

from the desk of the
Head of Academy

10 January 2025



Dear Parents,

Greetings from the Academy. I would like to extend my warmest wishes to you and your family for a very Happy New Year. May this be a year of health, happiness and purpose for each of us!

I also want to wish a joyful Sankranti for those of you who will be celebrating this special festival in the coming days. Sankranti marks the Sun's transit into Capricorn, the end of the winter solstice and the beginning of longer days leading toward the summer. It's a time to reflect on growth and renewal, just as we look forward to the possibilities of the New Year. May this festival of new life bless us all with hope and opportunity in the months ahead.

School will resume on Wednesday, 15 January and I know you have already received a start-of-term letter from either our Junior School Principal, Ms Latha, or our Senior School Principal, Mr Christian. There's a buzz in the air as we look forward to greeting old friends, meeting new faces and embracing the sense of possibility that comes with a new term. We are especially excited to welcome our exchange students from Mombasa and Maputo, adding a wonderful international dimension to our learning community.

A new term offers each of us the opportunity to reset, reflect and move forward with renewed energy and purpose. It is a time to reconnect with goals and embrace the challenges that will shape our growth. Though the start of the year brings excitement, we also know that the months ahead may bring times of challenge. Let's remember the importance of maintaining perspective,

especially when faced with the everyday stresses of life. I often find it helpful to ask myself, “Will this matter a year from now?” More often than not, the things that seem overwhelming at the moment will fade into the background, leaving us with valuable lessons and greater clarity.

With determination, resilience and the courage to focus on what truly matters, we will make this term a memorable one for our students and our community.

Our regular Friday newsletters will begin again next week. In the meantime, I wish you all a wonderful start to the year and a term filled with growth, learning and connection.

Best wishes,



Dr Jonathan Long



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD





from the desk of the
Head of Academy

17 January 2025



This morning's Senior School assembly took place against the misty backdrop of the Amphitheatre. Cool winter mornings on campus make for a fresh start to the day and a welcome opportunity to enjoy some fine spring weather before the summer heat arrives!

Dear Parents,

Greetings from the Academy at the end of the first week of a new term – and welcome back to these weekly newsletters! It's been wonderful to see the campus come alive again with the return of our students. There are many things that make this a uniquely special place in which young people can grow and flourish. What I find most compelling is the atmosphere of happy purposefulness, the determination to succeed, to enjoy life, to enjoy each other's company and, most importantly, to discover that there is far more in each of us than we think!

Here's a frightening statistic – 80% of New Year's resolutions are broken by the second week of February! Whether it's getting fitter, learning something new or committing to a healthier lifestyle, New Year's resolutions are promises we make to ourselves. They are filled with hope and ambition. But the research shows that despite the good intentions, these promises usually slip away as everyday life takes over. The problem is that these broken resolutions don't just fade away; they can transform into regrets that linger with us for a long time, reminding us of the goals we never achieved.

One of my favourite online social experiments took place a few years ago when a large chalkboard was placed on a sidewalk in New York City with the prompt: "Write your biggest regret." Passers-by were invited to pick up a piece of chalk and publicly share their personal regrets.

You can watch a short film clip of what happened at the link below.

[What's Your Biggest Regret?](#)

As people wrote, a pattern emerged: most regrets were about things they didn't do, rather than things they did. Many regrets fall into categories like missed opportunities, unspoken words, relationships left unresolved or dreams left unpursued. Phrases like "Not saying 'I love you,'" "Not following my passion," or "Not taking a risk" were common.

The project highlighted how people often regret inaction more than mistakes. American writer, Mark Twain, captured this type of disappointment brilliantly when he wrote, *"Twenty years from now you will be more disappointed by the things you didn't do than by the ones you did do."*

One of the valuable qualities I hope we develop in students at the Academy is courage. I don't mean that they will become foolhardy or reckless! The International Baccalaureate has a lovely definition which sums up this quality well. It describes young people who *"approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with **courage** and **forethought** and have the **independence of spirit** to explore new roles, ideas and strategies. They are **brave** and **articulate** in defending their beliefs."*

One of the best ways to allow these characteristics to grow is by making it possible for young people to make mistakes, to fail, to come up short and to disappoint. We all know that failure can be an important teacher. It's said that failure is one of the greatest teachers in the universe! I've also heard it said that good schools help students to learn from success whereas great schools enable students to learn from failure.

As parents, it's hard to deal with our children's failures, shortcomings and blunders – and especially when they seem to have been avoidable. But being immovable and stubborn in the face of our children's mistakes risks turning them into cautious and timid souls – individuals who go through life "playing it safe" and never truly achieving their potential or unleashing their greatness.

When we see our children's failures as a stepping stone on the path to growth and an opportunity to learn, we eradicate the debilitating impact of regret on our lives and theirs.

Mark Twain's words about regret end with an inspiring encouragement to become risk-takers, to seize opportunities and to reach out towards what is possible – even if it means encountering failure along the way: *"So throw off the bowlines. Sail away from the safe harbour. Catch the trade winds in your sails. Explore. Dream. Discover!"*

Best wishes,

Jonathan Long

Dr Jonathan Long



A MESSAGE FROM THE DEPUTY HEAD – MR JEFF

Managebac is an essential tool for streamlining and enhancing your child's educational experience at the Academy. This platform is central to their academic journey, offering a structured way to monitor progress, manage assignments and ensure smooth communication between students, parents and teachers. In addition, Managebac supports efficient attendance tracking, enabling parents to stay informed and actively involved. Managebac helps students in Grades 6–12 to:

- **Track Academic Progress:** Students can view and submit assignments, track deadlines, and receive feedback from teachers.
- **Stay Organised:** With features like calendar integration and notifications, students are encouraged to develop time management skills.
- **Enhance Collaboration:** Teachers use Managebac to share resources, set tasks and communicate with students, fostering a collaborative learning environment.

Parents can use Managebac to monitor their child's academic development, attendance and overall engagement with the programme. You can access Managebac through the following steps:

1. New Users:

- Check the email address shared with the school for an invitation to Managebac.
- Follow the link to set a password and log in using your credentials.

2. Existing Users:

- If you've forgotten your password, click on "Forgot Password" on the login page and follow the instructions to reset it.

For detailed guidance, click [here](#).

Attendance Tracking and Excusal Requests

Managebac also simplifies the process of tracking and managing attendance. If your child needs an excusal, you can follow these simple steps:

1. Go to the homepage and click on the "Excusal Request" button.
2. Enter the required details, including the dates, number of days and reason for the excusal.
3. Click "Submit" to complete the process.

This feature ensures accurate record-keeping and allows parents to notify the school promptly of absences.

For detailed guidance, click [here](#).

Stay Connected and Engaged

By actively using Managebac, you can stay informed about your child's academic and extracurricular activities, fostering a stronger partnership with the school. We encourage all parents to log in regularly, explore the platform's features and leverage this tool to support your child's success in the MYP and IB programmes.

Best wishes,
Jeff Doerfler

THIS WEEK'S NEWS

THREE BOOK OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS ANNOUNCED TODAY!

We take great pride in recognising and celebrating our students' exceptional achievements, both academically and in their contributions to the wider community. One of the highest honours a student can receive is known as the Book of Excellence.

This award is reserved for students whose work or actions stand out as exemplary, demonstrating a remarkable level of dedication, creativity or service. Teachers nominate students whose efforts merit this special recognition and those selected are invited to the Head of Academy's office to formally sign their entry into the Book of Excellence. A letter is also sent to parents to mark this significant achievement. In addition to

the immediate recognition, entries in the Book of Excellence become part of a student's official transcript and recommendations, further highlighting their outstanding contributions. This initiative not only rewards excellence but also inspires all students to strive for their personal best. At a special assembly today, Shishira, Modhrithi and Nirali, were the latest recipients of this unique award. Many congratulations to each of them on this accomplishment! The details can be found in the stories below. We look forward to celebrating many such achievements in the future!



Shishira Kokilavani has earned recognition for her excellence in Indian Classical Dance. A dedicated Kuchipudi dancer for over a decade, she has received national and international acclaim for her performances. Shishira's talent has brought honour to the Academy, particularly through her participation in key public events. Her achievements as an artist embody the Academy's commitment to excellence and she continues to represent the Academy with distinction.



Modhrithi Vallabhaneni has demonstrated a commitment to excellence through her mastery of Kuchipudi dance. Trained for over 12 years by renowned teachers, Modhrithi has earned accolades at prestigious national and international festivals. Her performances reflect the pluralistic ideals of the Aga Khan Academies, celebrating cultural diversity while inspiring cross-cultural understanding. Modhrithi's artistry exemplifies discipline, dedication and cultural appreciation, aligning with the Academy's mission of excellence.



Nirali Lakhani was nominated for her outstanding leadership in advancing the Academy's Peer Tutoring programme. She initiated additional support for students, developed resources to address gaps in understanding and fostered a compassionate and positive learning environment. Nirali's leadership extended to other initiatives, such as organic composting, MUN and Aashayein, and she embodies the Academy's values of service, empathy and excellence. Her quiet commitment and integrity reflect the qualities the Academy seeks in its students.



THE ART OF THINKING

Philosophy is a subject that is studied all over the world. Most know philosophy to be a serious subject which requires intellectual discussion and debate. However, with the philosophy club, we wanted to challenge that notion and make philosophy a fun experience and show everyone why we are so passionate about philosophy. At the Philosophy Class, we do away with conventional teaching and encourage member engagement. While the basics are taught, members are encouraged to form opinions on various global topics and to voice them out. We discuss global issues using various philosophical ideas and perspectives, encouraging our members to be open-minded and pluralistic in their thinking, while also enabling them to form their own opinions and justify their beliefs. Simply put, we believe that philosophy is an art – the art of thinking and the art of exploration. We also plan to introduce mock dramas of philosophers and other activities in the future, much like the ones in our wonderful Winter Fest stall. Philosophy is all about exploration and we provide a medium for this art of thought. So far, we have covered existentialism, free will and religion, which were interesting topics that everyone was interested in. You can find a detailed video on the Philosophy Club [here](#).



EXPLORING THE PAST AT HUMANITIES INQUIRY DAY

Students from Grades 6-8 participated in the Inquiry Day showcase to present their projects on the units they have studied, exploring themes such as local history, the study of civilizations and the impact of interactions between various empires among various others. Each year, the humanities department's teachers work with students to establish meaningful connections to these topics, which are then showcased through their projects. Students created interactive games, visually appealing charts, presentations and models that highlight rich historical heritage, environmental challenges and diverse cultural practices. This hands-on learning fosters collaboration, creativity and tactile engagement. Students reflected that the Humanities Inquiry Day helped them evaluate and present their learning, problem-solve and collaborate more effectively while deepening their understanding of these important concepts and themes.



CROCHET EMPOWERMENT!

During the winter break, Ashmi Saban from DP 1 took the initiative to teach crochet to middle school students from underprivileged backgrounds at a government school in her hometown. The goal was to equip these students with a valuable skill that could serve as an alternative source of income, fostering self-reliance and creativity. This inspiring effort received well-deserved recognition, including a certificate, a memento and a feature in the local newspaper. The government school has invited Ashmi to continue this impactful teaching during summer camps. This project embodies the Academy's vision of nurturing socially conscious leaders who use their skills to benefit the community. We are immensely proud of Ashmi's efforts and look forward to seeing her continued contributions.



INSIGHTFUL ASSEMBLY ON CURRENT AFFAIRS

The first Junior School assembly of the New Year featured a thought-provoking presentation by Grade 5K on current affairs. Divided into five themes, the presentation addressed significant global issues. It began with natural disasters, highlighting the devastating effects of the Los Angeles forest fires and the Koshi floods. The second theme focused on the HMPV virus, emphasizing the importance of prevention in controlling its spread. The third theme explored the impacts of climate change, particularly the increasing extremity of weather patterns. Next, the cultural diversity of the world was celebrated through festivals like the Maha Kumbh Mela, Christmas and various New Year celebrations. Finally, the presentation delved into sports updates, covering the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Pro Kabaddi League and Indian Super League. Through this comprehensive presentation, Grade 5K successfully raised awareness of critical global issues, encouraging their peers to think critically and reflect on these topics.



A NEW TERM IN THE JUNIOR SCHOOL

Though it has only been a few days, there is already a palpable buzz in the Junior School. The joyful sounds of students laughing, chatting and playing fill the air as they relish being back with their friends. During lesson time, the quiet hum of learning can be heard throughout the corridors. Classrooms are bustling with activities, including reading, maths and various practical and group tasks. The students are especially thrilled with their outdoor learning experiences amidst the green surrounding of the campus. Both students and teachers are eager and excited to see what the rest of the term holds.

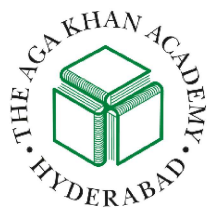
“One of the central precepts of the International Baccalaureate Programme is to honour world-class standards, while also respecting

cultural diversity. In this respect, its approach mirrors that of the Aga Khan Academies – to help students combine a cosmopolitan spirit on the one hand, with a strong sense of cultural identity on the other.”

His Highness the Aga Khan
Kampala, Uganda, 22 August 2007



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

24 January 2025



Senior School students gathered at the Amphitheatre on Monday to greet exchange students from the Aga Khan Academy in Mombasa and the Aga Khan Academy in Maputo. Senior School Principal, Mr Christian, welcomed our guests and gave each of them the opportunity to introduce themselves. We wish our guests all the best as they settle into their new homes and become part of our campus community over the coming months!

Dear Parents,

This has been an especially busy week for me! It's a week when urgent things rush to the centre and important things risk getting neglected. At times like this, I turn to a brilliant little book by Dr Richard Carlson called *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff*. The phrase itself is a useful mantra: don't let the little things in life consume your energy. It's a reminder I've found myself needing time and again, especially in moments when I feel my sense of calm slipping away.

Carlson's books are filled with practical wisdom on how to let go of unnecessary stress. One edition, *Don't Sweat the Small Stuff for Teenagers*, is particularly relevant for young people navigating the pressures of academic life, friendships, and the ever-present pull of social media. It's the kind of book I wish more students (and adults) would read—because we're all guilty of sweating the small stuff from time to time.

A central theme in Carlson's work is something we know in theory but often forget in practice: overreacting rarely helps. In fact, it usually makes things worse. Yet how often do we let small frustrations ruin an entire day?

Think about a typical school day for a student. They do poorly in an assessment, and it feels like the end of the world. A friend makes a careless remark, and suddenly a perfectly good day is destroyed. Even as adults, we fall into the same trap. A slow internet connection at the worst possible moment, a colleague who doesn't respond to an email, a long wait in a queue—these things shouldn't define our day, but sometimes they do.

Carlson's advice is simple but powerful: Is this really worth my energy?

Schools are busy places, full of small frustrations that spiral into unnecessary stress. I see it with students, teachers, and even myself. A misplaced document, an email that wasn't acknowledged, a lesson that didn't quite go as planned. It's easy to let these moments add up, to go home carrying the weight of a hundred minor annoyances. But what if we made a conscious effort to let them go?

This doesn't mean ignoring real issues. Some things do need our attention. But if we react to everything as if it's urgent, we lose the ability to distinguish between what truly matters and what doesn't. And when we model this for young people—when we show them how to step back, take a breath, and reframe a problem—we give them a skill that will serve them well for life.

There's an old saying: Don't make a mountain out of a molehill. Yet in today's world, it sometimes feels like we do the opposite. Social media thrives on overreaction, with minor inconveniences or misunderstandings blown out of proportion. It's easy to get caught up in the noise. But when we step back, we can see more clearly what really deserves our time and energy.

So, the next time something small threatens to derail your day, try asking:

- Will this matter in a week?
- Am I assuming the worst?
- Is my reaction helping, or making things worse?

More often than not, we'll find that the frustration isn't worth holding onto. And the more we practice letting go of the small stuff, the more energy we'll have for the things that truly deserve our attention—our relationships, our potential, and the simple joy of being present in our own lives.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



JUNIOR SCHOOL REPUBLIC DAY ASSEMBLY

Students from Grade 5A presented an assembly this week about the 76th Republic Day that will be celebrated this weekend. On the 26th of January in 1950, India's Constitution came into effect, making India a sovereign, democratic republic. During their presentations, students talked about one of India's greatest freedom fighters, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, whose birthday is marked on the 23rd of January. This assembly was a reminder of the sacrifices made by these

patriotic heroes and the values of justice, liberty, equality and fraternity enshrined in our Constitution. It also showed how people uphold their duties as responsible citizens and strive to contribute to the nation's progress. Patriotic songs in Hindi and Telugu were performed by groups of Grade 5 students, whilst they waved their flags enthusiastically. The assembly concluded with a proud rendition of the Indian National Anthem.



SHOWCASING CREATIVITY AND PASSION

Today, our Grade 10 students proudly hosted the MYP Personal Project Exhibition, a significant milestone in their MYP 5 journey. The Personal Project represents a substantial body of work developed over an extended period, offering students a chance to engage in a sustained, self-directed inquiry within a global context while aligning with the Aga Khan Curricular Strands at the Academy. This unique opportunity allows students to explore topics they are deeply passionate about, showcasing their subject-specific knowledge, approaches to learning skills and their passion. This year, students demonstrated remarkable creativity and meaningful learning

engagement with their chosen projects with many focusing on culture, food, sports, arts, sciences, fashion and sustainability. The skills and insights gained through this process will undoubtedly serve as a foundation for their future academic pursuits and personal growth. The exhibition not only highlighted the students' dedication and innovation but also underscored the value of independent inquiry and lifelong learning.



ART AND CREATIVITY: FOSTERING HOLISTIC DEVELOPMENT

At the Academy, art and creativity play a vital role in shaping students' holistic development. Art serves as a powerful medium of expression, enabling students to communicate their thoughts and ideas uniquely. Through diverse art forms such as sketching, glass painting, sculpting, carving, pottery, ceramic art and conceptual installations, students explore their creativity and develop essential skills like critical thinking and innovation. The Academy nurtures this artistic spirit, empowering students to grow intellectually and emotionally.



CREATIVE CARPENTRY

Housed in the art block, the Carpentry Club introduces students to a unique, hands-on art form rarely explored in traditional classes. Focused on woodworking, the club teaches essential skills such as cutting, measuring and joining wood, while emphasising safety and proper tool handling with equipment like saws, drills and sanders. Students collaborate across age groups to create projects ranging from decorative items to small furniture, fostering teamwork and leadership. By encouraging initiative, creativity and project management, the club broadens students' artistic horizons and offers a practical, skill-based approach to craftsmanship, making it a valuable addition to the school's extracurricular offerings. In an increasingly digital world, the ability to work with one's hands provides a refreshing and valuable counterbalance to screen-based learning. Carpentry nurtures problem-solving, patience and resilience, as students learn to refine their techniques and troubleshoot challenges along the way. Beyond creativity, woodworking instills a deep appreciation for craftsmanship and the effort behind handmade objects—an understanding often lost in today's era of mass production. You can watch the Carpentry Club video [here](#).



CELEBRATING TELUGU LEARNING

Congratulations to Ms Kasturi Varanasi on the achievement of publishing seven Telugu children's books under the series "Ananya Telugu Achulu" and "Ananya Telugu Hallulu" for Grades 1-5, in collaboration with Sadhana Publications. A special educator and a Telugu teacher with over a

decade of experience in IB schools, Kasturi has been part of the Aga Khan Academy since 2019. Her books are thoughtfully designed for modern learners across various curricula, featuring engaging activities and including foundational elements of Telugu language to enhance learning for young students. The books include original and diverse stories written in simple yet engaging language that makes it easier for students to comprehend and learn. These resources make learning Telugu accessible and enjoyable for children from Grade 1 to Grade 5, fostering a love for the language at an early age.



A VIRTUAL JOURNEY INTO ART

The Aga Khan Museum in Toronto is renowned for its extensive collection of art, showcasing masterpieces that span centuries and regions, from intricate calligraphy and textiles to stunning architectural elements. Designed to foster intercultural dialogue and a deeper appreciation of artistic traditions, the museum provides a unique space where historical and contemporary narratives intersect. On January 16, six students and two teachers from the art department participated in the fourth annual DP 1 virtual visit to the museum. They were joined by 25 art students and teachers from the Mombasa and Maputo Academies. The museum's director, Dr Ulrike Al-Khamis, led an engaging online session exploring Islamic Art, offering rich insights that enhanced participants' understanding of its cultural and artistic significance. Following the visit, students will complete a reflective task, deepening their appreciation of the artworks and their historical context. This work will form a valuable, context-specific contribution to their process portfolios and the comparative study component of their IB curriculum.



EXCHANGE EXCITEMENT BEGINS!

We are thrilled to welcome 21 students on the Aga Khan Academies Exchange programme. Four students from the Aga Khan Academy Maputo and 17 students from the Aga Khan Academy Mombasa have arrived to spend 11-weeks at the Hyderabad campus. The Student Exchange Programme is designed for selected students from Grade 9 from the India, Kenya and Mozambique campuses. The students will be immersed into their host Academy's way of life and will follow the same school day, eat the same food and abide by the same customs as their fellow local students. They will be exposed to new languages and new attitudes. Through soaking up a new way of life, students will be able to not only learn more about their fellow Academies' students but will also discover more about themselves in their new environments. During the exchange, students attend classes, participate in school activities and service learning, and engage in outdoor activities including heritage tours to foster a holistic development in all participants. Through this programme, we intend to build open-minded and well-rounded global leaders of tomorrow.



NURTURING CURIOSITY

We congratulate our Junior School art teacher Mr Nikhil Sharma on attending the prestigious Curiosity Conference at IIT Gandhinagar on 18 and 19 January. Organised by IITGN's Curiosity Lab, this interdisciplinary event explored the pivotal role of curiosity in learning, innovation and social change. The conference featured keynote talks, panel discussions, and hands-on workshops, providing a platform for educators, researchers, policymakers and practitioners to engage in dynamic dialogues and share insights. Mr Nikhil had an opportunity to present the role of curiosity in education and how it intersects with art, technology and pedagogy.



STRENGTHENING TIES: WESLEYAN COLLEGE LEADERSHIP VISITS THE ACADEMY

We were delighted to welcome President Meagan Blight and Associate Vice President Anjali Anand Seth from Wesleyan College to the Academy this week. Their visit reinforced our partnership, which includes a full-tuition scholarship and a \$100,000 award for our students, aligning with our shared commitment to accessible education. Wesleyan College, the world's first institution chartered to grant degrees to women, is expanding its global reach by welcoming students from diverse backgrounds. Our collaboration has already yielded remarkable outcomes—two alumni have received full-ride scholarships, while four others secured full tuition waivers, excelling in academics, internships, and social initiatives. During their visit, President Blight and Associate VP Seth engaged with students, faculty, and leadership, appreciating the Academy's vibrant community. A highlight was President Blight's interaction with students—playing badminton, observing sunspots through a telescope, and exploring student-led initiatives like the Crochet and Astronomy clubs. The visit included discussions with the Academic Senior Leadership Team, a session with DP1 students, and a tour of key campus spaces. President Blight praised the Academy's welcoming atmosphere, a testament to the dedication of our

students and staff. We are grateful for Wesleyan College's support and look forward to strengthening our partnership, opening more doors for our students, and advancing our shared vision of education for all.



INVESTING IN EXCELLENCE: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOR TEACHERS

Teaching is a lifelong learning journey. Last Saturday, Senior School teachers met to reflect on teaching, assessment and the Aga Khan Curricular Strands. With limited time for deep discussions during the school week, these extended sessions on Saturday mornings provide a vital space for teachers to collaborate, exchange ideas and refine their practice. Stepping into the role of learners, they engage in meaningful dialogue, challenge perspectives and strengthen the culture of excellence at the Academy. We believe that great teaching is at the heart of great learning. That's why we prioritise these opportunities—not just to refine skills, but to cultivate a

professional community that is always evolving, always improving. By investing in our educators, we ensure that every student benefits from the very best in teaching and learning.



EXPLORING STRONG INDIAN UNIVERSITY OPTIONS

In her ongoing series of visits to top Indian universities, our Head of College Counselling, Ms Pragati Pandey, visited Manipal Academy of Higher Education (MAHE) on 16 and 17 January. Her visit helped bring first-hand insights about strong undergraduate study options in India for our students after they complete their International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme. Established in 1953 and located in Karnataka, MAHE is one of India's premier private universities, excelling in fields like engineering, medicine, business, humanities and social sciences. Ms Pragati explored its rigorous undergraduate programmes, global collaborations and unique opportunities such as exchange programmes, semester-abroad options and the "last year abroad" pathway, enabling students to graduate with dual degrees. This visit equips our students with invaluable knowledge about MAHE's offerings, helping them consider domestic and

international opportunities for a well-rounded education and a competitive edge in the global job market.

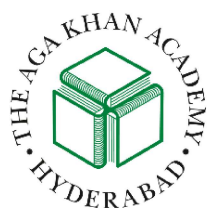
“One of the central precepts of the International Baccalaureate Programme is to honour world-class standards, while also respecting cultural diversity. In this respect, its approach mirrors that of the Aga Khan Academies – to help students combine a cosmopolitan spirit on the one hand, with a strong sense of cultural identity on the other.”

His Highness the Aga Khan
Kampala, Uganda, 22 August 2007



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY

HYDERABAD



from the desk of the
Head of Academy

31 January 2025



Dear Parents,

Have you noticed how children sometimes go along with the group, even when they know better? Whether it's following a trend or hesitating to speak up in a difficult situation, peer pressure plays a huge role in shaping children's decisions. And it's not just children - even as adults, we can find ourselves following the crowd by making choices that feel safer simply because others are doing the same thing.

In the 1950s, psychologist Solomon Asch conducted a famous experiment on conformity when he was working as a professor at Swarthmore College in the USA. He showed how individuals often go along with a group even when they know the group is wrong. The test was simple, a group of participants were shown a few lines of different length and asked to match them. When actors in the group deliberately gave incorrect answers, 75% of real participants went along with the wrong answer even though they knew it was wrong. The study showed how social pressure shapes decision-making, influencing everything from lifestyle choices to workplace culture.

Professor Asch's work highlights an important reality for parents and educators: even when children know what is right, it can be difficult to go against the group. For instance:

- A teenager who follows peer behaviour just to fit in.
- A student who hesitates to speak up against bullying because they don't want to stand out.

- A child who knows the answer in class but stays silent because no one else is raising their hand.

Of course, peer pressure isn't always negative. It can inspire children to make good choices and to push themselves in positive ways. Peer pressure is a concern when the need to fit in overrides independent thinking. When children silence their own judgment to follow the crowd they risk losing the ability to stand by what they know is right.

Here at the Academy, we try to create an environment where students feel confident expressing their own views, even when they differ from the majority. But building resilient, independent thinkers doesn't happen overnight. It takes practice. It takes small moments where children learn that their voices matter, that their ideas deserve to be heard, and that disagreement isn't something to fear.

One way to do this is by encouraging discussions where multiple perspectives are listened to respectfully. When students see that their teachers and peers genuinely want to hear what they think they begin to trust that their opinions have value. Children also need to understand that disagreement doesn't necessarily mean conflict. It's possible to respect someone else's view while holding firm to one's own.

Helping our students become aware of when they are simply going along with the group and when they are making a choice they truly believe in is a valuable skill to develop. Sometimes, it's a simple shift like pausing before saying "yes" to something, asking themselves, "Is this what I really want?" or "Would I still do this if no one else were watching?" These moments of reflection can make a big difference in helping children develop the confidence to stand by their own choices. The more children have the chance to practice thinking for themselves in small, low-pressure situations, the more prepared they'll be when faced with bigger, more challenging ones.

Together, we can help children develop the courage to stand apart when needed, the confidence to voice their own thoughts, and the wisdom to know that independent thinking isn't about standing out—it's about standing true to oneself.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jonathan Long". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr Jonathan Long

THIS WEEK'S NEWS



JUNIOR SCHOOL SPORTS DAY

Junior School students hit the athletics track today with great enthusiasm! After the lighting of the torch, the opening ceremony was a high-energy and brilliantly organised event that included traditional Indian dance, Zumba, parachutes, basketball, football and fitness drills. This was a real show of teamwork and pride in their abilities. The more traditional elements of sports day followed with running races, sprints, walking races and relays. Students tried their hardest and showed great determination. It was lovely to see them cheering each other along, encouraging and supporting each other to do their best. A good crowd of staff and parents saw some close finishes and outstanding personal performances. Perfect weather conditions and a joyful atmosphere of keen competition made for a memorable occasion! Well done to all our Junior School students and a big thank you to all the staff involved in making today such a great success.





ACADEMY AUTHORISED AS SAT TEST CENTRE

We are excited to announce that the Academy has become an authorised SAT Test Centre. This means that students can now register to take the SAT exams right here on campus, making the process more convenient and accessible for families. For the 2024-2025 academic year, we are offering 100 seats for the upcoming SAT exams on 8 March 2025 and 7 June 2025. Please note that our centre will be closed for SAT testing during the months of May, July, November and December due to school exam schedules and holidays. We are committed to providing a seamless and efficient testing experience for students who choose to take the exam here. For any questions or additional information, please feel free to reach out to our Test Centre Coordinator, Ms Pragati Pandey.



MAGICAL EVENING WITH WARSI BROTHERS

Last Friday night, the the Academy's Admissions Team hosted Dastaan-e-Qamar, a mesmerising qawwali night featuring the renowned Indian musical group, the Warsi Brothers. The soulful voices of revered maestros Nazeer Ahmed Khan Warsi and Naseer Ahmed Khan Warsi, accompanied by the harmonious melodies of traditional instruments played by eight talented *humnawa* (accompanists), created a spellbinding atmosphere under the starlit sky at the Amphitheatre. The enchanting performance left the audience captivated, with echoes of the evening's music lingering in their hearts long after the final note. Qawwali is a form of Sufi Islamic devotional singing originating in Hindustan. Originally performed at Sufi shrines or *dargahs* throughout Hindustan, it has gained mainstream popularity and an international audience as of the late 20th century.



REPUBLIC DAY CELEBRATIONS

Republic Day is celebrated in India on 26th January each year. This special day marks the date on which the Constitution of India came into effect on 26th January 1950 – replacing the Government of India Act and creating a newly formed republic. This year, India celebrated its 76th Republic Day, and our residential community came together for a flag-raising event and some beautiful dance and music performances by students. As has become the tradition, the ceremony was followed by a wonderful community breakfast in the Commons!





REACH FOR THE STARS!

The Astrophysics Club is the place where curiosity about the cosmos meets hands-on exploration and intellectual discovery. At the heart of the club's activities is a prized 10-inch Dobsonian telescope, through which members have marvelled at breath-taking celestial sights, including the craters of the Moon, Jupiter's swirling storms, Saturn's majestic rings and glimpses of mystical Mars. The club's astrophotography sessions have also captured stunning images of the Sun and the moon. Club members have ventured into simulated space exploration by launching rockets in the Kerbal Space Programme and experimenting with orbital mechanics. They have zoomed across galaxies in simulators like Universe Sandbox and Space Engine, visualising cosmic phenomena and pushing the boundaries of imagination. The intellectual curiosity of the club thrives through lively debates on ethical dilemmas, scientific advancements and the implications of space exploration. Discussions encourage critical thinking and imaginative hypotheses on topics like extra-terrestrial life and the ultimate fate of the universe. Members also present research merging creativity with rigorous inquiry. The success of the club is bolstered by the guidance and support of our teachers, Mr Sudipta and Ms Veni, whose mentorship has inspired club leaders and members to push boundaries and explore the

mysteries of the cosmos. The Astrophysics Club continues to build a passionate community of budding astrophysicists, nurturing a lifelong fascination with the wonders of space. You can watch a video about the club [here](#).



EXPLORING INTERDEPENDENCE IN OUR SCHOOL'S ECOSYSTEM

Junior School embarked on a captivating school tour guided by our CAS Coordinator, Mr Venkat, to deepen their understanding of the interdependence of organisms. They explored the campus and observed various plants, birds and insects in their natural habitats, fostering an appreciation for the delicate balance of nature. A highlight of the tour was a visit to the school's organic farm, where they learnt about sustainable farming practices and how we, as responsible citizens, can give back to nature. They discovered the importance of composting, planting and caring for the environment. This hands-on experience connected them with nature and inspired them to be mindful stewards of the planet.



JUNIOR SCHOOL SHINES AT SPORTS FEST

The Hyderabad Primary Years Programme Network Sports Fest for Athletics, held on 22 and 23 January 2025 at the Gaudium International School, Hyderabad, saw 36 Junior School students represent the Academy alongside 450 students from 14 schools across the network. Students brought home 11 medals in events including running, jumping and throwing. Arthav won a gold medal in the shot put, while Shiv secured three silver medals in the 4x50 meters relay race, standing broad jump and 200 meters. Aarav, Varun and Shlok contributed with two silver medals each, including wins in the 600 meters and 4x50 meters relay, with Hari earning another silver in the relay. Vansh showcased versatility by winning three bronze medals in the 100 meters, 200 meters and long jump. Despite the fierce competition, every participant gave their best, making it a proud and successful event for the Junior School.



A COMMENDABLE ASSEMBLY!

This week, a special assembly was held to recognise students who had received five or more Commendation Awards in academics and extracurricular activities so far this year. Senior School Principal Mr Christian Schmelz and Dean of Students Mr Suresh Madhavan appreciated the hard work and dedication of the students. Mr Jeff Doerfler, Deputy Head of Academy, then introduced the Commendation Awards. Each grade leader presented certificates to students who earned five or more commendations. Adding to the celebration, Dr Swati Garg, HoD Design, announced the winners of the Digital Design Challenge held in December 2024 for students from Grades 6 to 8. The assembly was a joyful tribute to student accomplishments, fostering pride, school spirit and inspiration for continued growth and success.



A THEATRICAL ENCOUNTER: REFLECTIONS BY DP 1 STUDENT AARISH JIWANI

A recent visit to the University of Hyderabad's theatre circle offered our drama enthusiasts an opportunity to witness an enactment of Anton Chekhov's play "Uncle Vanya". First published in 1897, the play is about Ivan Voinitski, known as Vanya and the group of characters who reside at the country estate that he manages. This tragicomic family drama is renowned for its realistic portrayal of everyday life. The students found the realism showcased in the performance striking. The performance provided our students with a new perspective on acting. The actors' natural portrayal of emotions and the intricate storytelling captivated the audience. Reflecting on his experience, Aarish observed how theatre, when executed authentically, forges a powerful connection with its audience. The experience was both memorable and enriching, offering the students a renewed appreciation for the transformative art of theatre.



HYDERABAD LITERARY FESTIVAL 2025

DP 1 student Fiza Dhanani shared her experience of visiting the Hyderabad Literary Festival 2025 accompanied by her peers and teachers. The day included Aruna Roy's thought-provoking talk, *Personal is Political*, which highlighted the intricate links between individual stories and systemic change. Manoranjan Byapari's session on *Translating Dalit Lives* was moving with its focus on the resilience and struggles of marginalised communities in India. The workshop, titled *Eco-Tales Across Borders*, hosted by the Academy's English teacher, Ms Priyadarshini Panchapakesan, beautifully wove environmental consciousness into storytelling. Poetry readings by Afshan De Souza-Lodhi and Sushil Gajwani captivated the audience with their evocative verses. The festival concluded on a high note with Band Raaga's electrifying live music performance!



STUDENTS' DAY OUT

Last weekend, the Exchange Programme students from Mombasa and Maputo had their first visit to Hyderabad. They were accompanied by residential students from Grades 9 and 10 and were chaperoned by staff members. Grade 9 Exchange student Awwal Gangwani described his experience as “super exciting and fun”. Awwal reflected that the visit allowed him to explore the cultural diversity of India as he hopped from one shop to another and tried out new delicacies with his friends. The students are now looking forward to more exciting and engaging experiences during their stay in India.



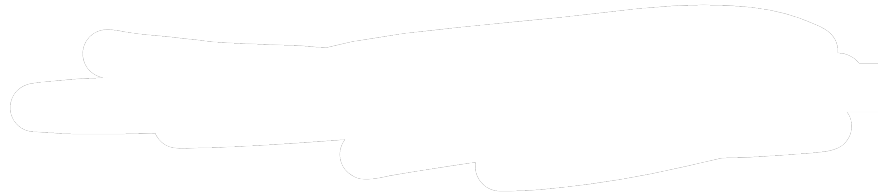
INNOVATION IN EDUCATION

Our Head of College Counselling, Ms Pragati Pandey, recently visited Plaksha University in Mohali. Ms Pragati engaged with faculty and students, gaining valuable insights into the university's interdisciplinary approach to education. Plaksha runs programmes in engineering, technology, design and business, with a unique Freshmore semester that blends foundational courses with real-world projects, allowing students to explore multiple fields before choosing a specialisation. Plaksha is the result of collective philanthropy from over 200 founders across cities such as Hong Kong, London, New York, Silicon Valley, Singapore and Tokyo. Their vision is to transform engineering and technology education in India and beyond. These founders not only contribute financially but also mentor students and foster a community of change-makers. The university's leadership devoted significant time to engaging with counsellors, demonstrating their commitment to the university's values. With world-class labs, expert faculty and a personal approach to student growth, Plaksha stands out as an institution focused on academic excellence, research and entrepreneurship. Ms Pragati's visit highlights the growing range of options for students seeking quality education within India. By sharing first-hand experiences, we aim to provide valuable information to students looking for exceptional educational opportunities at home.

“One of the central precepts of the International Baccalaureate Programme is to honour world-class standards, while also respecting cultural diversity. In this respect, its approach

mirrors that of the Aga Khan Academies – to help students combine a cosmopolitan spirit on the one hand, with a strong sense of cultural identity on the other.”

His Highness the Aga Khan
Kampala, Uganda, 22 August 2007



THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY
HYDERABAD
