

*from the desk of the*  
**Head of Academy**

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2 May 2025



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Dear Parents,

Exam season is here, and you can feel it across the campus. For students in Grades 10 and 12, especially, the next few weeks bring a mix of focus and pressure. It's worth remembering that academic stress is no small thing. A *Stress in America* survey found that nearly one in three teenagers felt depressed or overwhelmed by stress, with 40% saying it left them exhausted or unable to eat properly. According to the *American Psychological Association*, many young people now report stress levels higher than those of adults. One striking study even suggested that today's children are experiencing anxiety levels greater than those of psychiatric patients in the 1950s.

Academic pressure isn't the only challenge teenagers face during exam season. They are also dealing with the complexity of a rapidly changing brain. Understanding this doesn't make exams easier, but it might help us be a little more compassionate and thoughtful at this stressful time of year.

Experts tell us that adolescence is a period of intense brain plasticity. This is the brain's remarkable ability to change and reorganise itself in response to experience. In a process called "synaptic pruning", the connections we use most frequently are strengthened, while those we neglect begin to fade.

The adolescent brain is like a jungle full of pathways. Every time a student practises something—whether it's reading, playing an instrument, or solving a maths problem—they walk that path again and again. The more they use it, the clearer and stronger the path becomes. But if they stop using a path, it slowly gets overgrown. This is how learning is physically wired into the brain.

This means that students sitting exams actually have a powerful advantage: their brains are wired for learning, provided we help them approach it with the right mindset. Dr Carol Dweck, renowned for her work on motivation and learning, argues that a "growth mindset"—the belief that abilities can be developed through effort—is one of the most valuable tools we can offer young people. When students understand that struggle is part of the learning process, they're more likely to embrace challenges rather than avoid them.

However, a growth mindset doesn't make the challenges disappear. Managing time and resisting distractions are all functions of the prefrontal cortex. This is the brain's "executive centre" responsible for planning and self-regulation. Surprisingly, this part of the brain doesn't fully mature until the mid-to-late twenties. So if your son or daughter struggles to plan ahead or stay focused, it isn't laziness—it may be biology. This is why teenagers benefit from structure, clear revision plans, visual reminders and regular breaks to help them manage their focus and energy more effectively.

There's one more factor we mustn't overlook. For teenagers, exams often feel like more

than a test of knowledge; they feel like a test of identity and social standing. The adolescent brain is wired to care deeply about what others think. A poor grade doesn't just signal weak performance; it can feel like a loss of face among peers, teachers and parents. That's why emotional safety matters just as much as academic preparation. When we praise effort, not just results, and make it clear that love and respect aren't tied to performance, we help lift an invisible burden from their shoulders.

Our job is to guide students through the curriculum. But it is also to understand and honour the remarkable work their developing brains are doing, often invisibly, beneath the surface. With encouragement and the right amount of support, they can survive the stress of exams and emerge wiser and more confident for the journey ahead!

Best wishes,



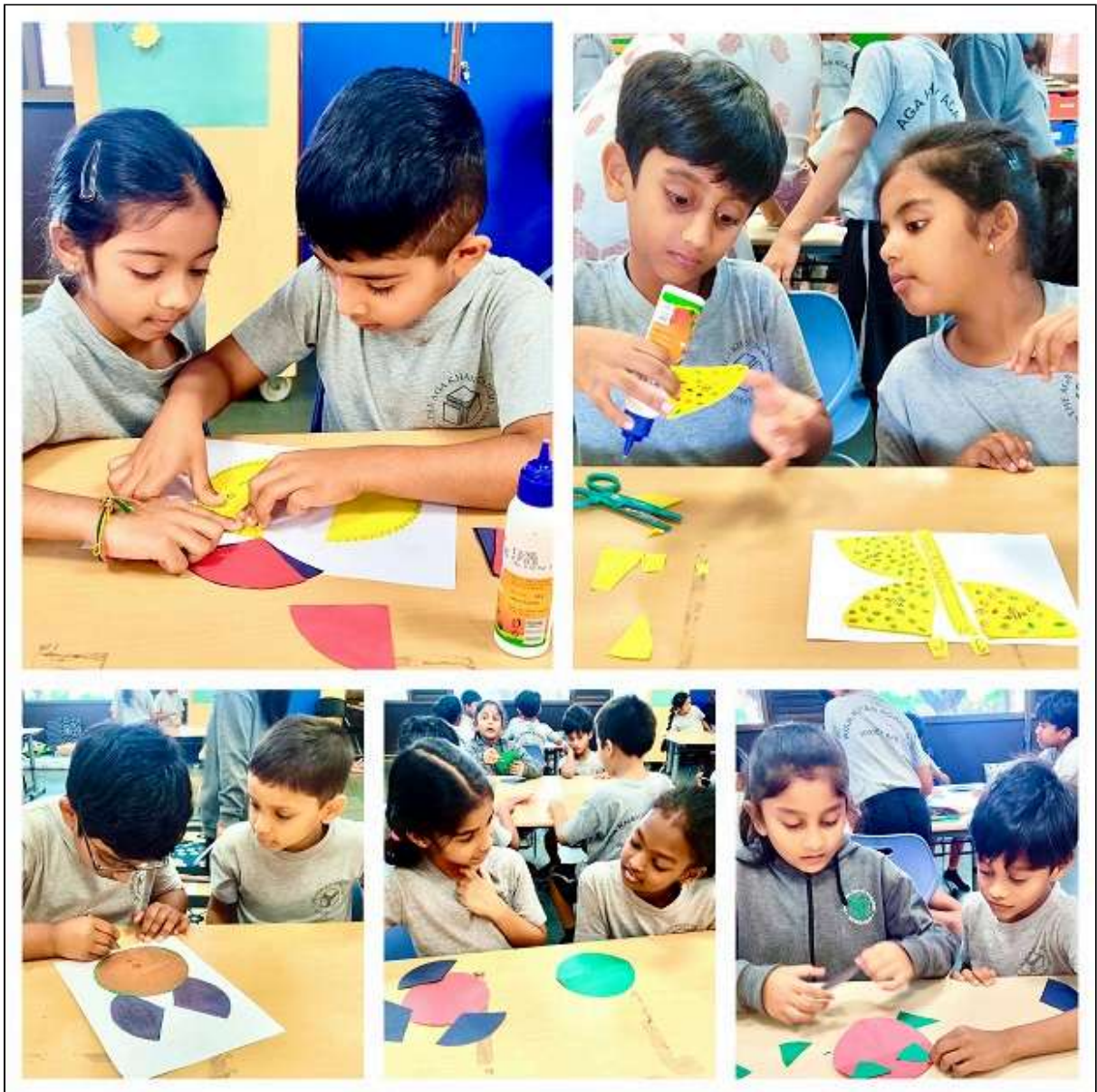
Dr Jonathan Long

## THIS WEEK'S NEWS



## WISHING SUCCESS TO OUR DP 2 STUDENTS AS FINALS BEGIN

With their high school journey coming to a close, our DP 2 students have worked hard to prepare for their IB Diploma exams. This week, they joined over 125,000 students from 152 countries and over 200 nationalities for this year's IB Diploma exam session. These exams are a major milestone for students at the end of a rigorous two-year journey. Not just a test of knowledge, the exams are a chance to demonstrate critical thinking, global awareness and the ability to apply learning in complex, real-world contexts. Regarded as one of the most demanding and respected pre-university qualifications in the world, the IB Diploma is recognised by leading universities globally for its depth and breadth. Students who succeed in the IB exams have proven their readiness for university and beyond - not just as learners, but as thoughtful, principled contributors to society.



## FRACTION FANTASIA

As part of their exploration into fractions, Grade 1 students took part in a playful and creative learning experience that brought together mathematics and visual arts. Using

fraction cut-outs -  $\frac{1}{2}$ ,  $\frac{1}{4}$ ,  $\frac{1}{3}$ , and even  $\frac{1}{8}$  - they designed imaginative creations like fish, flowers, butterflies and dragons, applying their understanding of equal parts in a meaningful and expressive way. Throughout the activity, students demonstrated important learning skills – thinking critically, communicating clearly, and managing time and materials with increasing independence. They were inquirers, artists and mathematicians all at once, reminding us that learning is most powerful when it is joyful, purposeful and connected across disciplines.



### HANDS-ON IN THE LAB

Science is an important part of an Academy education, helping students to explore the world with curiosity and a sense of wonder. Our approach is deeply experiential. This means that students learn by doing, through hands-on activities and real-world experiments that bring scientific concepts to life. Whether it's building circuits, testing water quality, or exploring ecosystems on campus, these experiences develop confidence and a spirit of inquiry. The International Baccalaureate's programmes place a strong emphasis on science as a key pillar of a well-rounded education, encouraging students to understand the scientific method, appreciate the ethical dimensions of discovery and apply their learning to

global challenges. In a world shaped by rapid change and complex questions, a strong foundation in science empowers our students to engage responsibly, ethically, and creatively with the future.



### HABITS THAT MAKE HAPPY KIDS

This week, Grade 2K presented an assembly on the transdisciplinary theme "Who we are" and it was an enlightening and engaging experience. The students made good use of biographies and autobiographies to express their beliefs and values. Their role play, inspired by Sean Covey's "The 7 Habits of Happy Kids" depicted several habits through relatable scenarios, demonstrating how these habits can help shape character and promote personal growth. The performance was not only engaging but also highlighted the importance of cultivating positive habits in daily life. The "7 Habits of Happy Kids" is a delightful, story-based book that teaches young children essential life skills like responsibility, teamwork, goal-setting, and empathy. Through engaging characters and simple stories, it helps children build the habits of confident, kind and thoughtful individuals.



## TABLE TENNIS CLUB

Table tennis began as an after-dinner parlour game in Victorian England. Originally played on dining tables with cigar box lids and books for nets, it has evolved into one of the fastest and most popular sports in the world. It became an Olympic sport in 1988. More than just a game of quick reflexes, table tennis has even played a role in global diplomacy - famously helping ease tensions between the U.S. and China in the 1970s. The Academy's *Table Tennis Club* is run as part of the Experiential Learning Programme. It offers students an opportunity to engage in this fast-paced sport of concentration and quick reflexes. Open to all skill levels, the club encourages beginners and experienced students to improve through regular practice and friendly competition. The Table Tennis Club brings together students from Grades 6 to 12 and encourages mentorship, in which older students guide and inspire younger ones. It breaks down grade-level barriers and helps students build friendships beyond their usual circles. You can watch the feature video [here](#).



## SCULPTING CREATIVITY

The art rooms at the Academy are more than classrooms. They are often places where students step out of the hustle and bustle of daily school life. In these quiet spaces, surrounded by colour, texture and possibility, they find the freedom to reflect and imagine. Exploring the world of clay sculpting is part of this opportunity and a chance to discover that making art with our hands connects us in deep and lasting ways to the world around us. Working with clay isn't just about creating a sculpture. It's about slowing down, paying attention and engaging all the senses. For young people growing up in an increasingly fast-paced, screen-filled world, clay offers a return to the tactile and the real. It invites patience. It encourages persistence. And it teaches that creativity often begins through the dialogue between hand and material.



## WHY MUSIC MATTERS

Learning a musical instrument has been shown to support children's cognitive, emotional, and social development in deep and lasting ways. Research from the University of Southern California's Brain and Creativity Institute suggests that music training enhances brain development in areas linked to language, memory, and emotional regulation. Other studies consistently find that children who play an instrument tend to develop stronger focus, better coordination, and greater resilience. At the Academy, we see music as an essential part of a balanced education. Howard Gardner (Harvard education professor and creator of Multiple Intelligences theory) put it well, "*Music is not just a form of entertainment - it's a distinct form of intelligence. When children learn music, they're not just learning notes, they're learning how to think.*"



## WORLD'S LEADING SCHOOLS GATHER IN LISBON

We are thrilled to share that Arjun Puri, our Dean of Admissions, was the keynote speaker at the prestigious OpenApply Conference 2025, held this year in Lisbon. The event brought together leading international schools and education professionals from around the world, making it a truly global gathering of thought leaders in admissions and school leadership. Arjun's keynote address, titled "Bringing 'Soul' to Stakeholder Engagement," received a huge ovation and struck a powerful chord with the audience. In his talk on empathy, kindness, and authentic connection, Arjun challenged schools to move beyond transactional relationships and instead foster deeper, more human-centred engagement with students, families, and the wider community. His message was both timely and timeless, reminding all of us of the heart at the centre of great education. We couldn't be more proud to see such meaningful work recognised on the world stage.



## YEARBOOK 2023-24

### ACADEMY YEARBOOK 2023/24

We're delighted to share a link to the 2023/24 Yearbook. The following link will take you to an online flip-through version:

[Yearbook 2023/24](#)

If you would like a higher resolution version to download, you can make use of [this link](#). If you ordered a physical copy of the 2023/24 Yearbook, you will be able to collect it from the Junior or Senior School office on the last day of school.

The online version of the 2024/25 Yearbook will be shared as a link with the final newsletter of the term. Physical copies of the 2024/25 Yearbook will be available for collection at the start of the new academic year. Students graduating this year will receive a physical copy on graduation day.

It's taken a while to re-establish the Yearbook after the disruptions of the pandemic. We are back on track, and from now on, Yearbooks will be published annually in the final month of each academic year.

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*“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.”*

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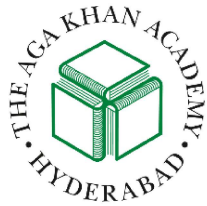
His Late Highness Prince Karim Aga Khan IV  
Kampala, Uganda, 22 August 2007



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THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY  
HYDERABAD

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*from the desk of the*  
**Head of Academy**

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9 May 2025



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Dear Parents,

We are living in uncertain times. Rising tensions can make everyone feel anxious. We know that children pick up on this too, sometimes through what they see and hear, but often through the atmosphere at home or at school. Many young people, especially teenagers, face a daily tidal wave of messages on social media. Some are alarmist. Many are shaped by strong views. Others are simply confusing. This can add to feelings of unease and anxiety.

Children are remarkably attuned to the emotional undercurrents that surround them. That's why parents and teachers matter so much at times like this. Whether they express it openly or not, children look to the adults in their lives for cues on how to think and how to act.

When events beyond our control dominate the headlines, our role as parents and educators becomes especially significant. One of the most important things we can do when the world feels unsettled is to focus our energy on what is within our control. This means focusing on the emotional climate we create for children, both at school and at home. This, more than anything, is where stability and strength are built.

Here on campus, we have a specific priority to develop the intellectual potential of our students. But we also have a priority to create a calm, principled environment in which young people can learn to navigate complexity with thoughtfulness and care. This is vital because we are shaped, unconsciously, by the atmosphere that surrounds us. When global events unsettle our peace of mind, these are precisely the moments when our values need to be lived. Qualities like empathy, courage, integrity and compassion must not only be taught but also seen in action. When young people witness these values being lived out in everyday decisions and interactions, they learn how to carry them forward into the wider world.

Our role is not to avoid challenging themes or difficult topics, but to help guide and structure meaningful conversations. We don't need to have all the answers, but we can create space for thoughtful questions to be asked. We can model how to weigh up different sources of information, how to stay grounded in facts and how to recognise when emotion is overriding reason.

In uncertain times, children need us to be present. This means being fully attentive, calm and emotionally available. It is not just about being nearby but about showing up - listening carefully, noticing how they are feeling and offering steady reassurance. Even brief moments of genuine connection can help a child feel safe and secure.

It's also okay to be honest. We don't need to pretend everything is fine. But how we frame our words matters. Saying something like, "Yes, things feel uncertain right now, but there are a lot of people working hard behind the scenes to find solutions" can be enough to ease a child's worry. It gives them a sense of perspective without overwhelming them.

Children often carry unspoken questions, shaped by things they've seen or overheard. Gently asking, "What have you heard?" or "How are you feeling about it?" opens the door for reflection. And sometimes, the most comforting thing we can do is simply listen, without rushing in to explain or fix.

Most of all, times like this are a chance to remind our children of who we are and what we stand for. Being part of a school community that values inclusion, kindness and thoughtfulness helps anchor

them in a deeper sense of identity. It shows them that even in uncertain moments, they belong to a story that is rooted in hope and belonging. Though we cannot control what happens beyond the school gates, we can shape the emotional climate in which our children grow. And that can make all the difference.

Best wishes,



Dr Jonathan Long

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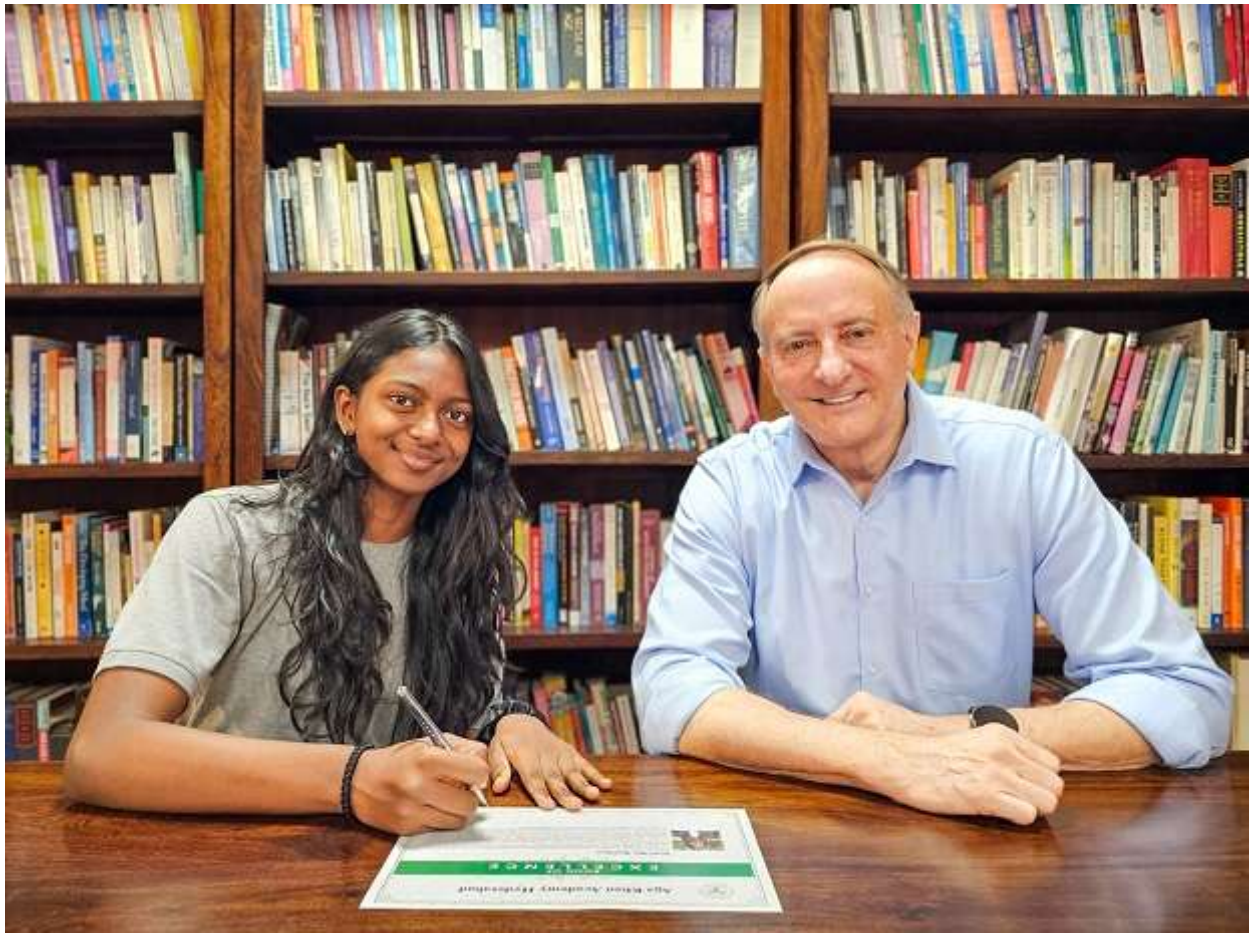
## THIS WEEK'S NEWS



### BOOK OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

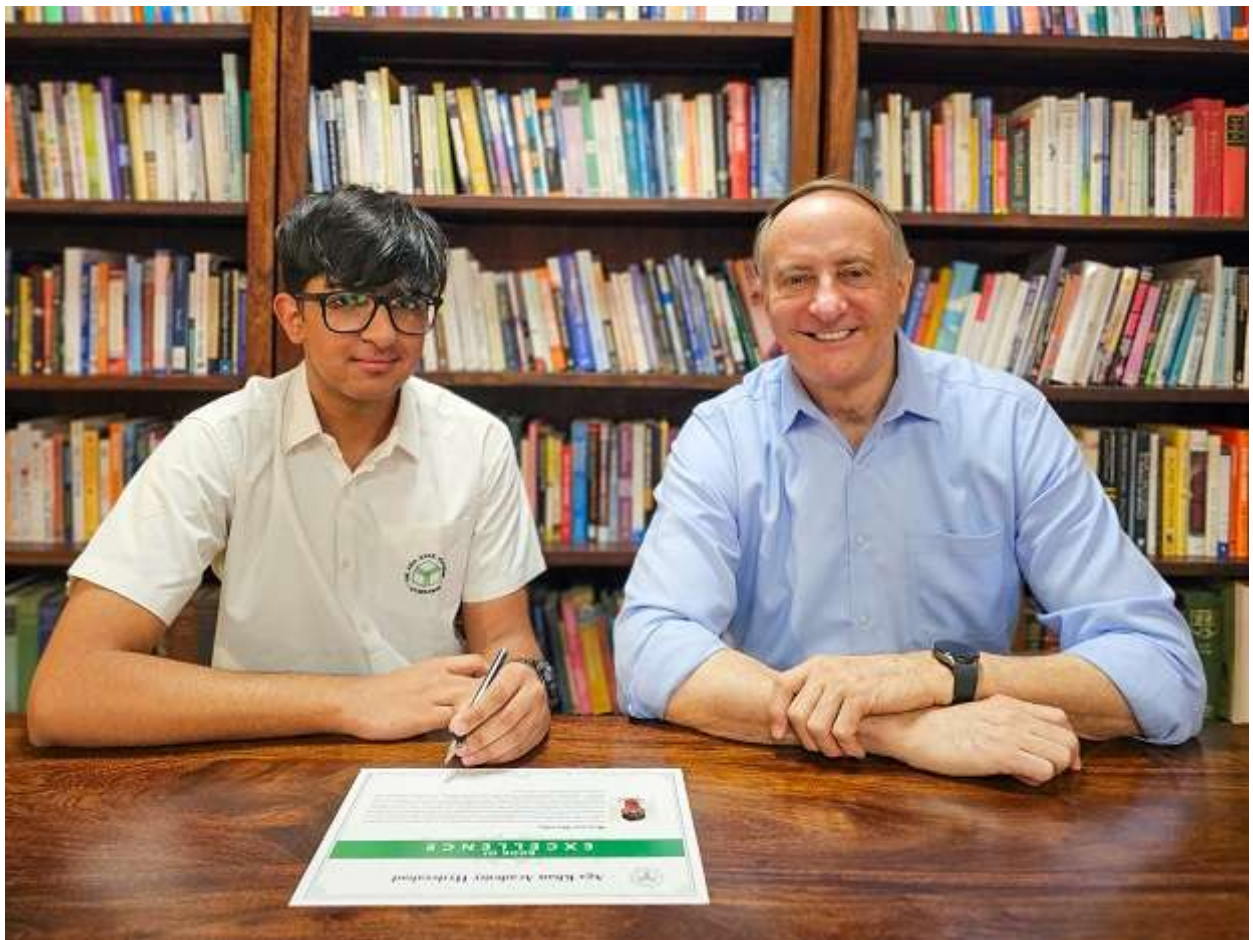
The *Book of Excellence* is an award that recognises exceptional conduct in any aspect of school life. Students can be nominated by staff who feel that the work or contribution is so impressive that it deserves very special recognition. This recognition is also recorded on the student's university transcripts as an honour. Over the past six years, only fifteen *Book of Excellence* awards have been made, so this is a rare and commendable achievement. This week, three new *Book of Excellence* awards were announced at a special assembly:

### **Sumedha Bandaru (DP 1)**



This award recognises Sumedha for her leadership and academic excellence. As Captain of the Swimming Team and Pandya House, she has combined leadership with authentic values. Her role as Director General of the Model United Nations demonstrated her ability to think strategically and bring out the best in others. Her commitment to social responsibility through *Project Pages*, an initiative she co-founded to support libraries in under-resourced schools, broadens opportunities for children through access to books. Her involvement in external affairs and fundraising has been characterised by maturity and selfless service. Sumedha models the qualities of a principled, compassionate and forward-thinking leader. She is a credit to the Academy and an inspiration to all who seek to lead with purpose and heart.

### **Shayaan Maredia (DP 1)**



Shayaan is recognised as a courageous learner who approaches opportunity with energy and a desire to grow. A deep thinker with a passion for exploring big ideas, he brings intellectual rigour to all that he does – from his thoughtful contributions to the Philosophy Club to his outstanding work in visual storytelling as part of the Admissions and Communications internship. Whether he is engaging with abstract philosophical questions or refining a video edit to better capture the Academy’s message, Shayaan works with care and attention to detail. He listens deeply and brings warmth and empathy into every interaction. His ability to connect philosophical thinking to real-world contexts makes him a powerful voice in our learning community. We are delighted to recognise Shayaan’s many contributions with this Book of Excellence award.

**Pranav Paruchuri (DP 1)**



Pranav is a thoughtful and principled student whose calm, steady presence and intellectual depth enrich every space he inhabits. In the Philosophy Club, he has helped build a space where ideas can be explored respectfully, encouraging peers to ask better questions and challenge assumptions with kindness and clarity. Pranav's work with the Admissions and Communications internship has been impressive. He has approached each task with maturity and commitment, consistently going beyond what was asked of him. His contributions reflect his quiet leadership and his ability to think critically and communicate effectively. Pranav's strength lies in his capacity to hold multiple perspectives, to reason with integrity, and to engage with others in a spirit of openness and mutual respect. For all these reasons, we are delighted to recognise him with this Book of Excellence award.



## SHARING OUR LEARNING

Last Saturday, the Junior School students invited parents to share in their year of learning. Each student created a work portfolio comprising their learnings throughout the year – their favourite pieces, the best pieces, the things they were most proud of and their challenges and ways to overcome them. Parents shared activities with their children related to English, Maths, Telugu and Hindi, leaving with a clear understanding of how teaching and learning happens across the Junior School. It was a pleasure to see the pride the children have in their work!



## RESEARCH IN ACTION

An in-depth Extended Essay workshop took place this week to support the research journey of our DP 1 students. The Extended Essay is a 4,000-word independent research project that allows students to investigate a topic of personal interest within one of their subjects. It develops students' skills in research, academic writing and critical thinking, preparing them for university-level work. The workshop helped students refine their research questions, develop critical thinking skills and deepen their understanding of academic writing. With careful mentoring and skill-building sessions on citation and argumentative writing, students strengthened their understanding of the IB criteria. The workshop served as a valuable platform for independent inquiry and scholarly engagement.



## NURTURING LOVE FOR READING

Author Neil Gaiman said, “A book is a dream that you hold in your hands.” The value of developing a love for reading is something we take very seriously. Last week, the Junior School hosted the *Scholastic Book Fair*, thanks to the efforts of Ms Veena, the Junior School Library teacher. Earlier in the week, each class visited the library to create their personal Wish Lists, and on Saturday, students eagerly returned with their parents to make their selections. With a wide range of quality books catering to all interests and reading levels, the book fair had something for everyone.



## GLOBAL LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE: PEACE, CONFLICT AND RESOLUTION

Last week, Grade 9 Integrated Humanities students hosted a *Global Leadership Conference* on the theme, "Peace, Conflict and Conflict Resolution." Each student represented a conflict-affected country, offering perspectives on global issues through critical analysis and dialogue. The event integrated key MYP Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills, including research, collaboration and communication. Students were able to better understand the geopolitical, cultural and economic dimensions of conflict and governance and to propose context-driven resolutions. Demonstrating the MYP Learner Profile attributes of resilience, open-mindedness and knowledge, students practised respectful dialogue and empathetic listening – hallmarks of global citizenship. In alignment with our Academy's values of pluralism and global citizenship, this student-led initiative reminded us that the path to peace is paved with courage, conversation, and the willingness to see the world through another's eyes.



## LIFE ON TWO WHEELS

The Cycling Club is an essential and popular part of the Academy's Experiential Learning Programme. Designed to promote basic cycling skills, fitness and an appreciation for the outdoors, it is open to students from Grades 6 to 12. It's an opportunity for students to explore our campus on two wheels through a series of cycling routes – some of them quite challenging. The Cycling Club allows students to enjoy the outdoors in a safe and supportive environment and to learn some useful life skills along the way. You can watch a video about the club [here](#).



## A JOURNEY OF GROWTH AND WONDER

Grade 1 students celebrated their learning journey this week with a joyful reflection event. The highlight was a light and shadow puppet show inspired by their unit of inquiry, *"How the World Works"*. Students shared the message of protecting nature and planting trees to help save the Earth. Making a transdisciplinary connection with Maths, they designed their puppet characters using 2D shapes, applying their knowledge artistically and purposefully. After the show, students recited two poems, reflecting on their study of literature. One poem highlighted how trees protect and support life, echoing the environmental themes of their inquiry. The second poem offered glimpses into the simple joys and observations of everyday life, allowing students to express personal connections and shared experiences. This celebration beautifully brought together learning across subjects and highlighted the students' development as thoughtful, creative and caring individuals. We are proud of their accomplishments and look forward to what they'll achieve next!



## WELCOMING MS USHA SHIVAKUMAR AS OUR NEW DP COORDINATOR

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Ms Usha Shivakumar as our new Diploma Programme Coordinator. Usha will take over the role from Mr Sudipta, who will be leaving the Academy at the end of this term. We thank Sudipta for his exceptional work with us over the past 12 years and wish him the very best in the journey ahead. A graduate of IIT Madras and VIT, with a B.Ed from Mumbai University and a strong background in both mathematics and physics, Usha joined the Academy 4 years ago as a member of the Math Department. Her work has been marked by an impressive combination of academic rigour, teaching experience and mentoring skills. Over the past decade, she has taught across IB, IGCSE and A Level programmes. Her background in research-based science education and her commitment to student-centred learning make her an ideal leader for the next chapter of the Diploma Programme at the Academy. We are excited about the vision and energy Usha brings to this role and look forward to her leadership in supporting our students through the academic and personal challenges of the IB Diploma. Please join us in warmly welcoming Usha to the Academy and to the DP community.



## INTRODUCING OUR NEW PYP COORDINATOR: MS LAVANYA VADAVALLI

We are delighted to announce the appointment of Ms Lavanya as our new PYP Coordinator from the start of next academic year. Ms Lavanya takes over from Mr Abhimanyu, who leaves the Academy after five years of exceptional service. We thank him warmly for his authentic and inspiring leadership and wish him every success in his future endeavours. Lavanya is no stranger to our community. Over the past four years, she has worked with us as a Grade 4 Homeroom Teacher. She has helped shape our Programme of Inquiry, mentored students through the PYP Exhibition, and facilitated workshops on maths, assessment and student agency. With over a decade of international experience in IB schools across India, Singapore and Australia, Lavanya combines a global perspective with deep pedagogical insight. She holds a master's in teaching from Swinburne University in Melbourne and has previously served in roles ranging from homeroom teacher and Assistant PYP Coordinator to lead teacher and curriculum designer. Lavanya is deeply committed to inquiry-based, concept-driven education. We are confident she will build on the strong foundations laid by Mr Abhimanyu and lead our PYP community with care and vision. Please join us in welcoming Lavanya to her new role.



## EMPOWERING EDUCATORS THROUGH INQUIRY

This week, the Academy's Centre for Educational Research, Innovation and Training (CERT) successfully concluded a year-long Research Fellowship Programme – an initiative to develop practitioner-led inquiry and innovation in education. The programme includes advisory support that builds the capacity of teachers to conduct educational research and promote innovation in the classroom. One of the research projects, *"Connecting the Dots: Building Coherent Program Transitions for Maximum Impact"* by Meena Gnanadesikan and Kruti Dholu, explored the challenges students face during the transition from the PYP to the MYP. The second study, *"Art Education in the Digital Age: The Application of the Community of Inquiry (CoI) Approach in Indian Classrooms"* by Nikhil Sharma and Elizabeth Eckel, investigated how digital art creation impacts student engagement and enhances creativity and critical thinking in a high socioeconomic, urban Indian context. We thank everyone who contributed to this very successful project and we look forward to the launch of this year's RFP!



## A DECADE OF DEDICATION

Over the next two weeks, we are recognising staff who have completed 10 years of distinguished service at the Academy. The first three staff to be recognised were Head of IT, Shrikant Pateria, English Teacher (and our new Head of English from next term), Saloni Chesney and Physics Teacher Suhel Vakkal. Over the past decade, their dedication and commitment have touched the lives of countless students, shaping future leaders and nurturing a culture of excellence. As we mark this meaningful milestone, we extend our heartfelt gratitude to these extraordinary individuals for making the Academy a truly inspiring place of learning and growth. Next week we will recognise another three staff members who celebrate this special achievement this year, too!

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

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His Highness the Aga Khan

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



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THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY  
HYDERABAD

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*from the desk of the*  
**Head of Academy**

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16 May 2025



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Dear Parents,

If you've ever looked closely at the side of a long-distance truck on an Indian highway, you'll have seen a metal container bolted beneath the chassis. Known as the *fatta box*, it's the driver's essential toolkit, filled with whatever might be needed for the road ahead. It doesn't look like much, but inside a *fatta box*, you'll find all sorts of tools and spare parts. There could be spanners, wrenches, puncture kits, fuses, bulbs, fan belts and zip ties. In other words, all the tools you might need for important roadside repairs. On a long journey, it's not a question of whether something will go wrong – it's just a matter of when!

I love looking out for these *fatta boxes* and admiring the decorations and colours that adorn them. I often wonder what's inside, knowing that each driver has carefully made their own selection. Over the years, they've learned to depend on these *fatta boxes* when things go wrong.



All of us who work with children (whether as parents or teachers) need to pack our own *fatta box*. I don't mean spanners and screwdrivers, but the wisdom and skills that help us support young people on their journey to adulthood. My two daughters are now raising families of their own — but I still

carry a *fatta box* of tools that have stood the test of time, shaped by four decades of working with children around the world.

Five of the tools in my *fatta box* show the greatest signs of wear. These are ones I've used the most over the years. Whenever a child has a "puncture" in their confidence or hits a "breakdown" after an especially bumpy week, these are the tools I've come to rely on.

**The tool of curiosity:** Children are growing up in a world very different from the one we knew as children — socially, digitally and culturally. Instead of reacting with judgment or fear, I have learned to meet their world with curiosity and ask questions before making assumptions. Listening without interrupting and being genuinely interested in how they see things shows them that their voice matters. As the saying goes, "make a connection before giving a correction."

**The tool of calm:** Neuroscientists tell us that the adolescent brain is still developing, particularly in areas related to impulse control and emotion. As a result, young people feel things more intensely than adults. That's why young brains need mature adult brains to help regulate their emotional world. When a teenager is having a "melt-down", they don't need us to join the chaos – they need us to be the calm in their storm.

**The tool of compassion:** This doesn't mean agreeing with everything they say or abandoning adult guidance. It means remembering that teenagers experience life from the inside out, often with little outside context or hindsight. Taking their emotions seriously, even if they seem exaggerated, helps them feel understood, not dismissed. Seeing things through their eyes is the first step to building trust.

**The tool of clarity:** Teenagers test boundaries because they're trying to work out where the edges are. This doesn't only apply to rules, but also to questions of identity and belonging. Saying "no" isn't about control; it's about care. Teenagers feel safest when adults set clear and fair expectations and hold the line with love. Contrary to popular belief, adolescents don't flourish in unregulated environments. They thrive when the boundaries are consistent, compassionate, and firm.

**The tool of commitment:** Children will get things wrong. So will we. But if our response focuses on learning opportunities rather than shame, they learn that growth is always possible. Growing up is a winding path with detours and setbacks. Commitment is about remembering what really matters in the long run. It's the steady resolve to keep the bigger picture in sight, especially when the present moment feels frustrating or uncertain.

Over the years, I have learned to depend on these tools. Each represents a piece of wisdom that I've come to trust: not because it fixes everything, but because it helps steady the moment and move things forward. And like the tools in a driver's *fatta box*, there are times when they can make all the difference.

Best wishes,

Jonathan Long

Dr Jonathan Long

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## THIS WEEK'S NEWS



### TIGGER TEASER

Grade 1 and 2 students have been hard at work over the last few weeks learning songs and lines for their musical performance – Tigger. The tale is full of fun and friendship, teaching us how to spend time with the friends that we love. It also teaches us that it is alright to enjoy a good bounce every now and then! We are looking forward to welcoming everyone to share in our performance

and we know the singing and dancing will fill the audience with great cheer. More information coming soon!



## END-OF-YEAR EXAMS IN THE SENIOR SCHOOL

### **From our Senior School Principal, Mr Christian Schmelz**

This week, students in MYP 1 to 4 wrote internal, end-of-year exams. MYP 5 and DP 2 students continued with their external eAssessments and Diploma exams, respectively.

Exam weeks tend to be nerve-racking – for students, parents and teachers alike. This year, we designed the exam schedules for younger students in a way that provided ample opportunity for continuous revision and exam practice. Encouragingly, we noticed that many students became better at using those opportunities during the school day by consulting with their teachers and revising in small groups or by themselves. The students made good use of their time at school and, after the exam each afternoon, started to prepare for the next day.

Taking exams successfully and staying focused over a prolonged period of time requires students to manage themselves effectively, revise systematically (i.e. not just the night before) and look after their wellbeing with sufficient sleep and a healthy diet. The end-of-year exams allow our students to gradually build these skills.

Over the next two weeks, students in MYP 1 to 4 will receive feedback on their exams, review one last time the curriculum outlines for this past year and identify, if needed, any conceptual and skill areas that may need a bit more work over the June-July break. Until the end of term, MYP 5 students will follow their normal timetable and work with teachers on developing skills that are

relevant for the Diploma subjects they have selected. This Diploma Programme introduction helps students prepare for grade 11 and ensures that students can learn continuously.



## EXPLORING IMAGINATION AND IDENTITY THROUGH CREATIVE WRITING

The Creative Writing Club is a unique space where students can express their creativity and ideas in a carefully guided environment. They are encouraged to come up with their own distinct styles and techniques but are also encouraged to push their creative boundaries and explore new styles of writing. Students in this club also have opportunities to learn about books and writers. Students are challenged to create and work outside their comfort zone, making them a better version of themselves as a writer. You can watch the Club feature [here](#).

### 78° East: Creative Writing Magazine

*Adapted from the editorial to "78° East", the creative writing magazine produced by students of the creative writing club led by Dr Gopika Jadeja. You can read the magazine [here](#).*

I sit here in our sylvan campus on the outskirts of Hyderabad, writing this editorial, the peacocks walk around. One even flies to the top of the rock I have begun to call a friend and roosts there, watching over my writing. For the past two years, the enduring image of my everyday life has been the peacocks crying in unison with the sound of dynamite blasting rocks, millennia-old geological structures, to make way for development. I have been trying to write about it, but each day I sit down to write and it eludes me. The peacock's cry mingles with the sound of the ash settling to earth. There is no shelter for the peacock; no sky left for its cry to spread.

Writing can be a struggle, because it is about grappling with our realities. Over the past few terms, the Creative Writing Club has been a space for students to come and think together and create a space where they make this struggle their own and learn to express what it means to live in this world here and now.

Our student writers have engaged with the words of others as well as their own words—words that refused to arrive, words that did not always make sense, words that remained in hiding. To bring words to the brightness of the page means a laying bare of the self that requires courage; it means digging deep into ourselves for truths about ourselves and those around us that may be difficult to see and acknowledge. I am proud of our students who have dug deep within themselves and have the courage to speak truths to themselves in their writing.



## LIFESAVING IN ACTION

We all love having the swimming pool for our physical education lessons, especially at this time of year. But swimming skills are not the only thing we need to learn. Spending time in and near any body of water has its risks and that is why all the Junior School classes took part in lifesaving

sessions this week. Under the expert guidance of Mr Surendra, Ms Seena and Mr Yaseen the children were shown how to rescue someone in trouble in the water using rope, pole and ring techniques. They were also taught not to panic in such situations, staying calm helps the rescue effort. The students of Grades 1-5 are ready for action in school and when out and about near water, in the rare event that someone needs rescuing while swimming.



## EMPOWERING EVERYDAY HEROES

The Business Club, founded by Avani Bisht and Sahasra Punnam, in collaboration with the Unsung Heroes team, successfully organised a Financial Literacy Workshop for our wonderful support staff. This thoughtful initiative aimed to equip our everyday heroes with practical financial knowledge to help them make informed decisions about their money and future. Guest speaker CA Kishore Kumar Kurakula led the session, covering key topics such as budgeting, saving and long-term financial planning. A special focus was placed on introducing essential government schemes designed to support workers, including savings plans, insurance options and pension benefits. These insights provided the staff with valuable tools to access benefits they may not have previously been aware of. The workshop was a testament to the school community's dedication to empowerment through education. Congratulations to the Business Club and the Unsung Heroes team for organising such a meaningful and impactful event.



### INSPIRING CONNECTION, EMPATHY AND INCLUSIVITY

Recently, students from the Aga Khan Youth and Sports Board (AKYSB), India, made a memorable visit to our Academy, giving us the privilege of hosting over 160 enthusiastic students. Aashayein is AKYSB India's flagship camp for passionate facilitators to mentor and inspire the youth of rural Saurashtra in Gujarat. During their visit to the Academy, the students engaged with our inquiry-based learning environment and residential life experiences. This interaction was enriching for the visitors but also offered our residential students an opportunity to connect with peers from diverse backgrounds. Engaging with the Aashayein students helped our students reflect on the privilege of their education, deepen their appreciation for community outreach and reinforce the values of inclusivity and mutual respect. We are grateful for the opportunity to showcase our Academy and are delighted that all the visitors enjoyed their time with us.



## A GALLERY OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

This week marked a significant moment for the Academy's Centre for Educational Research, Innovation and Training as it hosted its first Gallery Walk. The event offered a glimpse into the Centre's work, anchored in the belief that professional learning should be CRISP – Collaborative, Responsive, Imaginative, Strategic and Purpose-driven. One of the most interesting highlights was a display showing the learning journey of the interns on our Teacher Preparation Programme, reflecting a deep transformation from freshers out of college into passionate and purposeful educators. Looking ahead, the Centre is excited to expand its reach by offering differentiated programmes to support the personal and professional growth of staff. Co-developed in partnership with the human resource team and school leadership, the training modules will ensure that every educator remains empowered, equipped and inspired to make a meaningful impact.



## CELEBRATING A DECADE OF SERVICE

As part of our ongoing celebration of long-standing staff commitment, this week we continued to honour colleagues who have reached a significant milestone - ten years of dedicated service at the Academy. This second group of recipients includes **Ms Shabana Awadiya**, Personal Assistant to our Junior School Principal; **Ms Vidhya Pallath**, a Junior School teacher; and **Mr Giribabu Kuna**, one of our Lab Assistants. Over the past decade, each of them has brought energy, dedication and care to our learning community – supporting students, collaborating with colleagues and strengthening the vision and values we cherish. We are deeply grateful for their contributions, which have helped shape the Academy into the dynamic and nurturing environment we are proud to call our own.



## HONOURING A LEGACY OF CARE AND LEADERSHIP

At the end of this term, we bid farewell to our Dean of Students, Mr Suresh Madhavan, as he takes up a senior leadership role at another school. Mr Suresh has led our residential programme with integrity and heart. Over the past 12 years, he has been a steady and compassionate presence in the lives of our students, holding them to high standards while always seeing them as individuals, full of potential and promise. His leadership has shaped a student culture rooted in responsibility and respect. Alongside his work as Dean, Mr Suresh Madhavan also brought his passion for economics into the classroom, where he has inspired students to think critically about the world around them and their place within it. More than anything, Mr Suresh's time at the Academy has been marked by a deep and authentic alignment with His Highness's vision for education. We are grateful for the conviction and care he has brought to his work. We wish him every success in this new chapter and know he will carry forward the spirit of the Academy wherever he goes.

From the start of next term, in addition to his responsibilities as Deputy Head of Academy, Mr Jeff Doerfler will take on oversight of our Residential Programme. He brings considerable experience to this role, having led the residential life programme at Woodstock School for over 12 years, following more than two decades of leadership in schools across the United States before moving to India in 2009.



## DISCOVER THE JOY OF RESIDENTIAL LIFE!

### **From our Deputy Head of Academy, Mr Jeff Doerfler**

From the start of next term, we are introducing an enhanced residential programme with some important changes. We are excited about these. Being a residential student is more than just having a place to stay on campus – it's a unique environment, designed to nurture a child's independence, leadership and well-being in a safe and supportive setting.

Students benefit from teacher-supervised study hours, nutritious meals, special leadership opportunities and a vibrant weekend activity programme. They learn time management, build strong peer connections, and develop confidence and resilience - skills that last a lifetime.

What sets our boarding experience apart is our emphasis on student voice. From choosing weekend activities to helping shape academic-related support, students have a say in how their residential community grows. There is space for fun, creativity, and personal interest alongside academic pursuits!

Weekends on campus are designed to balance structure and safe choices. Students enjoy a mix of optional and required activities, community socials and "Student Choice Time," where they can explore interests or relax. Students who live in Hyderabad may return home on weekends, except for certain key weekends that require full residential participation. This flexibility allows families to remain closely connected while giving students the full benefit of the boarding experience during the school week.

We invite you to consider this transformative experience for your child. Whether it's through academic support, personal growth or meaningful relationships, residential life at the Academy is designed to help students thrive. By enrolling your child in our residential programme, you can be assured that they will develop in key areas such as academic achievement, independence, decision-making, confidence, resiliency and social skills.

If you have any questions regarding our residential programme, please write to: [akahyd.residential-program@agakhanacademies.org](mailto:akahyd.residential-program@agakhanacademies.org)

If you are interested in signing up your child for our residential programme, write to: [admissions.hyderabad@agakhanacademies.org](mailto:admissions.hyderabad@agakhanacademies.org)

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

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His Highness the Aga Khan

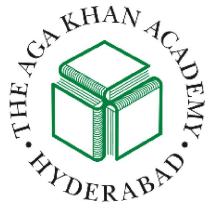
Groundbreaking of the International Academic Centre of Excellence, Tanzania, 17 March 2005



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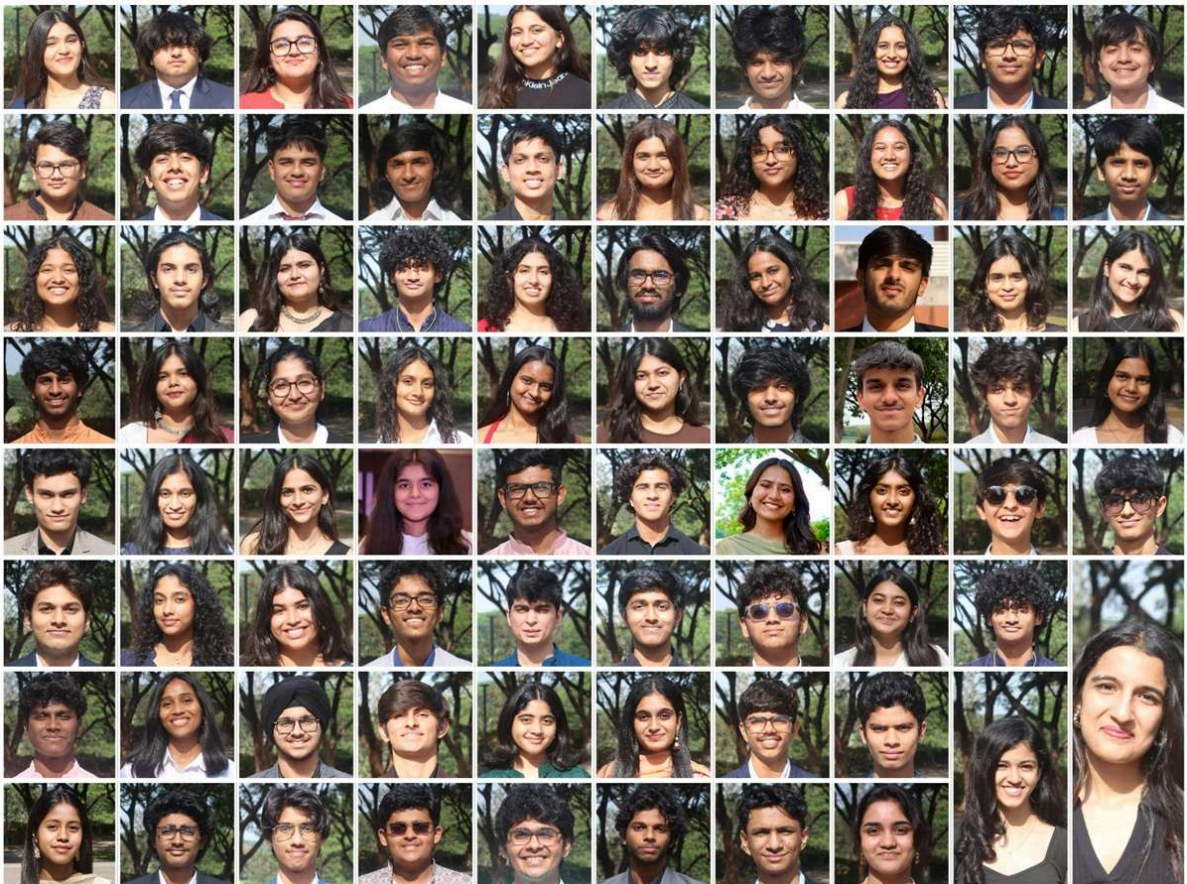
THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY  
HYDERABAD

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*from the desk of the*  
**Head of Academy**

23 May 2025



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Dear Parents,

Tomorrow, the Class of 2025 graduates. Some of the class first entered the Academy as Grade 1 students. Tomorrow they leave as adults, inspired by an education that has equipped them to make their mark. While they will always be the Class of 2025, tomorrow they will spread out across the world to follow their dreams.

The dictionary defines a rite of passage as “*a ceremony or event marking an important stage in someone's life.*” In earlier times, these key transitions often included special rituals. For example, young boys of the Algonquin Tribe in Quebec were fed the powerful hallucinogen, *wisocan*, to lead them into manhood. In Bali, it was customary for boys and girls to have their teeth filed as part of the transition into adulthood. Fortunately for our graduates, tomorrow's ceremony won't include either of these rituals!

The best rites of passage allow young people to gain a better understanding of who they are and the kind of life they want to live. Sadly, in the modern world, rites of passage are often only celebratory in nature – they no longer have an underlying theme on which young people can base their lives. Consequently, many young people pass from childhood to adulthood with little more than a certificate or a party.

Yet the need for meaningful transitions is as great as ever. A recent study found that young people whose parents pay attention to significant life transitions are more likely to experience lower stress, better emotional health and stronger self-esteem. Simply put, young people thrive when the adults in their lives pay attention to what matters. Graduation at the Aga Khan Academy is one such moment. It is a chance to pause and say to these young people: You have grown. You are capable. And your life is not just your own - it is a gift and a responsibility.

This year's graduating class leaves with a remarkable record: more than 300 university offers across 14 countries, over \$6.5 million in scholarships, and 51 offers from institutions ranked among the world's top 100. These are impressive figures. But they are not the whole story. The real story lies in the quieter, more personal transitions that led them to this point - the first time standing up for a peer, the moment of choosing integrity over convenience, the discovery of one's own voice in an essay, an artwork, a project, a performance. These are the unspoken rites of passage that mark the journey from adolescence into adulthood.

While society may grant privileges based on age, we know that maturity is not a matter of age alone. Between being a child and being an adult lies the adventure of adolescence. This is a time of discovering identity and learning how to live meaningfully in a complicated world. An Academy education supports that journey with a story - one that nourishes the soul as much as it trains the mind.

To the Class of 2025: May you carry forward the story that has shaped you here—a story

rooted in the vision of His Late Highness Aga Khan IV. It is a vision that calls for more than academic excellence; it asks you to lead with integrity, to serve with purpose, and to remain deeply committed to ethical leadership and social responsibility.

In March 2022 in Maputo, His Highness Aga Khan V said, *"Throughout your studies and your youth, adults will tell you that the future is ahead of you. I want to tell you that the future is what you leave behind you, shaped by every one of your actions and your statements and your decisions. The future follows behind you in the path that you choose."*

Best wishes,



Dr Jonathan Long

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## THIS WEEK'S NEWS



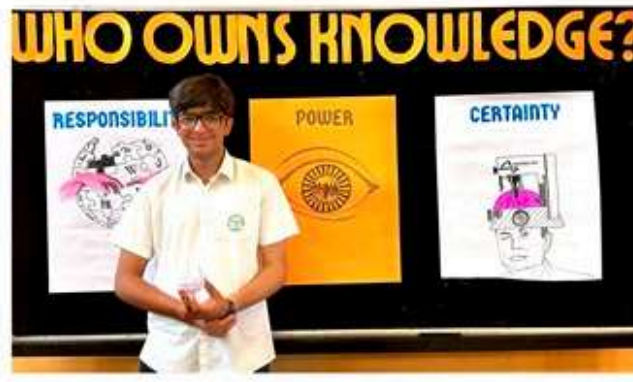
### BOOK OF EXCELLENCE AWARD

The tradition of recognising and honouring exceptional students for their conduct and dedication continues with the prestigious Book of Excellence award. This accolade is

reserved for students whose outstanding contributions to the Academy deserve special recognition. Today, we presented this award to a deserving DP 2 student who will be graduating from the Academy tomorrow.

**Bhaavik Blessed Mamidala – DP 2**

This award recognises an exceptional scholar whose intellectual depth, moral clarity and love of learning have left a lasting impression on all who have worked with him. A gifted thinker with rare perceptivity, he brings philosophical insight and literary sophistication to every discussion – whether drawing on Camus and Sartre or engaging with the poetry of Ben Okri and Ramesh Kartik Nayek. As Student President of the Modern Literature in Translation club, he has curated dialogues that bridged cultures and ideas, embodying the Academy's values of pluralism and ethical reflection. His leadership as student editor of Mind Benders set a benchmark in academic publishing. His editorial acumen, collaborative spirit and pursuit of excellence resulted in a journal of exceptional quality. As an intern in the Admissions and Communications department, Bhaavik brought fresh, creative ideas to the table and contributed actively to social media initiatives. His input showcased originality, enthusiasm and a strong understanding of engaging communication. His contributions also extend to the revival of De-construct, a student-led magazine exploring questions of justice and freedom through both Western and Asian philosophical lenses. Thoughtful, humble and deeply committed to his peers and community, Bhaavik represents the highest ideals of global citizenship and reflective scholarship.



## CELEBRATING THE POWER OF INQUIRY

The IB Theory of Knowledge (TOK) exhibition is a key part of the Diploma Programme where students explore how knowledge plays out in the real world. Each student selects a prompt, such as “What counts as knowledge?” and uses three carefully chosen objects to illustrate and reflect on their ideas. Through a short-written commentary, they explain how these objects connect to TOK themes and demonstrate their ability to think critically and personally about how we understand and use knowledge. It's a creative and thoughtful way for students to apply big ideas to everyday life. This year's Exhibition was inaugurated on 21 May 2025 in the presence of enthusiastic Grade 10 students and teachers. In an opening speech, Student President Meher Patel affirmed the value of a questioning spirit and the inner drive to sustain it. The exhibition highlighted urgent local and global issues from the domains of personal knowledge, religion and technology. The event was a celebration of inquiry and understanding, emphasising the central role of knowledge in interpreting and engaging with the world around us. It prompted thoughtful conversations and a renewed appreciation for the depth and complexity of knowledge by asserting the

power of inquiry in fostering informed, reflective and ethical individuals ready to face the challenges of the modern world.



## A GLIMPSE INTO THE JOURNEY AHEAD

The Senior School welcomed Grade 5 students for a special Immersion Day in the Senior School this week. This experience was designed to support their transition from the Primary Years Programme into the Middle Years Programme (MYP). The event introduced students to the MYP framework, a glimpse into subject offerings and opportunities to build connections with MYP 1 peers. The day began with a welcome from the leadership team, including Mr Christian, Ms Afeera and Grade Leader, Mr Jebin. The subject teachers introduced their disciplines, offering insights into what students can expect in the MYP. One of the highlights of the morning was a showcase of student talent. MYP 1 students captivated the audience with an array of performances, from dance and drama to music, infusing energy and enthusiasm into the event. Following the performances, PYP 5 students embarked on a guided campus tour led by the current Grade 6 students and Advisors, exploring key learning spaces across the Senior School. At the end of the

interaction, Ms Afeera and Dr Swati distributed goodie bags, leaving each student with memorabilia of the day and excitement for the journey ahead.



## EMBRACING LINGUISTIC DIVERSITY: REFLECTION BY DP 1 STUDENTS DAKSH AND KARINA

The Language Club, held every Sunday morning, brings together students from diverse backgrounds to celebrate cultures and learn new languages. The aim is to foster cross-cultural understanding and linguistic nuances through interactive sessions, games, and cultural exchange activities, deepening their appreciation for different languages and their communication styles. The club aims to break language barriers among students, building a strong community and nurturing pluralistic leaders. Last week's session was led by four student facilitators and featured three exciting activities. The club started with an engaging icebreaker "Imposter" to help everyone relax. Next was "Human Bingo", where students had to complete a challenge by interacting with peers who had done language-related tasks—like reading books in multiple languages such as Arabic, Khasi, Telugu and English. The highlight was a multilingual Treasure Hunt, where clues were written in different

languages. Students worked in teams, relying on each other's language skills to decode clues. We look forward to more such enriching Sundays!



## BOOKS AND BUZZ

Reading is a powerful tool to nurture young minds. Health and medical journalist, Dan Hurley, spent three years interviewing psychologists and neuroscientists around the world. His aim was to test the claims being made for things which could increase intelligence. His conclusion is startling, “reading and intelligence have a relationship so close as to be symbiotic.” To encourage this habit, the Senior School library organised a book fair this week, featuring a rich collection of fiction and non-fiction. Students from Grades 6 to 11 eagerly explored the shelves, discussing favourites and new finds. The library is abuzz with energy as reading enthusiasts dive into the world of books.



## LEARNING FROM THE PAST

Last weekend, DP 1 students made their third visit to the Telangana State Archaeology Museum as part of their “Exploring Artifacts” project. Divided into three teams – photography, documentation and information and marketing — the students explored ways to promote the museum’s artifacts. The photography team captured engaging visuals, the documentation team gathered data and the marketing team created posts and reels. Humanities teacher Mr Peter, who accompanied the students to the museum, contributed innovative ideas that aligned with the project's objectives. A conversation with the museum's Assistant Director offered valuable perspectives on museum operations and marketing strategies.



## UNDERSTANDING HYDERABAD'S URBAN DYNAMICS

As part of our commitment to promoting experiential learning, Geography Extended Essay students went on a field trip to explore the contrasting neighbourhoods of Hyderabad city. The objective was to investigate a range of urban geographic themes, including gender-based educational deprivation, spatial distribution in embedded water demand and ecological footprint, spatial-temporal changes in the distribution of shops and services in the traditional Central Business District (CBD), and the environmental impacts of landfill sites in surrounding areas. Students had the unique opportunity to engage with diverse communities across low-, middle-, and high-income residential zones. This hands-on experience enriched their understanding of urban dynamics and human-environment interactions. By using field instruments, conducting surveys, engaging in direct observation and carrying out interviews, students collected valuable primary data to support their extended essays. Beyond academic learning, this field trip fostered critical thinking, communication skills and a deeper appreciation for real-world applications of geographic inquiry. It was a landmark experience that marked a significant step in their journey as budding researchers and global citizens.



## ROOTED IN NATURE

Last weekend, five students from the Charminar Dorm experimented with building a mud wall, learning basic *mestri* (masonry) skills. They also cared for fruit trees planted by seniors during the COVID-19 pandemic, now yielding fresh, flavourful produce like mangoes, papayas and berries. Grown completely organically, the fruits taste fresher, sweeter and full of natural flavour. The students are especially grateful to Mr Venkat Reddy, Head Dorm Parent and CAS Coordinator, for creating a special “well-being” shed at the farm — a peaceful space to connect with nature. There is now a lot of scientific evidence which shows that physical labour and working with our hands have huge benefits. Some research shows that bacteria naturally found in soil, called *Mycobacterim vaccae* can activate neurons that produce serotonin in the brain. Serotonin is crucial for regulating mood, emotional stability and a better social life. So apart from harvesting fine crops of fruit and vegetables, working on the Organic Farm might have some very significant well-being benefits too!



## IBMYP ENHANCEMENTS BY CHANGEMAKERS

We are thrilled to be part of a special IB global initiative to enhance components of the Middle Years Programme (MYP). A group of Grade 6 teachers, known as “Changemakers”, is actively engaged in this trial, working collaboratively to implement the enhancements with a focus on Approaches to Learning skills. In the IB, Approaches to Learning (ATLs) are the key skills students develop to become confident and independent learners. These include how they think, work with others, manage their time, communicate, and carry out research. Rather than focusing just on what students learn, ATLs help them understand how to learn—so they can apply these skills in school and in life beyond the classroom. Over the past eight weeks, these teachers have explored new approaches and this week they had a chance to showcase their progress. It was wonderful to witness the Senior School teachers engage meaningfully with the presentations. This MYP Beta Trial provided us with an opportunity to strengthen our implementation of the MYP framework.

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

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His Highness the Aga Khan

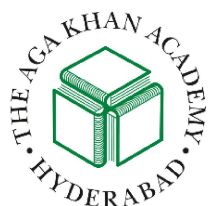
Groundbreaking of the International Academic Centre of Excellence, Tanzania, 17 March 2005



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THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY  
HYDERABAD

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*from the desk of the*  
**Head of Academy**

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30 May 2025



### Mount Everest Base Camp Expedition 2025

A team of Academy students and teachers set off on the 2025 Mount Everest base camp expedition on Sunday, May 18. Just over one week later, on Monday, May 26, the team reached the base camp! Today, the group is catching a flight out of Lukla Airport and will return to Hyderabad via Kathmandu. Join us in congratulating these proud mountaineers!

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Dear Parents,

This has been a whirlwind end to a spectacular school year! Last weekend, the Class of 2025 was celebrated in style with a memorable Graduation Ceremony. We were honoured to welcome President Meaghan Blight of Wesleyan College as our Chief Guest. Full coverage of the event is included in the articles below. In the Junior School, the *Celebration of the Arts* and an *Art Exhibition* brought the year to a fabulous conclusion with many parents in attendance.

I'm proud of what has been achieved here this year. This is a dynamic and inclusive community – a place in which young people experience a transformative education. I speak on behalf of all the staff here when I say it has been an honour to care for your children, to see them learn and grow. Thank you for the opportunity to do that – it is an enormous pleasure and privilege.

As we celebrate these achievements, we also say farewell to three long-serving staff members who have each worked here for more than a decade.

**Ms Shreelatha Kumar**, our Junior School Principal, was part of the founding team at the Academy in 2011. She retires this term after years of wise and compassionate leadership. We wish her well as she embarks on the next chapter of her life, with deep gratitude for the countless ways she has shaped our community and touched the lives of students, staff and families.

**Mr Suresh Madhavan**, our Dean of Students, leaves behind a legacy of care in shaping the lives of our students. We congratulate him on a prestigious new role at another school and thank him for his authentic commitment to student wellbeing and the values he has so consistently embodied. He leaves with our gratitude and warmest wishes.

And **Mr Sudipta Roy**, our Diploma Programme Coordinator, concludes his time at the Academy, having guided generations of IB students with compassion and heart. As he takes on a fresh challenge in Pune, we thank him for his legacy of care and support. He leaves with our affection and very best wishes for the road ahead.

Thank you, parents, for your ongoing trust and encouragement. It's been a wonderful year, and we look forward to welcoming our returning students back in the new term – rested, inspired and ready for the next adventure!

With eight weeks of school holidays ahead, you may be wondering how best to keep your children occupied. Research into what happens during long breaks reveals some striking findings. A study by the RAND Corporation found that the average student in the United States experiences a learning loss equivalent to one month per year during the holidays. Leading psychologist Dr Harris Cooper reported that by the time children reach high school, cumulative summer learning losses can result in a lag of up to two years in reading achievement. Emotional and social development can also be affected if children lack stimulating activities or meaningful social interaction during the break.

So, what can you do as a parent? Here are four simple, research-backed suggestions to help your child make the most of the next 8 weeks:

**Relax:** Our students work hard and play hard. They lead full and busy lives. If your son or daughter returns home exhausted, that's probably just as it should be. Let them eat, sleep and play without

pressure. A complete break in the first week of June can do wonders. From that foundation of rest, they'll be in a much better position to embrace more purposeful activities as the holiday unfolds.

**Read:** If there's one thing that can enrich your child's mind and emotional wellbeing this summer, it's reading for pleasure. Research shows that voluntary reading is a powerful driver of academic success, with even modest daily reading linked to gains in vocabulary, comprehension and general knowledge. It also lowers stress and supports emotional growth. Just six books read over the break can help maintain literacy levels and avoid a slide in reading ability.

**Refocus:** Two months is more than enough time to try something new. Whether it's a creative project or learning a new skill, encouraging your child to identify one clear area of focus can be transformative. Research in developmental psychology highlights the importance of goal-directed activity in adolescence. According to a study published in *Child Development* a few years ago, when young people engage in "structured voluntary activities" (like music or sports) during the holidays, they develop greater self-regulation and motivation. Online platforms make it easy for students to explore their interests - from photography and creative writing to coding, animation and even language learning. As the saying goes, "If you aim for nothing, you'll probably hit it."

**Reflect:** I remember when my children said to me, "Dad, I'm bored!" I'd reply by saying, "Great, be bored for a while – it's good for you." For most young people today, life is so filled with things to do and constant stimuli that it is almost impossible for them to sit and do nothing. Young people have an expectation that they always need to be entertained or to have something "to do". This can lead to anxiety when nothing is happening, and that can create high levels of stress. At first, feelings of boredom can be highly irritating for young people. But after some time of simply accepting it, it can help to clear the mind and create inner calm. It can also generate the self-motivation to come up with new ideas and plans. So, don't be too concerned if your children say they are bored during the next two months. It may be just the opportunity they need for their minds to take a break and to come back sharper, stronger and more creative.

As we close this academic year, I hope the coming weeks offer your family time to reconnect and rediscover simple joys. Whether through books, new experiences or quiet reflection, may your children return refreshed and enriched. Thank you once again for being such a vital part of our community. I wish you a happy and restorative summer break.

## **2025/26 SCHOOL YEAR**

We look forward to welcoming all of our returning students back in late July! You can find the key calendar dates for next year by following this [link](#).

Best wishes,

Jonathan Long

Dr Jonathan Long

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THIS WEEK'S NEWS



## GRADUATION 2025

This year's Graduation Ceremony brought together families, staff, alumni and distinguished guests, and was streamed live for those joining from around the world. A final group photograph and the symbolic pinning ceremony, where students received a commemorative pin from their advisors, marked their official induction into the Academy's global alumni network. Mr Shiraz Vastani, Board Chairman of the Aga Khan Education Services India and parent of an Academy alum, offered warm reflections on the Academy's mission and its impact on generations of learners. The keynote address was delivered by Ms Meaghan Blight, President of Wesleyan College, whose words underscored the values of inclusive leadership, courage, and global citizenship. Accompanying her was Ms Anjali Anand Seth, Associate Vice President for International Admissions at Wesleyan College and Strategic Advisor to the President, affirming the growing partnership between Wesleyan and the Aga Khan Schools network. Among the distinguished guests were Ms Marva Headley, Early

Childhood Development Coordinator from the Aga Khan Schools' Geneva Head Office; Mr Farhad Merchant, CEO of AKESI; and AKESI board members Ms Monisha Tejani and Mr Noordin Dhannani. As the Class of 2025 embarks on the next chapter of their lives, the ceremony was a testament to their achievements and a celebration of the Academy's mission to develop ethical leaders who will shape a better world.



## LAST DAY OF THE 2024/25 SCHOOL YEAR

From our Senior School Principal, Mr Christian

A productive academic year is coming to an end. Throughout the year, and also in our closing assembly, we celebrated outstanding achievements and the growth of students in academic subjects, sports, performing and creative arts, debates such as MUN, community service, and countless other areas of student activity. Many, many students demonstrated excellence in a multitude of ways and thus became role models for others. Our students, their parents and the faculty have reasons to be proud of our students' accomplishments!

Today, the Senior School published report cards for students in MYP 1 – 4 and DP 1. These report cards provide information about students' academic work and the level of achievement throughout the year and on the final exams. We encourage parents and students to take a moment to carefully review the teachers' feedback.

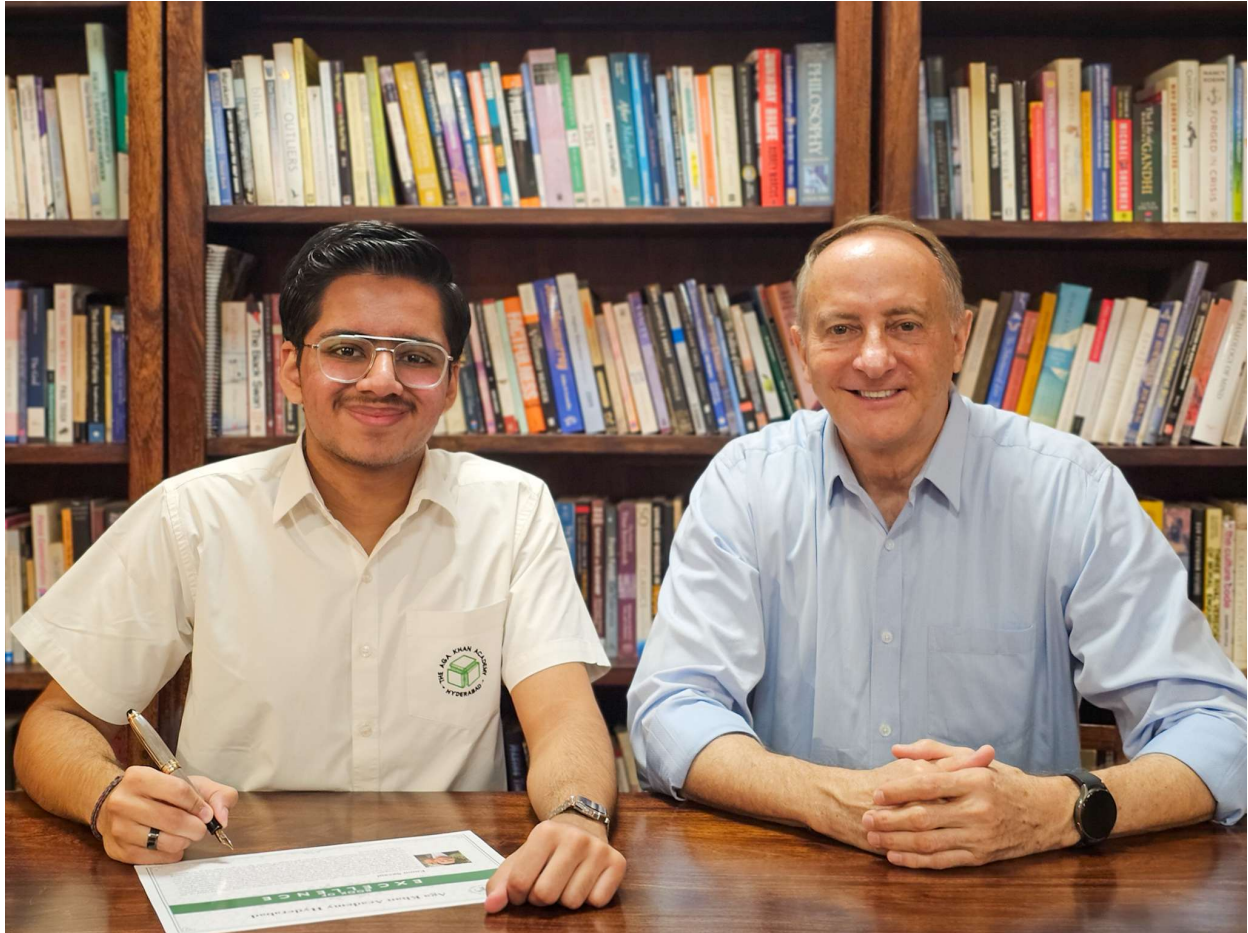
For students who have the aspiration to improve their grades further, the long break in June and July provides ample opportunity to make a real difference. Students are encouraged to review their notes and learning resources from this year, scrutinize any exams, tests or other assignments, identify gaps in performance and target those specifically in their revision. As discussed in our end-of-year assembly: the continuity of learning is essential for long-term success.



## BOOK OF EXCELLENCE AWARDS

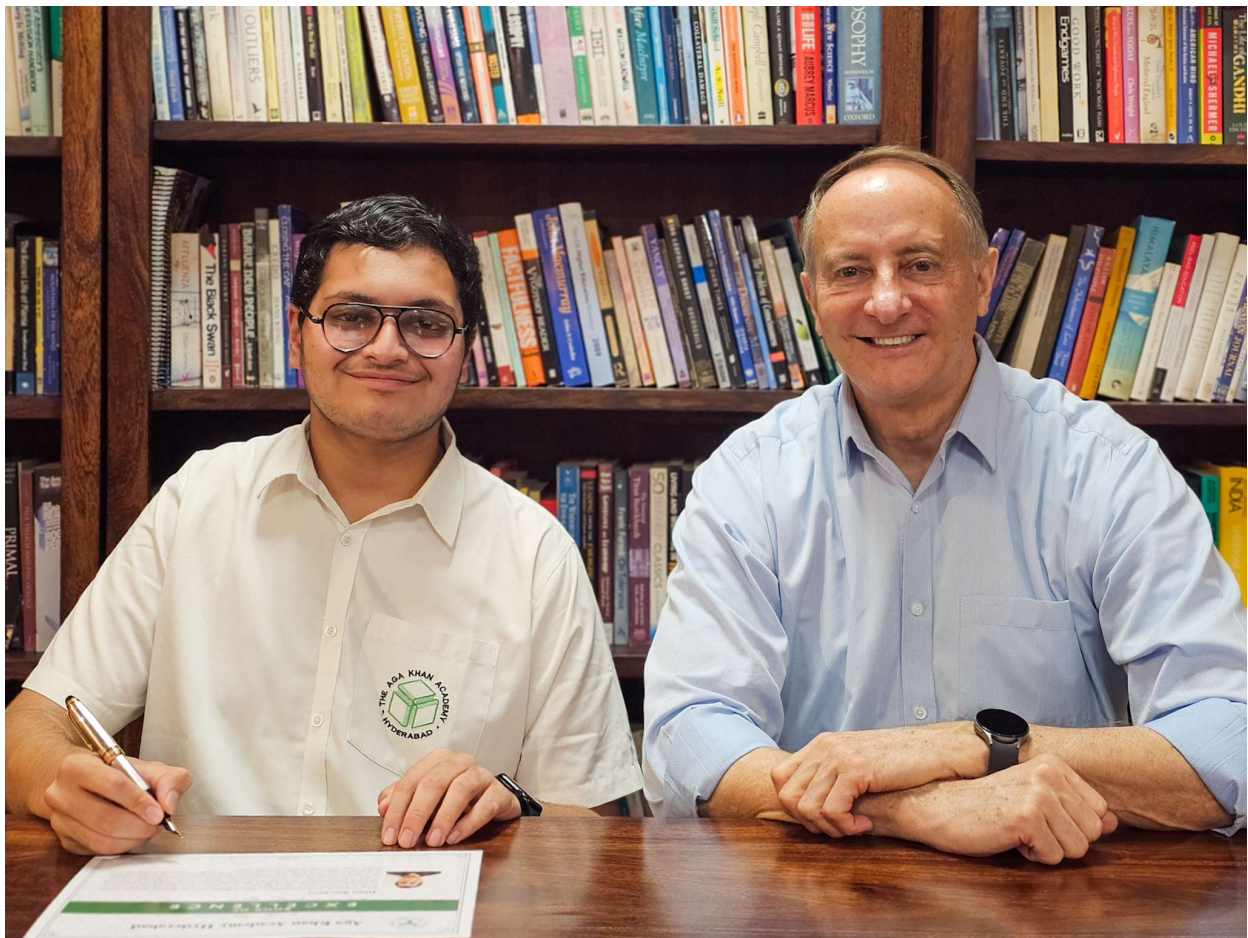
The tradition of celebrating students for their exemplary conduct and dedication has continued this week with two more *Book of Excellence* awards being announced. This honour is reserved for those whose contributions to the Academy merit the most special recognition.

### **Emon Savani (DP 1)**



This award recognises a student leader who has quietly impacted the Academy in many ways. As Head of the Photography Team and a cornerstone of the school's visual storytelling initiatives, he has transformed how the Academy documents and shares its identity. His work has created a photographic archive spanning over 25 major events. Whether serving as Deputy Head of Photojournalism for MUN, interning with the Admissions and Communications teams, or moderating the Pebbles publication team, he brings a collaborative spirit to everything he does. As founder of Pitch-Match, strategist for the Human Rights Conference, and Operations Head for the Academy's organic farming project, he has modelled the values we aspire to. His entrepreneurial drive is evident in his online education company and his real-world learning through internships in accounting, executive administration and communications. He represented India at the 2023 Children's General Assembly in Denmark, delivered a keynote address to thousands and has mentored students in web and app development. A published author, environmental advocate and RISE scholar, he leads with humility and a sense of service. Emon is richly deserving of recognition in the Book of Excellence.

### **Jihan Raichura (DP 1)**



Jihan is recognised for the values and qualities he consistently demonstrates through his authentic leadership. Whether it is his involvement in Model United Nations, Student Life initiatives or event planning activities, he represents the vision of His Late Highness Aga Khan IV. He has contributed to many dimensions of school life, reflecting his deep commitment to student leadership. Jihan has played a key role in coordinating major school events, including the Diwali Celebration, the Southern Asia IB Schools Association conference, the Residential Christmas Celebration, Republic Day, Cultural Fest and Holi. Each of these occasions demanded logistical expertise, cultural sensitivity and creative foresight. What sets Jihan apart is his calm, thoughtful approach to complex challenges. His exceptional problem-solving abilities, clear communication, collaborative spirit and proactive mindset make him a natural leader. In recognition of his ethical leadership, promotion of pluralism and selfless service, Jihan is a truly deserving recipient of the Academy's Book of Excellence Award.



## A JOYFUL CELEBRATION OF MUSIC

This week, the Junior School lit up the stage with vibrant performances that celebrated creativity, talent and togetherness. Grade 1 and 2 delighted the audience with their heartwarming performance of Tigger, inspired by the children's books, Winnie-the-Pooh, written by A.A. Milne. The musical celebrated friendship and reminded us that the best moments are those spent with friends. Besides the play, students from Grades 1-5 also showcased their skills through the music concert led by Ms December, the Junior School music teacher. The concert featured everything from Do Re Mi performed by the kids in the Day Care to Grade 5's spirited ukulele and stomping performance. With solos, recorders, body percussions, kalimbas and keyboards, students proudly shared the skills they've built throughout the year.



## NEW STUDENT REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL ELECTED

Developing ethical young leaders is at the heart of the Aga Khan Academies vision. Every Year, students and teachers vote to elect two new Student Council Presidents, one male and one female to lead the Student Council. Earlier this week, elections were held to elect a new Student Representative Council (SRC). The event began with four compelling presidential speeches, each candidate sharing their vision and goals for the upcoming year. The enthusiasm and passion were palpable as they addressed their fellow Senior School students. Following the speeches, voting took place. The excitement was evident as everyone eagerly awaited the results. This democratic process not only highlighted the importance of student leadership but also fostered a sense of unity and community within our school. The elected members of the SRC have already stepped into the shoes of their predecessors and are all set to take up their roles and responsibilities for the upcoming academic year. We will introduce the Council when we resume school after the summer break.



## INTRODUCING OUR STUDENT PRESIDENTS FOR 2025–26

We are proud to introduce our newly elected student presidents, Farzam and Sumedha. Known for their commitment, dedication and strong leadership, they are ready to represent student voices and guide the Academy towards continued growth and excellence. They will officially take up their roles in July when the school reopens for the new academic year. We congratulate them and wish them the very best for a successful year ahead!



## CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS

The Commons buzzed with excitement this week as students were awarded certificates for their accomplishments in academics and extracurricular activities over the year. Special recognition was given to students who received five or more commendations. The assembly ended on a high note with the much-awaited announcement of the winning House. After seven years, Nizam House made a triumphant comeback, claiming the Best House trophy with the highest points. The hall erupted with applause and cheers. It was a joyful celebration of student success and the vibrant spirit of our school community!



## PYP ART EXHIBITION

On May 28, the Junior School hosted the PYP Art Exhibition, titled “Rhythm and Strokes”, showcasing the vibrant creativity of students from Grades 1-5. Curated by visual arts teacher Mr Nikhil Sharma, the exhibition reflected a year of exploration through emotions, culture, global issues and artistic techniques. From whimsical cityscapes to cultural masks and clay sculptures, students expressed personal and global themes through diverse media. The exhibition beautifully highlighted inquiry-based learning, student voice and the power of art as a tool for growth, empathy and self-expression.



## YOUNG THINKERS TAKING THE LEAD

The Aga Khan Academy Hyderabad Mini Model United Nations (Mini MUN) was a wonderful opportunity for students in Grades 6–8 to explore the world of global politics and international relationships. Held in the Annex Building, it was a well-organised event. The juniors enjoyed a well-supported introduction to public speaking and diplomacy. While some nerves showed at the beginning, confidence and excitement grew as the day progressed. One of the highlights was the meaningful interaction between seniors and juniors—combining experience with fresh enthusiasm. While the seniors took pride in mentoring their younger peers, they also welcomed fresh perspectives and ideologies from the young leaders who successfully forged ahead the MUN tradition. It was a truly inspiring day filled with learning.



## BEYOND BORDERS

On May 28, 2025, the Humanities Department hosted the second session of Beyond Borders, an initiative led by Mr Peter Kvitok, the Head of Humanities to bring real-world politics into the student space. This platform fosters awareness of India's internal politics and global geopolitics while encouraging student interest in global politics and humanities. Our keynote speaker was Ms Aishwarya Chakkilam, Director of Partnerships, Engagements and Outreach at the Hyderabad Metropolitan Development Authority (HMDA). She provided valuable insight into sustainable urban development, human rights and governance. Students explored the distinction between human and fundamental rights, tracing their origins through key moments like the Emancipation Proclamation and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Ms Chakkilam emphasised that human rights

transcend culture and are foundational to peace and justice. A dynamic Q&A session followed, where students raised questions related to her work—from sustainable urbanisation and the use of technology in governance to the preservation of urban lakes and forests. She highlighted ongoing efforts like cleaning over 100 lakes, developing urban forests and digitising building permissions to curb corruption. This session deepened students' understanding of how human rights intersect with development, culture and conflict—reminding us that change begins in “small places, close to home.”



CHALLENGING, ENGAGING AND EXPERIENTIAL

The Experiential Learning Programme celebrated a spirit of joyful learning in a vibrant assembly this week. The event began with a captivating Dabke dance performance, followed by a graceful Indian classical dance. Planned and executed by the Experiential Learning interns, the assembly was a tribute to the teachers who led various clubs throughout the year. A cake-cutting ceremony was held to express gratitude to the mentors who guided students in acquiring new skills. Commendation certificates were awarded to two students from each club who demonstrated exceptional dedication and leadership. The event highlighted the meaningful collaboration between students and teachers, emphasising hands-on learning and creativity. This final gathering was a celebration of achievement, participation, innovation and community spirit – themes that define the Experiential Learning Programme!



## REFLECTIONS AND RECOLLECTIONS

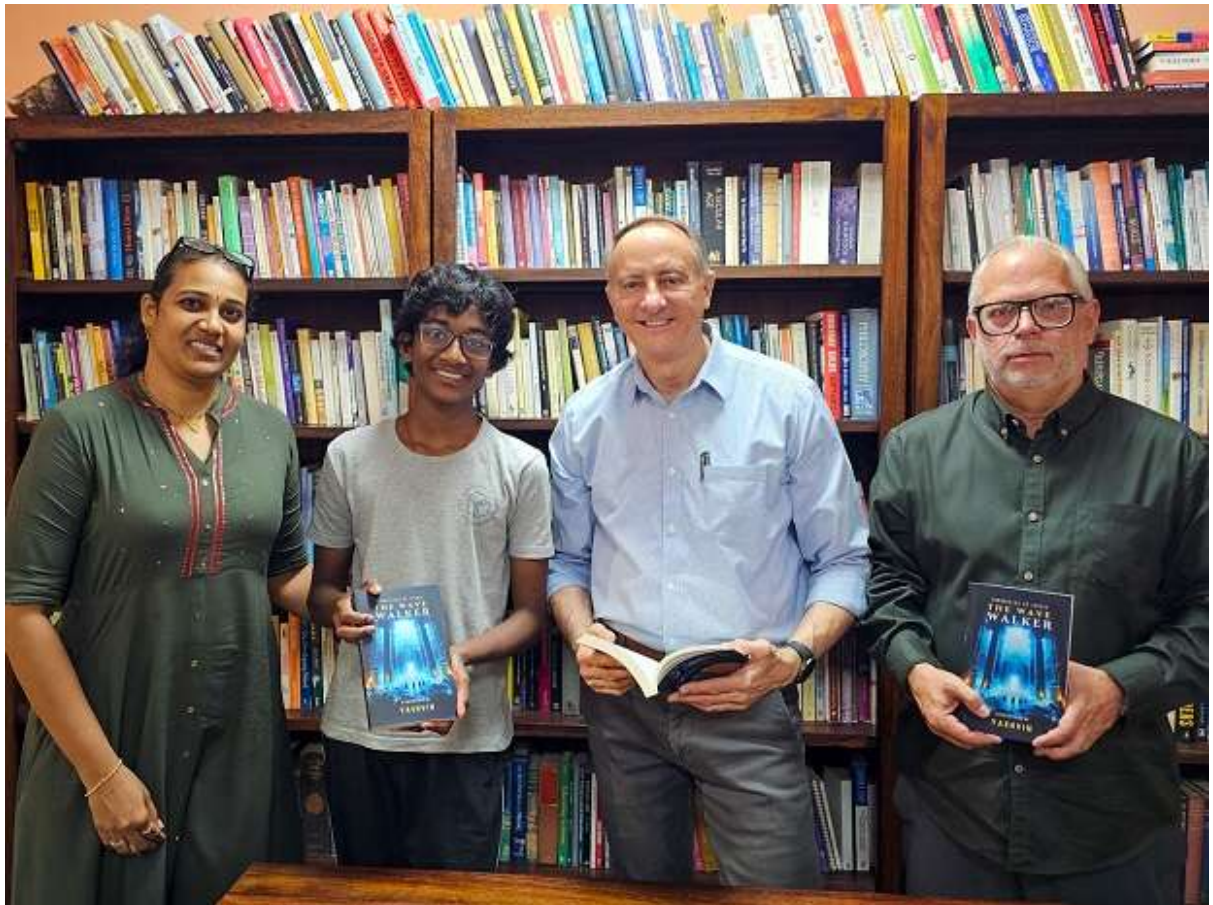
We're proud to present this year's edition of our residential magazine, *Pebbles*. This year's publication captures the pulse of our residential community – its stories, spirit and shared moments. From the reflections of our international students to the brilliance of our summer production and the unseen effort behind it all, every experience has found its place here. A special thank you to Mr

Suresh for leading the way and Ms Priyadarshini for mentoring the students throughout the process. Their vision, along with the students' commitment, has made *Pebbles* a space where students can collect and revisit their memories. Read the latest edition of *Pebbles* [here](#).



## MIND BENDERS RELEASED!

Head of Academy Dr Jonathan Long and Senior School Principal Mr Christian Schmelz released the 6th issue of the annual journal of Theory of Knowledge, *Mind Benders 2025* on 29 May 2025. The journal, which is a student-led initiative, is edited by two DP 1 students, Pranav Paruchuri and Ishita Gupta. It provides a platform for students to craft their 'epistemological voice' and explore the nature of thinking as knowers, drawing on insights from personal experience and real-world issues. The issue revolves round the theme of "The Epiphany of Ideas" and features essays, reflections, art works and critical articles from students from Grades 7-12 and from an Academy alumnus. The issue provides readers with a vibrant space where ideas can be acted out with a spirit of intellectual freedom and imaginative wonder. Read the latest edition of *Mindbenders* [here](#).



## YOUNG AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

Grade 8 student Yashvin has added another feather to his author's hat with the second edition of his *The Chronicles of Ipsen* series. After his debut novel, *The Chronicles of Ipsesia: The Elemental*

*Prophecy* garnered readers' interest, Yashvin published his latest book titled *The Chronicles of Ipsen: The Wave Walker*. Set in a richly imagined world beneath the sea, the story follows Aiden and his friends as they awaken ancient powers and confront mysterious guardians. A bright and imaginative student, Yashvin fosters the passion for storytelling that is deeply rooted in the Academy's strong focus on nurturing curiosity, inquiry and a love for reading. His accomplishment is a shining example of how young minds flourish when given the space to dream and create. Yashvin is pictured above with his proud mother, Dr Long and Deputy Head of the Academy, Mr Jeff.

Physical book: <https://amzn.in/d/0mgzBsN>

Kindle version: [https://amzn.in/d/8tL6Sum\\_](https://amzn.in/d/8tL6Sum_)



## AN EVENING OF CELEBRATION

This week's end-of-year Lawn Dinner brought residential students and staff together in a lively celebration of music, dance and fabulous food. It was an opportunity to honour the cultural diversity of our residential community and to say farewell to Mr Suresh, our Dean of Students and Head of Residences. Students thanked him for his steady presence, support and care, acknowledging the role he has played in shaping their experience as residential students. The evening included a cake-cutting ceremony and the chance for Mr Suresh to offer a few reflections on his time at the Academy. It was a wonderful way to bring the school year to a close and a clear reflection of the strength of our residential community.



## TPP INTERNS EMBARK ON THE NEXT CHAPTER

As we conclude the academic year, we are proud to acknowledge the growth and learning of the interns demonstrated during the Teacher Preparation Programme (TPP), Phases 1 and 2. From a cohort of eight interns, four from Bangladesh will now return to the Dhaka Academy to complete the final phase, Phase 3 of the programme. They will continue their journey towards becoming reflective and effective practitioners. On behalf of TPP, Aga Khan Academy Dhaka, Md. Fakhrul Alam Sagor reflects: “We celebrated our learning together over the past 11 months. It’s time to reflect on what we were and what we are now. I believe that a teacher can change one’s philosophy of life to learn and grow, but a true leader can change society as well as the world.” Sagor said. “What if we can combine both attributes together – a teacher and a leader? Yes, we are trying to become both a teacher and a leader. This wisdom is what we’ve gained throughout our TPP journey. Though we are changing our geographical area, we will be working with the same mission and vision and continue to be an embodiment of the values of the Academy.” We wish them all the very best in their journey ahead.



CLASS PHOTOS (2023–2024 & 2024–2025)

We're excited to share the class photos from the past two academic years! Please be sure to check the photos according to the grade your child was in during that specific academic year.

Link - [https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OiKc4jOt53659ckR4k\\_55DCtkqLRO4bj?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1OiKc4jOt53659ckR4k_55DCtkqLRO4bj?usp=sharing)

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

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His Late Highness Aga Khan IV

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



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THE AGA KHAN ACADEMY  
HYDERABAD

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