

The B(elgaum) – B(onn) Link – Tom Rensmann

After finishing school in Germany last summer I felt it was time to take the first big step towards becoming an adult. I decided to spend 4 months at St. Paul's Jesuit School in Belgaum. I lived in the hostel, where the poorer boys board, and helped out wherever I could. Just before Christmas last year it was time for me to leave Belgaum. I'd had an amazing time supporting the boys in their daily lives, helping them with their studies and playing with them in their free time. Even though I was missing home, I would love to have stayed longer. But I decided that it was time for me to return to Germany and start my course at university.

After all the excitement of moving away from home and attending my first lectures, I started thinking about the possibility of going back to India again in the summer holidays. So after writing my exams I packed my bags and in August I got onto the plane to fly back to Belgaum.

I remember very clearly how excited I had been the first time I went to India. But surprisingly I was even more excited second time round. After having spent so much time at the school and the hostel and having been so involved in the boys' lives, I was desperate to know how things had developed while I had been away.

Many things have changed. Some of the older students have passed out and a new bunch of Kindergarten boys in their red shorts are shouting and running around. First standard boys are proudly wearing their school uniform for the first time in the four different colours of their houses and a new Jesuit-Brother is in charge of the hostel doing his best to look after 72 boys and motivate them to do well at school.

But most things have not changed. It is great for me to see all the boys as friendly and disciplined as ever. Teachers are working hard to prepare the students for the upcoming exams. The Jesuits are also working hard to make sure the school, as always, runs smoothly and that the students continue to be successful at all kind of competitions. The hostel boys are still as lively as always, playing football, struggling to be quiet during their study time and eating their huge platefuls of rice day by day.

But the boys also make sure that no day is ever boring for me. They keep fighting, being noisy in class and misbehaving as all boys do! But dealing with these small problems are the challenges I enjoy the most.

For me personally it is nice to see that some changes made last year are now benefiting the students. The "connection" with the Aloisiuskolleg, Bonn is very valuable and in particular the building of the "Aloysius Hall", sponsored by children from the Aloisiuskolleg, is a great achievement and is being regularly and gratefully used by St Paul's students.

Just after my time at St. Paul's came to an end for this year, two girls from the Aloisiuskolleg arrived in Belgaum. They had also volunteered to spend some time at St. Paul's. I was glad that two more German students would have the opportunity to experience some of the things I did during the four months I spent in Belgaum last year. So far they seem to be enjoying their time just as much.

However there is still a lot of potential to improve the B(elgaum)-B(onn) link. It is good to see German students visiting India but I would also like to see students from Belgaum come to Bonn in the near future.

I only had time to spend 30 days at St Paul's this year. But I am confident that it will not be long before I am back in Belgaum again!