

Adyar Newsletter



June-July-August 2026

English Quarterly | Rs 10



Jacobin Cuckoo - Herald of the Monsoon

NEWS FROM THE TS SCHOOLS

OLCOTT MEMORIAL HIGHER SECONDARY SCHOOL (OMHSS)

The new academic year at the OMHSS got off to an energetic start with the reopening of the school for Classes 1–12 on 4 June. PTA meetings, the distribution of uniforms and learning materials, and the Interact Club Installation set the stage for a year of participation and purpose. The Investiture Ceremony on 15 June saw student leaders step confidently into new roles, embracing leadership and service.

Learning during this term went well beyond the classroom. Teachers sharpened their skills through a professional development workshop, while students explored art, AI, cyber security, environmental science and research through engaging workshops and visits. Trips to the Blue Green Centre brought science to life, while the five-day “Every Child a Scientist” programme organised by the M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) immersed 50 students of Classes 9A and 9B in hands-on learning across AI, climate change, nutrition, microbiology, horticulture and more.



Students at the MSSRF lab

Student well-being remained firmly on the agenda, with yoga and a morning breakfast programme for Classes 1–12. World Environment Day, Kamarajar’s birth anniversary and National Moth Week were marked through meaningful activities. Annual Day on 10 July was a spectacular showcase of student talent, bringing together international dances, music and Tamil and English drama, alongside recognition of students and staff for outstanding achievement and service. The school also honoured three educators for 25 years of dedicated service and Academic Director Mrs Sashikala Sriram for ten years of voluntary service and leadership. The 80th Independence Day was celebrated with patriotic songs, a march-past, speeches, *Villu Pattu*, a Bharathi-themed dance and the presentation of endowment prizes.

KPMG volunteers accompanied Class 6 students to Dakshina Chitra for an engaging exploration of South Indian heritage, complete with a Kathakali performance.



Group photo of students outside MSSRF

ADYAR THEOSOPHICAL ACADEMY (ATA)

A New Year of Learning

The months from May to August marked the commencement of another year of learning at the ATA. The teaching faculty began the year by walking through the Theosophical Society campus, reconnecting with its

history, spaces, and philosophy, before welcoming students into the new year.

For ATA's seventh birthday, students from Grades 5 to 9 took ownership of the celebration through original songs, poetry,

theatre, photographs and stories. Learning soon spilled beyond the classroom. Children explored archaeology through excavation and prehistoric art, investigated nutrition as label detectives at a neighbourhood supermarket, studied wetlands at Tholkappia Poonga, and discovered the work of community helpers at a fire station. Senior students explored space science with NASA scientist Dr Swati Mohan, while visits to Alliance Française brought together art, film, and conservation, encouraging reflection on biodiversity, endangered species and our relationship with Nature.

Grades 6 to 9 explored conservation, waste, and water, with environmentalist Arun Krishnamurthy, while Grades 7 to 9 discovered aspects of Indian heritage with historian Chithra Madhavan. Tamil learners met a writer and journalist to explore short-story writing; Grades 4 and 5 interacted with a dentist while studying teeth and digestion; and Grade 5 learned juggling from Gregory, a professional juggler from France, connecting coordination and perseverance with weight, measurement and balance.

On Independence Day, Usha Thorat, Former Deputy Governor of the Reserve Bank of India, hoisted the national flag and spoke about environmental conservation,

climate change, and the role of young people in building a sustainable future.



Grade 6 at Alliance Française to view 'Secrets of Pangolin'



Grade 5 studying archaeology at Sharma Centre



Grade 8 exploring the Adyar estuary and wetland

SOCIAL WELFARE CENTRE (SWC) AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING CENTRE (VTC)

A Morning of Wonder at the Olcott Bungalow

On 25 August 2026, seven little explorers from the Social Welfare Centre (SWC) stepped into the world of the Olcott Bungalow, their bright eyes and boundless curiosity bringing a fresh sense of wonder to the beautiful space.

They wandered through the bungalow with eager interest, pausing to admire the colourful posters and intriguing displays placed around each room. Shells, dolphins

and turtles caught their attention, each object opening a small window into the fascinating world of Nature.

The morning's special delight was a hands-on butterfly activity. With just a few coral vine creeper leaves, the children fashioned delicate butterfly wings, discovering how something as simple as a leaf could become the beginning of a beautiful creation. They then brought butterfly illustrations to life with colour, filling the room with the cheerful energy of imagination.



A child viewing indoor exhibits

A brief introduction to butterflies followed, exploring their intimate connection with leaves and flowers. Soon, the children were ready to take their learning outdoors. Around the Olcott Bungalow, they searched eagerly for butterflies, watching for flashes of colour and the gentle flutter of wings. Each sighting became a moment of discovery; each



Exploring the great outdoors

A Fresh Appearance for the VTC

The Vocational Training Centre (VTC), too, has entered a new chapter. The building that housed the centre had been in need of extensive repairs and renovation. To make this possible, the VTC was temporarily relocated to a bungalow in Sriram Colony, on the Besant Gardens side of the campus.

Today, the renovated building stands renewed—with a fresh coat of paint and a welcoming new appearance. What was once a space awaiting repair has been transformed into a bright and inviting environment, ready once again to receive its students.

More than walls have been refreshed; a

butterfly, a tiny invitation to pause and look more closely at the living world around them.

It was a joyful morning of learning, exploring and discovering Nature firsthand. The AED environmental educators found themselves equally delighted, their own spirits refreshed by the children's infectious enthusiasm and the simple magic of seeing the natural world through inquisitive young eyes.



An educator reaches out to children



The wonderland of Owls

space for learning, growth and possibility has been renewed. With comfort, colour and beauty surrounding them, students can now return to an atmosphere that feels warm, welcoming and full of promise—a fitting environment for new skills, new confidence and new beginnings.



ADYAR ECO DEVELOPMENT (AED)

It was a busy and rewarding quarter for the AED team, which persevered through a challenging summer to keep its many initiatives moving forward.

The two ponds nestled in the coconut groves on either side of Schwarz Avenue are now much more accessible, thanks to lovely winding pathways leading from the Avenue. Meanwhile, work continued on the five Beach Cottages in the south-eastern corner of the campus, with extensive clearing and repairs to plumbing and electrical systems preparing them for occupation by the nursery and landscaping teams.

While surveying the undergrowth behind the Garden Department, the team discovered a curious cast-iron pole almost completely hidden by vegetation. Some digging revealed an elegant Victorian-era lamppost, complete with a Tudor Rose, offering a fascinating glimpse into the early British-era character of the Adyar Headquarters. Carefully restored and mounted on a sturdy base by the Upasika Circle, just outside the nursery, this little piece of campus history can now be enjoyed by all.



The newly unearthed Victorian-era lamppost

Despite the relentless heat, the nursery remained busy caring for saplings across the campus and keeping its daily operations running smoothly. Its boundaries have been extended and two new sheds have been put up — a beautiful working shed has been built

with sustainability in mind, incorporating reclaimed roof tiles and Cuddapah slabs from old buildings, together with timber salvaged from eucalyptus and mahogany trees brought down by earlier cyclones. A meshed propagation shed behind the Youth Lodge is nearing completion and will soon shelter hundreds of young saplings from the many creatures eager to make a meal of them — from snails and caterpillars to mongooses, bandicoots, and peafowl!



A shed built from stories!

At the Blue Green Centre, Nature walks and visits to the Olcott Bungalow continued, with growing interest from schools and organisations keen to collaborate. Special sessions marked World Environment Day, World Elephant Day and World Snake Awareness Day. Another engaging session introduced students to the vital but often misunderstood role of vultures through activities and stories shared by a vulture conservationist.



World Snake Awareness Day event

The National Moth Week in July brought four evenings of moth screenings on campus, attracting naturalists, researchers and citizen scientists and resulting in the identification of more than 100 species of moths and other nocturnal insects.

The OMHSS students also got their hands dirty in a new vegetable garden established near the Olcott Blue Green Centre. Their first harvest of Okra in August was enthusiastically gathered for the school kitchen for the preparation of the midday meal.



Students and educators examine the Moth Screen after dark

Maria Montessori's birthday on 31 August saw a collaboration with the Indian Montessori Centre that welcomed Montessori educators from Chennai and beyond to the Olcott Bungalow where she had spent many years with her son Mario after her arrival in 1939 at the invitation of President George Arundale. Through talks on Nature education, forest meditation, a guided Nature walk and a tour of the Bungalow, the day celebrated a shared belief in the transformative power of learning through Nature.



Forest meditation outside Olcott Bungalow in the circular seating area under the *Ficus virens* tree

BESANT MEMORIAL ANIMAL DISPENSARY (BMAD)

A milestone was marked when the BMAD team was honoured with the prestigious "Champions of Chennai" Award, presented by the KSA Trust under the Social Initiative category. Presented by Dr Irai Anbu IAS, the award recognised BMAD alongside other changemakers whose work is helping shape a more compassionate city.



BMAD with the "Champions of Chennai" Award

For BMAD, this honour carries an especially profound resonance when seen against the backdrop of its early days, when

the Outpatient Unit was little more than a single table set up outside the Inpatient Unit.

This richly deserved honour belongs to the skilled veterinarians, dedicated managers, tireless caretakers, passionate volunteers, generous donors, brave rescuers, and the parent organisation, The Theosophical Society — each of whom has played a part in transforming a humble beginning into a growing ecosystem of care. And it belongs, too, to every animal whose life has reminded us, again and again, why this work matters.

BMAD's corporate partnerships continued to turn generosity into meaningful action. With a ₹10 lakh grant from the Azim Premji Foundation, 400 sponsored Animal Birth Control (ABC) surgeries were carried out. The initiative helped ease the financial burden on compassionate community caretakers, who often fund the sterilisation of street animals

from their own resources. By supporting these surgeries, the programme helps ensure that street animals are sterilised, healthier, and better able to thrive where they belong.



ABC surgery in progress

In another important step forward, Swym Corp., through its CSR initiative, generously committed funds towards the construction of three new horse stables for BMAD's Large Animal Unit. These new spaces will expand BMAD's ability to shelter and care for rescued equines, offering them more than simply a roof over their heads: a safe place to rest, recover, regain their strength, and begin again.

A Wing, A Will, A Second Chance

A white-bellied sea eagle, rescued from Ernavur, arrived with an extensive avulsion injury to its left wing, along with damage to the patagial ligament. The challenge

was not simply to heal the wound, but to preserve something far more precious—the possibility of flight itself.

Following a complex surgical repair led by Dr Sridhar, with assistance from BMAD's surgeons, the team worked painstakingly to preserve the eagle's wing function. Today, the bird is steadily finding its way back to strength. Regular bandaging, targeted laser therapy, and structured wing-muscle exercises are helping rebuild what was injured, one careful step at a time.

Its recovery is a powerful reminder of what careful intervention, expertise, and patience can make possible. More than that, it reflects the extraordinary resilience at the heart of wildlife rehabilitation—the will to heal, the possibility of a second chance, and the quiet determination to return a life to the freedom it was meant to know.



The sea eagle recuperating after surgery

LEAVES FROM THE ARCHIVES

Paths Through Time: The Story of the TS Estate Roads

The story of the roads in the TS estate is inseparable from the story of the estate itself — a story of vision, dedication, and patient labour over many decades. The estate, now spread across nearly 266 acres, did not begin as one large property but gradually grew from the original 27 acres acquired by the Founders. Under the leadership of Annie Besant, additional lands were purchased, some through Society funds, some gifted by members, and several bought by Dr Besant herself.

As the estate expanded, so too grew the need to connect its many parts into one living whole. This important task found its champion in Jan Huidekoper, a Dutch planter from Java, whom Dr Besant invited to Adyar in 1910 to take charge of the gardens and estate development. He gladly accepted, regarding the opportunity as a rare privilege.

When Huidekoper arrived in Adyar in January 1911, he was confronted with the formidable task of stitching together a disparate collection of land parcels

into a coherent estate. The road linking Headquarters Building and Blavatsky Bungalow to the main road was little more than a sandy track, difficult even for the weary hackney horses of Madras to negotiate. Undaunted, and with remarkable energy and vision, Huidekoper undertook the immense task of consolidating and mapping the estate, constructing roads and pathways, strengthening riverbanks, assessing cultivable lands, and initiating extensive planting programmes that would simultaneously beautify the estate and make it productive and self-supporting.

Roads were laid connecting Headquarters Building to Leadbeater Chambers, Blavatsky Gardens to Besant Gardens, and onward to Damodar Gardens. Built as sturdy metalled roads to withstand heavy traffic, they were lined with tamarind, mahogany, gulmohar, and other flowering trees, creating shaded avenues of great beauty. As the estate continued to grow, more roads and hardened

pathways were added or repaired, improving access to all parts of the grounds.

Schwarz Avenue which runs past the iconic Leadbeater Chambers, was not always as quiet as it is today. The story goes that when Madame Montessori was here in 1939, three hundred of her students were rostered to work on this driveway. Hundreds trod the way to Olcott Bungalow for classes, making it a lively and much-used road.

Another important chapter came during the presidency of George Arundale when, in 1937, a large portion of the estate roads was concreted through special donations and Engineering Department funds. Though expected to last thirty years, many sections have endured for nearly ninety years — a remarkable tribute to the quality of the work and the dedication behind it.

Today, as portions of these historic roads are finally being relaid in 2026, they remain enduring reminders of the foresight and loving labour that shaped the TS estate — road by road, tree by tree, for generations to come.



The old concrete road being laid (1937)



The new concrete road being laid (2026)



Gifts of foodgrains and clothes being given by Rukmini Devi to all workers who helped with the road construction, with Dr Arundale looking on. A beautiful moment of compassion and gratitude (1937)

Cover Picture: A. Chandrasekaran

Carried on the monsoon winds across the Indian Ocean, the Jacobin cuckoo (*Clamator jacobinus*) journeys from Africa to India, arriving like a winged harbinger of rain. Also known as *chataka* in Sanskrit, ancient lore tells of the bird lifting its beak skyward, thirsting for no earthly water, but waiting faithfully for the first drops of the monsoon rain to quench its thirst. A timeless emblem of longing, faith, and renewal.