

from the desk of the
Head of Academy

5 December 2025



Dear Parents,

One of the most dramatic sites on the British coastline is Portland Bill Lighthouse in Dorset. It is one of those places you can never forget. In fact, it is ranked by Trip Advisor as one of the top tourist attractions in the world. The iconic lighthouse rises 41 metres above the rocks and has guided ships through the dangerous waters of the English Channel for generations. Climbing the old steps to the top of the lighthouse gives you stunning views across the UK's famous Jurassic Coastline.

When my wife and I were living in Oxford, we drove to Portland Bill Lighthouse one day for a family outing. What I remember most is the atmosphere on the day we visited. It was miserable! The wind was howling and the waves were crashing against the cliffs below. Despite the powerful forces of nature, the lighthouse stood firm. It continued to shine a bright light across the sea for ships to navigate by. It did not force ships to take a particular route. It simply provided a constant reference point. It offered guidance without interfering.



I have often thought of that lighthouse as a wonderful metaphor for our work as parents and teachers. A recent article in *The Atlantic* used the same image when discussing what it called "lighthouse parents." The phrase may be new, but the idea behind it captures something many of us instinctively know. In a world that can feel overwhelming, children need the steadiness of a lighthouse in their lives.

You may have come across the term "helicopter parenting". It refers to a style of parenting where adults hover over their children and manage decisions or solve problems on their behalf. This differs from the "lawnmower parent" who removes obstacles before a child encounters them. It also differs from the parent who steps back completely and leaves the children to manage life on their own. Lighthouse parenting offers an alternative. It provides steady guidance while giving children the space to learn how to navigate for themselves.

A lighthouse is visible but not intrusive. It is strong but not overpowering. It offers guidance in rough weather but leaves each ship free to choose its own route. In the same way, children develop confidence when they grow up with a steady adult presence and enough room to spread their own sails.

Children need the adults in their lives to be "lighthouse steady". They need us to listen before we advise and to pause before we intervene. These are the moments in which confidence grows. When we let a child speak to a teacher themselves, or sort out a friendship concern or take responsibility for a forgotten assignment, we allow them to discover that they can cope with more

than they imagined.

At the Academy, we try to offer the same steady guidance that a lighthouse represents. We set clear expectations, but we also ask students to take responsibility for their learning and the choices they make. This is how they discover what they are capable of. As parents and educators, we share the same hope. We want our children to become capable and resilient young people who meet the world with curiosity rather than fear. That growth does not come from smoothing every wave or removing every rock.

The lighthouse image reminds us that our presence can matter more than our interventions. The well-known psychiatrist and neuroscientist, Dr Daniel Siegel, has shown that children's developing brains are shaped by the emotional state of the adults around them. When a child grows up in the presence of a calm and integrated adult brain, they are more likely to develop that same steadiness themselves. When children feel anchored in that kind of steadiness, they navigate life with greater confidence and a deeper sense of their own strength.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



JUNIOR SCHOOL CAMPING ADVENTURES

Students in Grades 3 and 4 participated in an exciting camping experience last week. During the day they engaged in a range of outdoor activities that helped them grow in confidence. Grade 3 students pitched tents, joined team building games and enjoyed nature walks and quiet moments for reflection. The camp offered a welcome opportunity to connect with the natural world and learn in a practical, engaging way. Grade 4 students also supported a social service project where they helped repaint a government school building. They spent time with the children there, played games and shared conversations that built mutual understanding. The camps blended adventure with meaningful learning. Students practised cooperation and responsibility while creating joyful memories with their classmates!



MAJOR INTER-SCHOOL SPORTS MEET HOSTED ON CAMPUS

The Senior School was proud to host a very successful Inter School Sports Meet over two weekends, 22 and 23 November and 29 and 30 November. Meticulously organised by our PE and Sports team under the guidance of our Head of Physical Education Mr Ravi Kumar, the events followed a league format with knockout rounds. The statistics were impressive with 80 teams and 900 students from 16 schools taking part in boys and girls football, squash, swimming, tennis and cricket. Importantly, the event reflected the vision of the Aga Khan Academies. It created a setting where young people could strive for excellence, practise ethical leadership and learn to compete with integrity and respect. The spirit in which students played showed the character and resilience that the Academies aim to nurture in every learner.





EXPLORING MATTER AND MATERIALS

Grade 3 students recently visited the Secondary School science labs as part of their unit of inquiry, How the World Works. The visit gave them practical experience with different materials and how these respond to changes in temperature, force and other conditions. Students observed experiments such as rusting of iron, curdling of milk and reactions involving soluble and insoluble materials. These demonstrations helped them understand physical and chemical changes. They also explored reversible and irreversible changes in everyday materials which strengthened their ability to recognise which processes can be undone and which create something entirely new. The lab team guided students with care and encouraged curiosity as they made observations and recorded their findings. The visit deepened their understanding of matter and materials and helped them connect classroom learning with real world phenomena.



AN EXPLORATION OF TELUGU ESSAY WRITING

The Telugu department recently hosted a workshop on essay writing for all students. Led by Dr Ravi Chandra of Anantapur Central University, the session introduced students to the craft of essay writing and the techniques that shape strong Telugu essays. Dr Ravi explained how essays are structured, outlined different essay types and highlighted their place within Telugu literary traditions. It was an informative and well-received session and the department looks forward to offering similar learning opportunities in the future.



CELEBRATING DIVERSITY THROUGH PLURALISM

Personal Social Health and Economic education sessions on the Aga Khan curricular strand of Pluralism took place last week for students in Grades 6 to 10. These sessions encouraged students to examine their own cultural identities and to learn about the diverse backgrounds represented within their peer group. Pluralism is central to the vision of the Aga Khan Academies, which seek to develop young people who can engage thoughtfully with difference and contribute to more inclusive communities. Through discussions, role plays, games and movement-based activities, students experienced this vision in practice and considered how pluralism shapes the way we learn and live together. They also reflected on how they can express the spirit of pluralism in their daily interactions, both in school and beyond.



LEARNING BEYOND THE CLASSROOM

This week, students in Grades 1 and 3 stepped beyond the classroom to deepen their understanding of their units of inquiry. Grade 1 students visited the Sudha Car Museum, where they saw cars shaped like shoes, cameras, burgers and cricket balls. They discussed how the creator transformed simple ideas into imaginative vehicles through creativity and strong problem-solving skills.

Grade 3 students visited a textile art exhibition at Dhi Art Gallery, which linked closely to their study of matter and materials. They explored how different fabrics are used to create artworks and reflected on how artists convey ideas and emotions through cloth. The visit encouraged them to think creatively and to believe that even a simple idea can grow into something remarkable.

Together, these experiences nurtured thoughtful, curious and principled young learners—embodying the Academy’s mission to develop leaders with purpose.



ALIGNING OBSERVATION FOR TEACHER GROWTH

Earlier this week, the Centre for Educational Research Innovation and Training, together with our teacher coach Ms Vani Vishwanath, led a capacity-building session on lesson observation for mentors of our *Teacher Preparation Programme* interns. Stakeholders, including mentors, buddy teachers, heads of department, curriculum coordinators and the Senior School Principal, worked together to consider what effective observation and feedback should look like. The session connected the school's current observation tools with the University of British Columbia framework and the Aga Khan Academy teacher profile. Participants mapped key focus areas and co-created a shared template to support consistent and evidence-based feedback. This workshop is the first in a series that will foster coherence and a strong sense of shared purpose in how the Academy develops its future educators.

THIS WEEK'S SPOTLIGHTS



GROWTH, GRIT AND ACHIEVEMENT FOR YOUNG ATHLETES

Congratulations to Rukmini in Grade 5 who won the gold medal in gymnastics at the Altus Sports Festival hosted by Chirec International School. Competing as the sole representative of the Academy she showed great focus and composure and we are very proud of her achievement. Isaac in Grade 4 also distinguished himself by securing second place in the Youth Roller Skating Foundation championship. His strong performance reflects many hours of dedication and practice and his success has been a source of excitement among his classmates. Arya, also in Grade 4, took part in a world record attempt in Chennai for the largest karate display. Participating in an event of this scale required discipline and commitment and it offered a memorable opportunity to be part of something remarkable. We are delighted by the accomplishments of all three students. Their effort and enthusiasm reflect the spirit of learning and personal growth that we encourage across the Junior School.



ON THE RUN!

Several members of staff have recently joined runners across Hyderabad, taking part in community events that promote fitness and wellbeing. Ms Elizabeth, Ms Sarah and Ms Kathryn participated in the Women's Night Run, the Green Heartfulness Run and the Equality Run and each achieved a new personal best. Their commitment and enthusiasm have been an inspiration to colleagues and students alike. Building on this momentum, we are planning extracurricular running groups for students. These groups will offer structured training and the chance to take part in local running events as school teams. We hope this will encourage students to discover the enjoyment of running, set personal goals and experience the sense of achievement that comes from sustained effort and healthy habits.



STRENGTHENING LEARNING AND COLLABORATION ACROSS THE ACADEMIES

My name is Joe Hamkari, and I am the Dean of Studies at the Aga Khan Academy Dhaka. I have had the privilege of spending a week with educators at the Academy in Hyderabad. Excellence in education is one of the Academy's mottos. Education today is a shared endeavour, and I came to learn from the practices in Hyderabad and consider what might support our work in Dhaka. I was warmly welcomed by staff and spent the week observing classes, speaking with educators and studying how the school plans its timetables and organises teaching and learning. I was delighted to see teams working together to provide a high-quality educational experience. My learning ranged from observing how the Junior School environment helps young learners grow in confidence to seeing how Theory of Knowledge enables senior students to think critically about how learning takes place. I am grateful to all staff and students for their hospitality and I am confident that this visit marks the beginning of deeper collaboration across the Academies.



FRENCH EMBASSY VISIT EXPLORES ACADEMY PARTNERSHIP

The Academy recently hosted delegates from the Embassy of France for a collaborative meeting with the Academy leadership team. The purpose of the visit was to explore partnerships that would strengthen academic pathways for students, particularly in relation to higher education in France. The delegates shared insights on French universities, scholarship options and programmes that support international students. The group also discussed ways to broaden collaboration related to the Diploma in French Language examinations. The meeting marked a promising step towards expanding international opportunities for our students and further discussions are planned in the coming months.

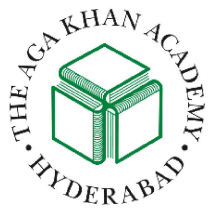
“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character and their commitment to citizenship.”

His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

Groundbreaking of the International Academic Centre of Excellence, Tanzania, 17 March 2005



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

12 December 2025



Dear Parents,

Every morning when I open my Gmail, I find a message from OneDrive titled *Your memories from this day*. It brings up photographs from years gone by. My children appear at different stages of their lives, smiling, laughing or celebrating a special occasion. I am sure many of you receive the same reminders. They show us the moments we choose to keep.

There is an old saying that being human is like wearing a coat with two pockets. One pocket holds dust and the other holds gold. It reminds us that our lives and our children's lives contain things of worth and things of little value.

When it comes to our children, most of us only take photographs of the gold. We keep the photos of birthdays and other milestone events. These memories lift our spirits because they show our children at their best.

We don't keep photographs of the dust. None of us stores images of our children's tears or anger. Yet these moments are equally part of growing up. But they are harder to face and need patience and time to understand. They can also be messy and unpleasant. We would never choose to save them in an album.

Over the years, I have come to see value in the dust as well as in the gold. When young people struggle or fail, we often find the richest opportunities for growth. Some of the most positive changes I have witnessed in students began with a moment of failure or a poor choice that landed them in trouble. When guided with care, these moments become turning points.

Three truths stand out for me about the coats we wear:

No one is born with gold in both pockets. Our children's lives will not always consist of golden moments. There will be ups and downs, and there will be times when our hopes for them seem to collapse into dust. This is normal – and when we feel defeated and broken in the face of it, that is normal too.

Dust is lighter than gold. The moments of failure and pain are transitory; they will pass. The story is told of a Persian king who instructed his wise men to inscribe a ring for him with words that would be true in every situation and bring him comfort whenever he was sad. After many weeks of thought, the wise men presented him with a ring. Inscribed on it were the words, "This too shall pass." These words remind us of something we easily forget in the midst of a crisis - that all circumstances, positive or negative, are temporary: the sun will rise on a new day, hope will reappear, and a way forward will emerge.

The gold defines us. There's a reason why the photos we cherish of our children speak of joy and goodness. It's because this is the hope we have for them - that they will flourish

and that they will shine. The gold is their true value and their true greatness. Though failure and disappointment may help to shape our children, no child should ever be defined by their shortcomings and failures. We define children by their gold and not by their dust.

Best wishes,



Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



A MESSAGE FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL PRINCIPAL MS ARCHNA GERA

I hope the countdown to the end of the year has been exciting and filled with joyful opportunities for you and your families!

In recent communications, we have explained how the Junior School is working towards making student assessment qualitative, more informative and more closely aligned with our written curriculum. This remains a key focus as we move into the next chapter of the school's growth. Through several training sessions and ongoing collaborative dialogues, teachers have been implementing increasingly rigorous assessments in the classroom.

These have been shared with you through the Assessment Folders that go home at the end of every unit. Since this updated system was first introduced in Unit 2, you would have received the folders for the first time in early November and you will receive them again today.

We encourage you to review your child's assessments, including their levels of achievement, the evidence of their learning and the feedback provided by their teacher. We also encourage you to also complete the parent comment sheet included in the folder so that this can be returned to school on Monday, after which the folders will be sent home again at the end of Unit 3. As you look through the work, you will notice that the quality and rigour of the assessments have strengthened since Unit 1 and will continue to evolve. Our intention is to ensure that parents remain informed about their child's growth in a meaningful and ongoing way. Beginning next academic year, this system of collating and sharing assessments will shift to an online platform called Seesaw. We will be sharing more details about this transition towards the end of the academic year.

Since this body of work now provides a clear and comprehensive picture of student learning, we will not be issuing a mid-term report this year. However, if you would like to discuss your child's progress in greater detail or wish to understand the assessment tools more deeply, you are most welcome to reach out directly to your child's teacher to schedule an online or face-to-face conversation.

We wish you and your families a warm and joyful festive season, and we look forward to continued partnership in the months ahead.



SENIOR SCHOOL SPORTS DAY

This year's Senior School Sports Day was a resounding success. Excitement was high as students cheered on their Houses. Every House point was fiercely contested in nail-biting finishes. The relay races, in particular, provided some excellent entertainment for the spirited crowd. The day commenced with a well-choreographed and lively Zumba performance by our Grade 6 to 10 girls. Students then participated in a wide range of track and field events, including 100m, 200m, 400m, 4×100m relay, long jump and shot put. A new highlight this year was the introduction of the 2.5 km "Open to All" Run, which saw enthusiastic participation from both students and staff. The Sports Day was a celebration of athleticism, teamwork and school spirit. We extend our appreciation to all staff, coaches and participating students for contributing to the success of this memorable event. Kakatiya House is currently leading the inter-house competition with 181 points.



JUNIOR SCHOOL SPORTS DAY

It was a cold start to today's Junior School Sports Day and a good opportunity to warm up with some spirited events on the track! A fabulous turnout by parents added to the celebratory atmosphere. The programme began with a yoga display by our Junior School students. There was something quietly impressive about their focus and calm. It was also a helpful reminder that sport is not only about speed or strength. It is also about balance, breath and the ability to steady yourself before you begin. Congratulations to all our Junior School students for a memorable and energetic morning - and thank you to the Physical Education team who prepared them and to the parents who supported them. It was a good morning and it left us warmer in more ways than one!



BUILDING STRONG FOUNDATIONS IN READING AND WRITING

Grade 1 students have been strengthening their phonics and spelling skills this term. By deepening their understanding of the letters and sounds they see and hear, they are developing greater confidence in reading, writing, and speaking. We are delighted to see the wonderful progress they have made. Our phonics lessons are designed to be engaging and interactive. Students learn through a blend of online games, digital activities, and hands-on group games that make the learning engaging. Their enthusiasm for learning has been evident throughout the term and we are confident that they will continue to grow through many more exciting and playful sessions ahead.



MYP PERSONAL PROJECT WORKSHOP 2025

Grade 10 students recently took part in a two-day Personal Project Workshop which gave them focused time and guidance to refine their reports and bring their work to completion. The Personal Project is a key milestone in the MYP. It asks students to take responsibility for an extended piece of independent learning that grows from a personal interest. Through the process, students plan, research, manage their time and reflect on their learning. The value of the project lies not only in the final product but in the habits it builds, including independence and academic integrity. During the workshop, students received targeted support and benefited from the presence of interns from the Teacher Preparation Programme who offered guidance and reassurance when needed. Over the two days, students worked with focus and maturity, and many gained a clearer understanding of their own learning strengths. With submissions now complete, students move forward with a sense of relief and pride. The Personal Project marks the end of the MYP journey and prepares students well for the challenges of the Diploma Programme and beyond.



STUDENT COUNCIL ASSEMBLY ON SCHOOL ETIQUETTE AND WELL-BEING

This week, our Junior School Student Council led a thoughtful assembly focused on strengthening our shared community values. The student leaders spoke confidently about the importance of everyday school etiquette. They also highlighted the need to make safe and considerate choices during play. A key part of the assembly was the launch of our “Be a Buddy, not a Bully” campaign. The Student Council encouraged all learners to choose kindness, show empathy and support peers who may need a friend. This initiative aims to build a culture where every student feels seen, valued and respected. The assembly concluded with an introduction to our “Your Voice Matters” box—a space where students can share ideas, concerns or suggestions. We are proud of our young leaders for taking the initiative to guide the school toward a more caring, responsible and inclusive environment.



REFLECTING ON KNOWLEDGE THROUGH A METACOGNITIVE LENS

As part of their Theory of Knowledge programme, DP 1 students recently attended a session titled DP 1 “Puducherry Trip A Metacognitive Gaze” led by two of their peers, Shresht Vadavalli and Sia Karmali. The session invited students to reflect on different ways of knowing and to consider how experience, context and perspective shape understanding.

The presentation raised questions around sustainability and wellbeing, compliance and radical approaches to life, worldview and audience. Drawing on her reflections from Sadhana Forest, Sia highlighted the value of ecological knowledge and explored the legitimacy of indigenous knowledge systems. Shresht focused on the complexities of Auroville, examining the role of spiritual knowledge and the influence of context in shaping acceptance or rejection of claims based on subjective experience. He also prompted discussion on the capacity of religion to address human challenges and the role of scientific development in enhancing the quality of thinking. Attended by the DP 1 cohort and their Theory of Knowledge teachers, the session deepened students metacognitive engagement with knowledge and encouraged them to think more critically about how understanding is formed and evaluated in the world around them.



LEARNING HINDI THE PLAYFUL WAY!

Junior School students are developing their Hindi speaking skills through well-known games such as Kabaddi, Duck Duck Goose and Green Light Red Light. Teachers have adapted these games so that students practise Hindi sentences and vocabulary while moving, listening and responding to one another. This approach reflects the pedagogy of play which recognises that young children learn best when they are actively engaged and emotionally invested in what they are doing. Through play students take risks with language, repeat structures naturally and build confidence without fear of making mistakes. Learning becomes social, physical and meaningful rather than purely instructional. As a result, Hindi lessons are lively and enjoyable and students are developing learning habits that will support them well as they grow.



CHRISTMAS AT FALAKNUMA PALACE

This week a small group of residential students had the opportunity to visit Falaknuma Palace for the Christmas Tree Lighting Ceremony. Falaknuma Palace, one of Hyderabad's most iconic heritage landmarks, provided a beautiful and historic setting for the evening. Accompanied by Ms December, the girls sang a Christmas medley in the Palace courtyard, adding warmth and music to a truly special occasion. Performing in such a setting was a memorable experience and one that many of the students will carry with them for a long time. Our thanks go to Ms Faridah for organising the visit and to Ms Maha, Ms December and Ms Katy for accompanying and supporting the students throughout the evening. We hope there will be many more opportunities for students to take part in experiences like this that connect learning, culture and community.

THIS WEEK'S STAFF SPOTLIGHTS



CELEBRATING GLOBAL MUSICAL LEARNING

The Academy is proud to share that our Music Teacher, Mr Altamash Ansari, recently attended the Aga Khan Music Awards and associated workshops in London. The Aga Khan Music Awards celebrate excellence in music from diverse cultures and support artists who preserve, develop and reimagine musical traditions in contemporary contexts. Alongside performances, the programme offers workshops and exchanges that encourage deep listening, collaboration and reflection. Mr Altamash took part in these rich learning experiences, engaging with musicians and educators from across the world. The opportunity allowed him to explore new perspectives on music-making and teaching and to reflect on how tradition and innovation can sit side by side. By bringing this learning back into the classroom, students' musical understanding and appreciation will be enriched!

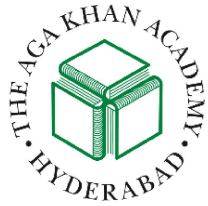
“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character and their commitment to citizenship.”

His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

Groundbreaking of the International Academic Centre of Excellence, Tanzania, 17 March 2005



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

19 December 2025



Dear Parents,

This has been a whirlwind end to a busy term! Students will return home today ready for some well-earned rest. The last few days have seen some fabulous events on campus – the Junior School and Senior School Sports Days last week, a very successful Model United Nations over the weekend and yesterday's Winter Festival.

In just under 2 weeks from now, New Year celebrations will ripple out around the world – 2025 will be a thing of the past, and 2026 will lie ahead, full of excitement and opportunity. With 4 weeks of the Winter Break ahead, the Academy enjoys a gentle start to the New Year – a chance to pause before the final term of this school year.

When school resumes on Monday, 19th January, our DP2 students will have a little under 100 days before the start of their IB exams on 27th April. The Winter Break is a chance for them to sharpen up their focus before they cross the finish line at Graduation.

As your children return home for the winter break, three simple ideas may be helpful.

Rest first

Children do not thrive when the holidays are filled with the same packed routines that define term time. They need downtime. The three things most adolescents benefit from in abundance are: sleep, food and play. From that foundation, they are far more likely to do the things we hope they will do: some preparation for next term, a little revision where needed, perhaps some music practice or the gift of unhurried leisure reading.

A growing body of developmental and neuroscience research reminds us that rest is not the absence of learning; it is one of its essential conditions. During periods of unstructured rest, the brain consolidates memory and regulates emotion. Adequate sleep, in particular, is strongly linked to improved mood and concentration. Chronic tiredness is associated with heightened anxiety and reduced executive function. Add to this the simple but powerful benefits of good food and playful activity, and we begin to see why the foundations matter so much.

One meaningful focus

Four weeks is short enough to end up doing very little! But it is also long enough to achieve something significant. A short project. A new skill. A fitness goal. Volunteering with an NGO or discovering a new hobby. There are also some excellent online options for structured learning. If your son or daughter can identify one thing to focus on over the break, they will return to school in January with a sense of pride and momentum that often carries forward into the new year. The opposite is also true: four weeks without purpose can become an aimless blur. As the saying goes, "If you aim for nothing, you'll probably hit it."

Don't fear boredom

I still remember my own children saying, “Dad, I’m bored.” My response was usually, “Good. Be bored for a while. It’s good for you.” At the time, it felt a little unkind. Research now suggests it was probably the right instinct.

For many young people today, life is saturated with stimulation. Screens, schedules and constant activity can leave very little space for the mind to wander. When that stimulation is suddenly removed, boredom can feel uncomfortable. Yet psychologists point out that boredom plays an important developmental role. Studies link periods of boredom with greater creativity, improved problem-solving and the emergence of intrinsic motivation. When the brain is not being constantly entertained, it begins to ask its own questions and generate its own ideas.

If we resist the urge to immediately fix boredom for our children, something interesting often happens. After the initial irritation passes, boredom can quieten mental noise and reduce the sense of constant urgency. It gently prompts the questions that matter: What shall I do next? What do I actually want to make, read, learn or try?

So if, at some point over the break, your child tells you they are bored, you may not need to rush in with solutions. It may be precisely the kind of space their mind needs to rest and reset.

On behalf of all of us here at the Academy, I wish you an abundance of joy and happiness this festive season. May 2026 be a fulfilling and successful year for you and your whole family. We look forward to welcoming your children back early in the New Year and to the next exciting chapter in their Academy education!

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name and last name clearly distinguishable.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



WINTER FEST 2025

Winter Fest is a much-anticipated highlight on the school calendar, blending cultural performances, experiential learning and community spirit into a vibrant celebration. Held on Thursday, it provided a fitting conclusion to a busy and rewarding term. The festival showcased a range of Experiential Learning Clubs, including Crochet, Public Speaking, Culinary, Pottery, Sculpting and Service Learning. Student-run food stalls, alongside vendor stalls, offered a tempting variety of treats and added to the festive atmosphere. Cultural performances brought the day to life, featuring Indian classical dance, Levantine Dabke, the Music Club and the Beaten Band's dynamic rhythms. The celebrations concluded with Krismas Nang Nen, a theatrical performance depicting how Christmas is celebrated in the rural villages of Mizoram. Winter Fest beautifully captured the Academy's spirit of creativity, community and joyful togetherness, inspiring us to carry these themes forward into the new year.





LITTLE STARS, BIG CELEBRATIONS

Grade 1 students participated in a delightful Winter Festival Assembly this week, celebrating the rich diversity of festivals observed in India and around the world. Our young learners captivated the audience with performances highlighting Lohri and Makar Sankranti, festivals that symbolise harvest, renewal and new beginnings. Adding a global dimension, students also presented the Ice Festival through graceful ballet and energetic skating, beautifully reflecting winter celebrations from different cultures. Through music, movement and expressive performance, students demonstrated a growing appreciation of cultural diversity. The assembly was a wonderful example of experiential learning, bringing traditions to life through joyful creativity.



A JOYFUL CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION ACROSS CAMPUS

Last weekend, our residential community came together to celebrate Christmas in a truly festive spirit. The celebrations began with students visiting staff homes to share Christmas goodies and personally invite everyone to join the evening festivities. As the day unfolded, the campus took on a magical glow, with twinkling lights, beautifully decorated Christmas trees and festive displays around the Academy Building. The evening buzzed with energy as students and teachers enjoyed traditional games and seasonal treats. One of the most memorable moments was the enthusiastic carol singing, which brought the community together in song and perfectly rounded off a joyful celebration of togetherness.



TERM ONE TRIUMPHS

The Junior School has reached its first-term milestone, and what a successful term it has been. Since August, we have watched our Grade 1 students grow and flourish, their confidence and smiles now a winning combination. Our sports teams have gone from strength to strength, proudly bringing home medals and trophies, while pupils across the school have celebrated their own personal learning victories. Festivals and special days have been marked with joy, laughter and togetherness and new friendships have been beautifully formed. What a term it has been. We look forward to Term Two bringing more of the same!



A BOOK A WEEK READING CHALLENGE

The Senior School Library successfully conducted a six-week reading challenge titled A Book a Week for MYP 1–3 students, aimed at fostering consistent reading habits and strengthening non-fiction literacy. Students were encouraged to read one non-fiction book each week and submit evidence of their reading through creative formats.

MYP 1: Section 6K – an outstanding 66 books read

MYP 2: Section 7A – 39 books read

MYP 3: Section 8H – an impressive 50 books read

The challenge promoted reading for knowledge while also supporting the development of Approaches to Learning skills, including research, self-management and communication.



A TASTE OF READING

This week, Grade 5 students took part in an engaging Book Tasting activity designed to empower them to select their literature book for the upcoming term. With a carefully curated selection of novels, students sampled different genres and authors before making an informed choice. The session concluded with each student selecting a book and justifying their choice, encouraging thoughtful decision-making and a deeper connection to their reading preferences. This approach aims to nurture a love of reading while helping students discover the authors and genres that resonate most with them.



WARM HEARTS, WARMER HOODIES

"You're the first friendly face we see every morning. This is for all those cold mornings you spend looking out for us." - Grade 8 students

This week, we witnessed a touching act of kindness that blended warmth with gratitude. Guided by Mr Tanupriyo and Mr Venkat, our Grade 8 students presented brand-new hoodies to our security staff as a gesture of appreciation. Students acknowledged the vigilance and warm greetings the security team offers each day. Head of Security Mr Suresh Emandi shared, *"It's not the hoodie itself, but the thought behind it that truly touches us. This gesture makes every early morning worth it."* By recognising the often-unsung contributions of our support staff, Grade 8 offered a powerful lesson in leadership, gratitude and kindness.



SKILLS WORKSHOP – CROCHET LEARNING

As part of the Skills Workshop programme, Junior School students engaged in a special crochet activity, creating their own purses. Through this hands-on experience, learners developed fine motor skills, patience and perseverance while following sequential steps. The activity encouraged creativity, learner agency and practical life skills, reflecting meaningful learning beyond the classroom. Students also demonstrated collaboration and pride in showcasing their completed work.



OUTDOOR LEARNING CAMP AT MARGOSA REWILD RESORT

Grade 7 students recently returned from an enriching outdoor learning camp at Margosa Rewild Resort, organised in collaboration with *Rocksport Academy*. Excellent supervision, clear safety protocols and seamless coordination between teachers, Rocksport trainers and the school nurse ensured student well-being throughout the experience. Activities included raft building, zip-lining, team challenges, village-style cooking, bonfire reflections, a DJ night and creative service-learning initiatives. A highlight was the service activity at a nearby government school, where students engaged in teaching sessions, painting, cultural exchange and Zumba activities. Opportunities for reflection through journal writing and group discussions supported personal growth and self-awareness, making the camp a valuable extension of learning beyond the classroom.



FROM TRADITION TO TRENDS

The Digital Design Challenge concluded last week, with students from Grades 6-8 presenting final digital solutions across four categories: Scratch games, websites, mobile apps and stop-motion videos. All projects were aligned with the theme Tradition to Trends. The challenge provided students with the opportunity to design and present fully functional digital solutions, demonstrating strong problem-solving skills and creativity using platforms such as Scratch, Adobe XD and Dreamweaver. Winning entries were recognised with appreciation certificates during assembly.



LEARNING THROUGH COMPETITION

As part of the weekend sports programme, our Under-11 boys' cricket team played their first external match against Farooqi Cricket Academy. Batting first, Farooqi scored 172 runs for 5 wickets in 20 overs. In reply, our team showed determination and resilience, scoring 155 runs before being bowled out in 19.4 overs, losing by 17 runs. The closely contested match provided valuable competitive experience and an important learning opportunity for our young players.



CLOSING THE TERM ON A HIGH NOTE

The Senior School's final assembly marked a joyful pause before the winter break. The assembly opened with a warm welcome from Senior School Principal Mr Christian Schmelz, followed by the presentation of Design Challenge certificates to winning teams from Grades 6-8. Head Librarian Ms Madhu announced the winners of the MYP Reading Challenge, celebrating students' commitment to reading, while Grade 10 art students shared reflections from their service-learning experiences. A highlight of the afternoon was a piano performance by Grade 8 students Arunima Ghosh and Aryan Patel, who performed Jacques Offenbach's *Infernal Galop* in a four-hands arrangement. The assembly concluded with Sports Day score announcements and holiday wishes from Head of Academy Dr Jonathan Long.



CELEBRATING OUR TPP GRADUATES

This week, Smriti Puri, Gollapalli Dhanush Krishna, Zaina Malak Vakkal Suhel and Zakeeya Zara Abbas celebrated the completion of the 18-month Teacher Preparation Programme (TPP) internship. TPP is a rigorous, values-driven pathway designed to prepare aspiring IB educators to serve within the Academy and across the wider educational network. These graduates entered the programme as passionate learners and leave as compassionate, skilled and reflective educators. We congratulate the TPP graduating cohort of 2025 and wish them every success as they begin the next chapter of their professional journeys.

“The students at this institution will be distinguished not only for their academic capacity, but for their character

and their commitment to citizenship.”

His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

Groundbreaking of the International Academic Centre of Excellence, Tanzania, 17 March 2005



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD
