

Assembly 16 November 2009

Mayo College, India

Last week, I was in Xi'an in central China, visiting the High School Affiliated to Xi'an Jiao Tong University. I was accompanied on this visit by Mr. Ngan Ka Hing and Miss Chan Yik Shan from the Chinese Department. The reason for our visit was to finalise arrangements of our twin school link and to plan activities for the year ahead. Our College places great importance on inter-school ties and it is hope that our new relationship in Xi'an will lead to many student and teacher visits and exchanges in the years to come.

This morning, I am delighted to have on stage two students who took part in another inter-school activity earlier this year. David and Davis will share with us their experiences of a visit to Mayo College in north western India.

“Good morning Dr. Kennard, Reverend Martin, teachers and fellow schoolmates. I am David Tong from 7B and this is Davis Chung from 7B. Today we are glad to share with you our experiences in the India cultural and educational tour in March this year.

Mayo College was founded in 1875, which is one of the oldest private boarding schools in the country.

In the evening on the eighth of March, Mr. Mak, Mrs. Chung and four students from 6B gathered at the Hong Kong International Airport. After hours of flights we arrived in Jaipur, in north western India. We were warmly welcomed by the teachers from Mayo College there. They gave us a ride to Ajmer, the city where the campus of Mayo College is located in. Then we settled down at the school's guest house.

At noon, four of our students attended a psychology lesson with the Mayo students. Then we visited the chemistry laboratories. The laboratories were a bit small but they are still very well equipped. In the afternoon, we joined in a tennis practice with the Mayo students. They are all very skillful players and I wish I could stay longer at the tennis court. Then we went on a ride around the college, over the years Mayo College has been using the same campus, therefore many of the buildings in the school are in fact historical buildings. Finally we had some time interacting with their student representatives. We shared a lot in different aspects, such as history of both schools and teenage cultures in two places. In the evening we were invited by the Principal of Mayo College to have dinner with him. It was a wonderful time and we had tried a lot of tasty Indian food which we have never had before.

On the second day, we took part in their college assembly. Then we had a campus tour accompanied by the student representatives. We visited their art gallery, school museum, library and IT centre. Finally we went to the Primary school of Mayo College, which is also in the same campus area. We had our lunch with the primary school children in the school canteen. In the afternoon we went outside Mayo College and spent the rest of the day in Pushkar, a town that is near to the school. As a tourist attraction, Pushkar is famous for its lake and the cluster of temples. And there is a market which sells souvenirs and different gadgets. We did a lot shopping and in the evening we had a buffet dinner in a hotel resort there.

The third day was the climax of the tour. That day was an annual festival in India called Holi, which celebrates the coming of spring. Every Indian smears color powder on each other, so does everyone in Mayo College. We put color powder on the faces and the clothes of everyone we met. It was such a remarkable experience and a blissful festival. We were surprised by their passion in traditional festivals. However, according to the Indian tradition, the powder smearing activity only lasts until noon. Everyone has to wash themselves and take rest in the afternoon. So the jubilant atmosphere in the campus had sunk to silence after lunch.

Since the fourth day was a public holiday after Holi, we had a meeting with the Mayo College Principal in the morning. Then we had some ball games with the Mayo students who stayed in the campus. In the afternoon we paid a short visit to the Mayo College for girls, which is just next to Mayo College. Then we headed to a local market in Ajmer by taking town taxi. These taxis are very different from those in Hong Kong. They run on three wheels, and the passengers of the last row have to face backward. The taxis run slowly and tremble, but it was really fun.

We left Mayo College and continued our tour on the fifth day. We returned to Jaipur and had a city tour by riding on rickshaws. There we visited Jantar Mantar and the City Palace. These two antiques were built by the same ruler called Jai Singh II in the 18th century. Jantar Mantar means 'calculation instrument' in English. It is a collection of 14 architectural astronomical devices. They all function well even today. Jantar Mantar is indeed a breathtaking combination between art design and scientific calculations. The City Palace is a huge museum which was the living place of the ancient royal family. It is a complex of courtyards, gardens and buildings. It is also a successful mix of Indian and European architectural style. After lunch, we got back on the coach and took a long journey to Agra, the city where Taj Mahal is located in. It was night when we arrived at Agra therefore we directly went to the hotel.

We woke up at 5 am on the last day and visited the Taj Mahal at dawn. Taj Mahal was built by Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan in memory of his favourite wife. It took 23 years to finish the

whole construction. The main material used is marble, while some other valuable materials were collected all over Asia, including jades from China. We took many photos of this world-famous attraction. We proceeded to New Delhi for our flight to Hong Kong.

Finally we would like to express our gratitude to the school which organized and subsidized this tour, to the teachers and students from Mayo College and to Mr. Mak and Mrs. Chung, who accompanied us in the tour. We have prepared a video summarizing the whole trip. Thank you and please enjoy the video.”