especially with its prices decreasing. It is clear that the best course of action would be to increase the capacity of renewable energy. However, to do that immediately would be difficult. For now, the Coal Minister said that in "another three to four days, things will be alright", and Coal India has reportedly ramped up supplies to try and offset some of the shortage.

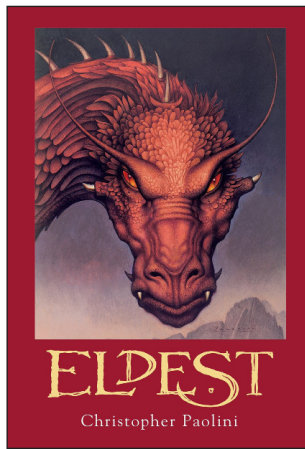
Problem of the Week



On a circle, fifteen points $A_1, A_2, A_3, \dots, A_{15}$ are equally spaced. What is the size of the angle $A_1A_3A_7$?

Source: CEMC Waterloo

What Have You Been Reading During The Lockdown?



Eldest

Author: Christopher Paolini

Publisher: RHUK

Published: September 7, 2006

Eldest is the second book in the Inheritance series and is one of my favorite fantasy books. Paolini's world-building throughout the series is unmatched, dare I say even by JK Rowling. The well-planned world of Alagaesia is extremely immersive and it feels very realistic and lifelike in. All in all, I would definitely suggest this book to fans of the fantasy genre, especially of the sub-genre of high fantasy. This book also inspired me to start working on my own fantasy novel.

- Neelotpal

What Have You Been Watching During The Lockdown?



The Walk

Director: Robert Zemeckis

Producer: Sony Pictures, TriStar Pictures

Release Date: September 30, 2015

Based on a true story, *The Walk* is about the dauntless Philippe Petit, a well known high-wire artist. Eventually, he sets his heart on becoming the highest high-wire master in the world and decides to walk on a tight-rope attached between the North and South towers of the World Trade Centre, that too without a safety net. In real life, Petit completed this walk in 1974. Like the New Yorkers who witnessed this, the audience too experiences jubilation and relief. A must watch, really.

- Vansavardhana Jhunjunwala

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