

# CALIPH OR KAFIR?

-Shuhail Ali Ahmed, XII

To some he is a revolutionary, to others a statesman but to all he is the Pasha of the jewel of the Middle-East. Mohammed bin Salman Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud, more famously known as MBS, head of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and the wealthiest family in the world. Born with a golden spoon dipped in oil, MBS came to power after careful manipulations of the complex succession line of the House of Saud. Once in power he set about establishing himself as a ruler with a difference. While he did not tolerate dissent, he also ensured that Saudi Arabia reconfigured to stay relevant in geopolitics with a new sustainable economic programme without the burden of religious fanaticism.

His aim is not only to modernize the kingdom but also make it a hotspot of tourism. He began by easing out on women's rights from allowing them to drive to travel without a male guardian as well as seek a divorce. Bin Salman is aware of the religious importance the kingdom is held by the Muslim world at large and yet he is unafraid to bring revolutionary changes to even worship within the country. His rise came with stripping the clerics of their powers, and containing the radical Wahabism at bay. His vision to recreate an entirely different city can be seen in his dream project The Line, a cognitive smart city that promises to be ahead of its

times. He understands well that Saudi Arabia's dependence on oil economy is not sustainable and has therefore begun to diversify in newer projects. In the Russia-Ukraine conflict, MBS has shown grit and refused to balk under American pressure to denounce Russia. He has kept a sharp control over oil production to keep Biden at heel. Despite the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict the historic Abhram Accords with Israel is not yet a dead letter. Saudi Arabia under MBS has emerged as the big player in the Middle East countering Qatar and Iran with their multiple proxy wars.

While Saudi Arabia remains dependent on the Americans for military might for now, MBS has clear intentions to decouple from the USA and build its own military. MBS's relationship with India has strengthened under the aegis of the present government. From wanting to collaborate with India to building the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor which could counter China's belt and road initiative, MBS is helping to keep the balance of power in the Middle East. In a world riddled with radicalism, MBS could stir the narrative away from religion and give it a wider perspective. Whichever way this goes, the days ahead will be demanding and the mettle of the Pasha will be tested in more ways than one.

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# THE ULTIMATE REBEL: CHE GUEVARA

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-Aayat Hazarika, XII

## WHO WAS HE?

Born on 14 June 1928, Ernesto “Che” Guevara was an Argentine Marxist revolutionary, physician, author, guerrilla leader, diplomat, and military theorist who was a prominent figure of the Cuban Revolution. His stylised visage has become a universal countercultural symbol of rebellion and global insignia in popular culture. Radicalised by the poverty, hunger, and disease he witnessed as well as by Marxist ideas, he became convinced that armed rebellion was the only solution to Latin American problems.

## WHAT WAS HIS POLITICAL STANCE?

An anti-U.S. statesman, he guided the Castro regime towards alignment with the Soviet Union. The Cuban economy faltered because of American trade sanctions and unsuccessful reforms. During this difficult time Guevara began to fall out with the other Cuban leaders. He later expressed his desire to spread revolution in other parts of the developing world, and in 1965 Castro announced that Guevara had left Cuba.



Illustrated by Mashunsing Keishing, X

## WHY DID HE DO THE THINGS HE DID?

After travelling throughout Latin America in his college years, Guvera became acutely aware of the massive wealth disparity among the people: he saw miners who were “set to ruining their health in search of a few meagre crumbs that barely provided them subsistence”; he bore witness to the immense hardships borne by indigenous people, who were exploited by the capitalist machine of the US. He saw in Guatemala his dream of a united and prosperous Latin America come true; for the series of progressive - albeit communistic - reforms brought about by the democratically elected Jacobo Árbenz provided a breath of fresh air to a region plagued by dictators that put the interests of the American United Fruit Company above their own people. Árbenz cut up unused land from the United Fruit Company and returned it to the landless natives, bringing immense benefits to his countrymen. But then the CIA swooped in, staged a coup and overthrew the Government. If Che Guvera detested the US before, then this event cemented his immense hatred for US imperialism that drove him all his life.



Illustrated by Ikalu Ahozhe, X

# EL FUSER

## WHAT WAS HIS ULTIMATE FATE?

Guevara spent months in Africa, particularly the Congo, unsuccessfully attempting to train rebel forces in guerrilla warfare. He secretly returned to Cuba in 1966 and travelled to Bolivia to lead forces rebelling against René Barrientos Ortuño's government but was captured by the U.S. assisted Bolivian army, executed on 9 October 1967, and buried in a secret location after his hands were cut off and sent to Castro for evidence. In 1997 his remains were discovered, exhumed, and returned to Cuba for reburial.

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# "LIVE YOUR LIFE NOT CELEBRATING VICTORIES BUT OVERCOMING DEFEATS."

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## WHAT DID HE DO FOR CUBA?

In 1954, Guevara visited Mexico and the following year he met Cuban revolutionary leader, Fidel Castro, and joined his '26th July Movement' playing a vital role in the subsequent success of its guerrilla war against Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, who was overthrown. From 1959-1961, Guevara was president of the National Bank of Cuba, and then minister of industry. In this position, he travelled the world as an ambassador. At home, he carried out land redistribution plans and industrial nationalisation.

## WHAT IS HIS LEGACY?

Che was an idealist and a hero to many, but beneath the facade of the martyred revolutionary was a hypocrite and a fool. Yes, he was well educated - compared to most people of that time and place - and he was a man driven by his beliefs, one that would take long introspective motorcycle rides throughout Latin America, helping out the poor and weak while associating their misery with capitalism. However, Che betrayed the very revolution he advocated; the revolution began with the aim of overthrowing Batista and bringing the power back to the people - but did the “people” get the power? Fidel and Che, took the power for themselves and kept it with them. Che brought about revolution, yes, but it came with bloodshed and death. He set up massive forced labour camps filled with dissidents, homosexuals, AIDS victims, Catholics, Afro-Cuban priests, “effeminate men”, and all others that he deemed as “scum.” All of Che's “unfits” would be transported at gunpoint; some would never return, many were raped, beaten or mutilated, all were traumatised for life. No evil was too great for his “revolution”, and like Lenin, Guevara's approach was the utter destruction of his enemies via revolution, and the hated enemy deserved no remorse.

# MOSCOW FREEZES

-Siddhi Priyadarshani, X

America and the EU are considering a new plan to fund Ukraine's war with Russia. They wish to use frozen Russian assets to fund Ukraine. However Moscow is threatening to reciprocate in kind if the proposal is passed. It remains to be seen how this will pan out; Moscow insists that it has a right to the funds, while Western leaders see it as a necessary step to help Ukraine recover.

However the West must reconsider this step very carefully as the usage of frozen Russian funds shall set a precedent that will cause many countries to pull out

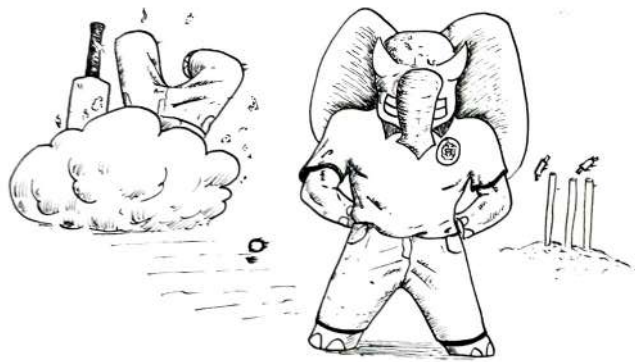
from their Euro and Dollar based assets in Western nations due to the massive risk of facing such penalties in the future, and subsequently collapsing Euro and the Dollar.

A major portion of these frozen funds are private holdings of the citizens of Russia, and taking them away will cause massive amounts of resentment among the Russian populace. Even as the debate continues, Ukraine is not winning on the ground and it remains to be seen how it will end and what consequences it will eventually have, at the world at large.

*Campus Caricature*

## MAN DOWN

*Illustrated by Mashunsiing Keishing, X*



## THE OUTPOST

In the absence of opposition in a landslide victory, Putin becomes the President of the USSR for the 5th time. He cautions the west against deployment of NATO troops in Ukraine reminding them of Russia's nuclear prowess. Trump turns oracle and claims that there will be a bloodbath of the American economy followed by its democracy if he loses the Presidential Elections. Between an infirm and an irrational, mhhh America has an insane choice looming before them. The Election Commission has announced the dates of the Lok Sabha elections prompting the BJP to accelerate its election pace while the Opposition remains scattered.



*Illustrated by Mashunsiing Keishing, X*

## ENGLISH RELAY

A relay race was organized by the English Department on 16th March 2024. The event was aimed at developing four major skills in English Language and fostering the interest of the students in learning the language. The event was conducted from 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m., and it was full of vigour and excitement as it promoted healthy competition among the participants. The participating teams showed their high spirits and good temperament contributing to the success of their teams.



## ALUMNI NEWS

Anushcka Joshi, AVS batch of 2022, has received the President Walker Award at the Penn State University, in recognition of her academic excellence in her freshman year of undergraduate studies. Anushcka is pursuing a Bachelor's in Computer Science at the Schreyer Honors College (SHC), Penn State, University Park, United States. We congratulate Anushcka on her achievement.



## EXCHANGE SCHOLARSHIP

AVS alumnus Dronashish Goswami, (class of 2020) currently studying MSc. in Environmental Governance and Adaptation to Climate Change at the University of Tartu, Estonia, has been awarded the prestigious Erasmus exchange Scholarship to Lund University, Sweden. Congratulations to Dronashish.



## NET/JRF

Sukanya Hazarika, an alumna of our school (Class of 2018), and student of Tezpur University, has qualified NET/JRF in Sociology. The UGC National Eligibility Test is an Indian standardized test that determines the eligibility of an Indian citizen to be an assistant professor in Indian universities and colleges, as well as to be awarded with a Junior Research Fellowship to pursue research in the respective subject. We extend our heartiest congratulations to Sukanya and her parents.



# MR. PAUL CARLING AND ALUMNI VISIT

The first Headmaster of The Assam Valley School, Mr. Paul Carling and his wife Mrs. Jane Carling, visited school accompanied by alumni on the 18th of March, 2024. The alumni engaged in a friendly cricket match with the School Cricket team before

winding down for an evening filled with various cultural performances including a short play based on Shakespeare's Sonnet 116. It was an evening filled with reliving happy memories, reminiscing and delightful reunions with a place everyone once called home.



# IN CONVERSATION:

*The founding Headmaster of The Assam Valley School, Mr. Paul Carling and his wife Mrs. Jane Carling, visited school accompanied by alumni on the 18th of March. AVE, represented by Editor-in-Chief, Atoti Zhimomi and Deputy Editor, Jigme Pao Tamang, caught a moment with Mr. Carling to have a quick chat with him.*

**AVE:** How does it feel coming back to AVS after so long?

**PC:** I just walked the main drive from the headmaster's house to the school which I used to do everyday, so I was very emotional about the whole thing. It's been very powerful returning but the thing is, it's the same and it's different, the trees have grown so that's different, the outlook of the school is more mature so that's different, but there are some things that are still the same. The guy who used to cook for me - his wife, she was on the bicycle, she saw me and she got off the bike to talk to me. So the human things are still the same, it's still lovely to meet people who were witnessing 1994 when the whole school was starting, so things are different - it's a more mature campus but I think people are still the same and I don't think the students have changed very much.

**AVE:** What have been the most important things you remember as AVS' Headmaster?

**PC:** The most important things we gave to the first years was a sense of adventure, challenge and excitement, and actually, I think to persuade them that they - and we were very privileged to do so - could shape the future of the school. We all felt that we were really pioneers and that we could make it (AVS) a touch different from other types of schools, and I don't mean better, I mean a bit more different and a bit more balanced between academic life and sporting life and literary life and also a bit of community service as well. So I think that's what we tried to do was to give them a chance to mould not only their futures, which they were building from their own efforts but also to think about what makes a school, a school. But we were very lucky because it was a new school, starting with a few people, with terrific excitement. And I'm glad to say that judging by the people who started here, they've done and achieved terrific things, excelling in science, art or diplomacy.

**AVE:** What is the practice that you saw then that you wish had been continued in school?

**PC:** I'd like it to be a very balanced educational institute, you know different people have different interests and they are allowed to carry those skills forward but are also very tolerant and understanding of people with different skills, so the artist understands the scientist. In society, it's very much "us and them", so I'd like to see a tolerance and understanding and a joining together of people who look as though they are of different sides, understanding each other to take the whole thing forward, and I'm sure



it'll be there. Art, music, science and inquiry, literature, and social service, all those things, I'd like to see them, and I know that they are continued here at school.

**AVE:** What were your fondest memories as headmaster?

**PC:** This is actually the fondest memory, to a certain extent, but not as Headmaster; the whole of my family was here and the boys were growing up and they studied 5 and 7 here, and my wife is an extraordinarily gifted teacher and was responsible for a lot of the strength of English and arts in this school. We were also supported by the staff who were terrific, because they were entering into this new adventure as well bringing a huge amount of experience from other schools and from their own families as well and were willing to take a risk to do something which had something that was just a little bit special about it. The students were also very supportive of us - and we asked them to do some quite unusual things. I remember we used to have what I used to call "social service" - it was a club - in the afternoon, and so I had to take one of these activities and we used to have this assault course built into the trees with ropes and everything, and all of the boys gave up fairly quickly, but there was one tough little girl and she saw what the vision was and she went through with it, she was determined to do that - that was the sort of support from the students. We also had a very, very fine catering manager who raised the standards of food and of health, and we had the security guards as well. All of those different elements came together and that was kind of special as well and the things that the students have gone on to do is terrific.

# WE BID ADIEU

*Mr. Leslie Peter Watts, has played a myriad of roles at The Assam Valley School in his long stint of 29 years. From heading three of the 8 Houses to being a Quizmaster to a long tenure as the Mi/c of the Athenaeum, the AVS Debating Society, to serving a long term as the Head of Event Management, Hospitality and Alumni Affairs at school. Mr. Watts is a repository of all things 'AVS.' In his final term at school, AVE catches up with The Great Gatsby for a quick talk.*



**AVE:** What would you say is your most profound memory of AVS?

**LPW:** What has always set AVS apart is its commitment to holistic education; developing well-rounded personalities and not specialists. To this end the school has always encouraged excellence in core subjects as well as in pursuits such as Art, Dance, Music, Dramatics, Debating and sports. Apart from this I will also remember being closely connected with students on many fronts. Of course who can ever forget this beautiful, lush-green campus sans pollution. I was fortunate that our son, Norman grew up in such a clean and enriching environment.

**AVE:** Do you plan to take up the simmering project of writing a series called "Letters To The School" for AVS?

**LPW:** I may well do that as there are myriad memories jostling for space in my mind right now and I am sure there will be time in the months

ahead to pen my thoughts on AVS, apart from other writing work that I already have in the pipeline.

**AVE:** Of the many roles that you have played in AVS, which one has left the most impact on you?

**LPW:** Having spent sixteen out of the twenty-eight years at AVS as a Housemaster, I'd say my interaction with students on the pastoral front has been the most rewarding and enjoyable. I have learnt so much from young minds and I am truly blessed to have had the opportunity to interact with such talented students. You are very often challenged to change your perception of life, of established norms and values and this is how we too, as adults adapt and grow with the changing times.

**AVE:** What are your last words to AVS?

**LPW:** Change is inevitable, embrace it, celebrate it, stride ahead with it. However, the character and ethos of AVS must be preserved.



**Aakanksha Kumar, Head Girl, 2024-25:**

No words that I can use to describe a man such as Mr. Watts- from my 5 year journey here at AVS would do justice to all that he has done in the twenty nine odd years that he has spent and served the school. Diligence, sophistication and efficiency is what makes Mr. Watts the very knowledgeable man that he is. Personally, Mr Watts has been a very loving teacher, somebody who'll care for you like his own- someone who'll never hesitate to share his wisdom with others and someone who you can fall back on, knowing that he'll always guide you to what is right. All the best for your future endeavors sir, the assemblies will feel a little bleak without your 'Pronunciation Pill for the day' and we will always be grateful for all that you did for us during Slaters.

**Mr. Rajendra Chauhan:**

'And in the end, you are not just counted years, but you have carried home a box of learning. I wish you a happy retirement'.

Mr. Watts was one of my mentors in the year 1995 along with Mr. Iftikar Hassan. I thank Mr. Watts for teaching me how to dress up, how to present yourself in a boarding school and off course hockey. We will miss your reading, debating and pronunciation skills taught in every school assembly. AVS was lucky to have all in one in you, with your unique style of leadership, who believed in transforming everyone whom you led as a Teacher, Housemaster and Event Manager. Your dedication and devotion to School has been an inspiration for all.

**Rompiti Patton, Head Boy, 2024-25:**

An accomplished and talented man, Mr. Leslie Peter Watts, I will fondly miss him and his outstanding organizational skill. He was a great man of wisdom and knowledge with whom, any subject of interest under the sun can be discussed. In the short time working with him as the head boy, it was a mostly smooth ride and a memorable one. He will be dearly missed. I wish him a happy and enjoyable life ahead.

**Kartik Duggar, Captain of Event Management, ISC 2014**

As I pen this goodbye to Mr. Watts, it's impossible not to reminisce about his charming personality, the iconic back brush hair and the endearing accent that echoed through the WMH. Yet, it's not just his distinctive appearance and voice that have left a lasting impression. Sir, you've been the epitome of a mentor, a confidante, and a guiding light. Your encouragement has propelled me towards Event Management which I was not very confident about, and your belief in my abilities fortified my confidence. I hope a chilled one is still waiting when we meet next.



**Atoti Zhimomi, Editor-in-Chief, 2024-25:**

With the departure of Mr. Watts, AVS loses an integral person who was truly vital in shaping the school in the way that it is today. His passion and love has always been evident through everything that he has contributed from his innumerable years of service to the school. I wish nothing but the best for the legend behind the Event Management as he embarks on his new journey beyond the gates of AVS. May the roads ahead be full of everything he loves—family, friends, travels and life.

**Aarnav Dutta, School Captain, 2024-25:**

Mr. Watts has been an instrumental part of the school for years now. Every event that went by smoothly in school had his contribution. I worked with Sir during the East India Debates. Having the event in school offline after so many years, he guided me and the rest of the student organizing committee patiently and we learnt how to organize such a big event from him. As a student community, we are ever so thankful to him for all his efforts and time he has spent with us, and for everything we learnt from him.

## Ripple #222

-Rianna Irom, X

*It's an unusual night tonight,  
An unusual hour to be awake  
And unusual for my father to be  
keeping me company  
As he watches the television  
across from me.  
It is only when my mother calls  
To inform me of his accident,  
That I look up to see him smiling  
at me.*

## Tongue Of Slip!!

1. "Just because he was born in the earlies."  
-Gumin Bote Dai, X (*Hence he is an oldie.*)
2. "He is our Dummy Teacher." -Ganga Chandak (*We only see one dummy here.*)
3. "I forgot the meaning but I dont know the word." - Jasraj Thokchom, XII (*Write us a dictionary before you leave.*)
4. "Are you a locationer for him" - Nuklasen Aier, XII (*New GPS system alert.*)
5. "The cause of the consequence is him only." - Krishnam Agarwala, XII (*With that grammar, you are both the cause and the consequence.*)

## Keep It Reel!

*Sunkissed Walks*

-Mahi Poddar, XII



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