

ROUNDSQUARE SPECIAL

ISSUE 200





TRAVEL

Front Cover Illustration by Mashunsingh Keishing



An Ideal, A Philosophy

- Rianna Lingjel Irom, Editor-in-Chief, XI

Round Square Conference 2025 at The Assam Valley School was a living testament to what AVS stands for: resilience in the pursuit of excellence. It was also a powerful expression of the Round Square spirit, particularly its ideal of internationalism, as schools travelled from across the country despite flight cancellations, air traffic disruptions, and the infamous Delhi fog. Their determination set the tone for a conference that became a true celebration of human spirit.

Organised under the guidance of AVS Round Square Representative Mrs Sagarika Dutta, led by Aliden Jahzara Ovukum (ISC 2026), and supported by Agnivh Borah, the newly appointed AVS Round Square Representative for 2026, the conference reflected ideals that have long been woven into the fabric of AVS. From service, allied through the Social Service League, to dialogue and diversity championed by AVS MUN and the East India Debates, the principles of Round Square are lived experiences on campus. Our commitment to sustainability, through zero-waste practices,

solar energy, water recycling, and composting, is part of everyday life at AVS, reinforcing our responsibility to the environment we are privileged to inhabit. While committees change, the commitment to Kurt Hahn's philosophy remains steadfast, shaping young minds within the nurturing environment of a residential school. The Round Square Conference 2025 was guided by this very vision: to enable students to experience and embody the IDEALS that will sustain them beyond the school gates. Throughout the conference, students stepped forward across parallel sessions to lead, collaborate, and contribute, embodying the spirit of leadership in action. What was particularly heartening was the unwavering commitment of our visiting delegations, whose presence transformed the conference into a festival of shared purpose and collective resolve. In the face of uncertain skies and challenging circumstances, the enthusiasm and perseverance of participating schools mirrored the spirit that AVS strives to uphold, one of courage, collaboration, and hope.

DAY ONE



Illustrated by Baibhav Dutta, VIII

Opening Ceremony

- Nongthombam Chingkheinganbi, XI

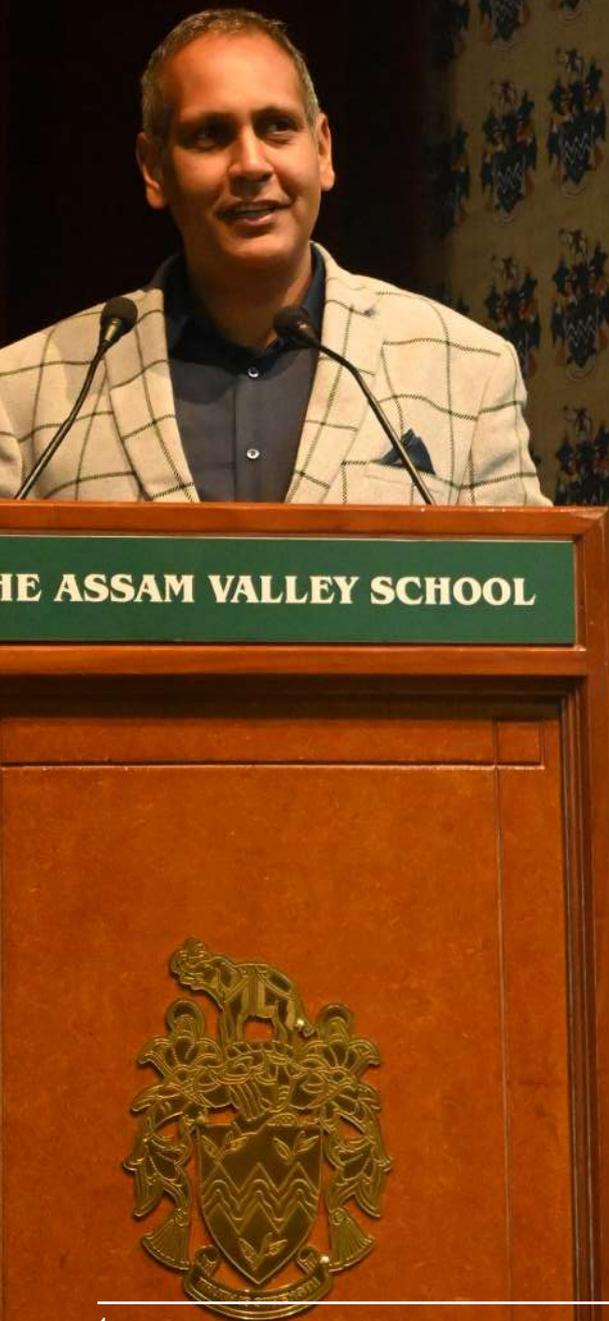
On 17 December 2025, the Round Square Conference 2025 at The Assam Valley School was formally declared open by the former Chairperson of the Round Square Committee, Aliden Jahzara Ovung (ISC '26).

The opening ceremony began with the chanting of the Gayatri Mantra, after which the anchors clearly outlined the aims of the conference: to collaborate through service and to translate Round Square ideals into meaningful, real-world action. This was followed by the mounting of the school flags of each participating institution, a symbolic gesture to honour the pride and culture each flag represents, and a reminder that we move forward not as individuals, but as a collective community. The ceremony was further enriched by a series of vibrant cultural performances, ranging from a graceful Sattriya dance to soulful choir renditions.

Our keynote speaker, Mr Abhijit Bhattacharya, then took to the stage and delivered a deeply impactful address. He shared candid anecdotes from his life, beginning with his school days, where his very first speech turned into one of his most embarrassing moments, to his experiences as a substitute player in national matches, where he once found himself blamed for his team's loss. Through these stories, he highlighted an important truth that everyone experiences both highs and lows. The question-and-answer sessions went off very well, and the first keynote session proved to be productive as well as extremely engaging.



KEYNOTE ADDRESS - I



The first keynote speech of the conference, held on 17th December 2025, was delivered by Mr. Abhijit Bhattacharya, a former Indian volleyball player who captained the national team and played a pivotal role in popularising the sport across the country. In his inspiring address, he shared personal experiences of gaining confidence and performing acts of service. Mr. Bhattacharya narrated a memorable story from his time as one of India's top sports scholars, when he received an opportunity to go to Cambridge University. The university, he explained, was providing land to support startups. When he asked about the impact of this act of service, he was told, "We measure service in centuries, not decades." This insight left a lasting impression on him, helping him understand that the impact of service grows gradually over time, rather than being immediate. He advised delegates not to focus on their faults, but instead to reward themselves for every positive action.

He reminded everyone that life is a mix of highs and lows, and

recognising this mindset is key to moving in the right direction.

Sharing his own experiences in service, Mr. Bhattacharya recounted a trip in 2009 to a nearby village, where he noticed that students had no volleyballs to play with. He organised a tournament for them, inviting children from various villages.

Ten years later, in 2019, former volleyball players came together to form a grassroots initiative called Assam Volleyball Mission 100, which began by collecting 100 balls. Remarkably, all this was achieved without any funds, relying on creativity and sustainability, such as making tripods from bamboo for training purposes. Through these stories, as well as tales of perseverance on the volleyball court, Mr. Bhattacharya emphasised the importance of hope, dedication, and service.

His message resonated strongly with the delegates, inspiring them to reflect on their own acts of service and consider how even small efforts can grow into lasting, meaningful change in their communities.

- Viraj Kumar Gupta, IX

BARAZA

Rakesh Khatri

- Viraj Kumar Gupta, IX



Named in honour of Rakesh Khatri and led by Udit Jansaria and Viraj Gupta, the baraza began with an energetic icebreaker session, where delegates bonded through interactive games and activities. Later, the group visited Tezpur, engaging

in meaningful acts of service such as plantation drives and community interaction with the Mahila Samiti Organisation. On the third day, the final Baraza session was held, during which delegates discussed a range of topics and shared ideas on how to engage in service meaningfully and reflect upon the words of the keynote speakers and the various acts of service carried out throughout the conference. As the group parted ways, they carried with them not only cherished memories but also the lessons and knowledge gained along the journey.

A

GROUPS



Wangari Maathai

- Aashil Faraj, VIII

The team began their morning with a brief ice-breaking session, greeted by cheerful faces all around. This was followed by a thoughtful discussion on service and the importance of helping those in need. Later in the afternoon, the delegates stepped out to engage in meaningful acts of service, including plantation drives. On the second day, the group visited Kaziranga National Park, where they observed the region's rich wildlife. This was followed by further acts of service, such as donation drives and painting walls. On the final day, the participants took a moment to appreciate one another's

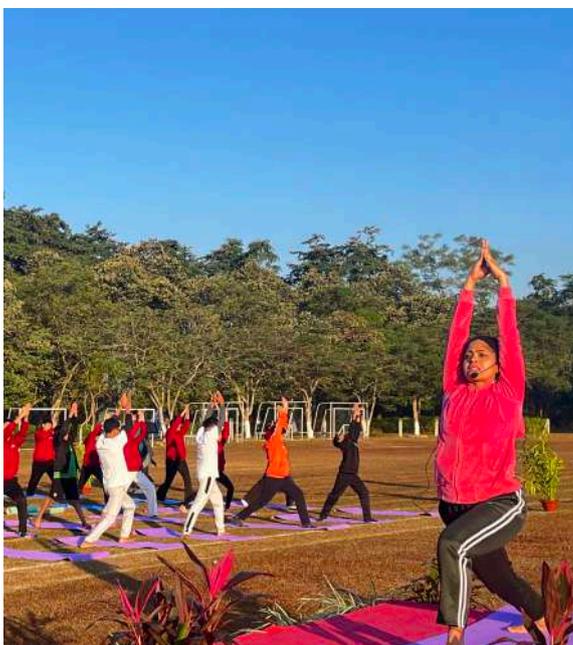
efforts and enthusiastic engagement throughout the gathering, bringing the experience to

Jadav Payeng

- Sneha Ngangom, Deputy Editor, XI

The group began with a fun icebreaker, playing the popular game Mafia, which sparked laughter and connection. They then reflected on the impact of Mr. Abhijit Bhattacharya and the lessons they could learn from him. Later, they engaged in social service, planting saplings and painting houses on campus.

Day two included a visit to Kaziranga National Park, followed by trips to small local schools where they donated stationery. On the final day, the group held a short reflection session, reviewing their experiences and discussing the meaningful work they had accomplished so far.



Led by Ms. Navodita Pande, the Yoga Session happened early in the morning. Students and teachers alike came together in the pavilion to practice various postures, both of the sitting and standing kinds. A few among them were



YOGGA

MR. ABHIJIT BHATTACHARYA

In the midst of the AVS Round Square Conference 2025, AVE spoke with keynote speaker Mr. Abhijit Bhattacharya.

AVE: Which moment in your life became a turning point, pushing you from intention to action?

ABB: During a visit to Thelamar village in Assam, I saw children eager to play volleyball but lacking equipment. Realising no one was helping them, I decided to act. This led to the founding of the Assam Volleyball Mission 100 and the Brahmaputra Volleyball League.

AVE: The Round Square ideal of Service often asks us to step outside our comfort zone. What challenge do you still face?

ABB: Balancing my full-time job at ONGC with the volleyball leagues I started is challenging. The organisations have grown beyond expectations, and I must decide whether to fully commit to them to ensure their continued success.

AVE: Could you share a personal setback early in your career and what it taught you about resilience?

ABB: Once, while representing India, I made a mistake that cost my team a victory. That guilt was intense, but I learned that resilience also means recognising your strengths. Even in failure, your good times will return.

AVE:

What advice would you give to young aspiring athletes?

ABB: Always value teamwork. Every player has unique skills and your job is to harness them for the team's benefit. Even a seemingly disruptive team member may turn out to be crucial in the right situation.

AVE: As a former captain of the Indian Senior Volleyball team, what key lesson has stayed with you?

ABB: Success is about teamwork. Be an excellent team member first, knowing when to lead and when to step back. Giving your best and supporting others is the foundation of any achievement.

glimpses of service at AVS.

- Raisah Yasmin Hazarika, XI

At the Round Square Conference 2025, service activities were held in various parts of The Assam Valley School and outside campus in order to instill the true values of service. Each delegate participating came together to do various acts of service such as making dustbins out of eco bricks as well as drilling plastic bottles into a metal framework so as to build the walls of a greenhouse.

The students remarked at the end of this experience that it had been a great experience where they realised the impact of true creativity and innovation if one makes the effort.





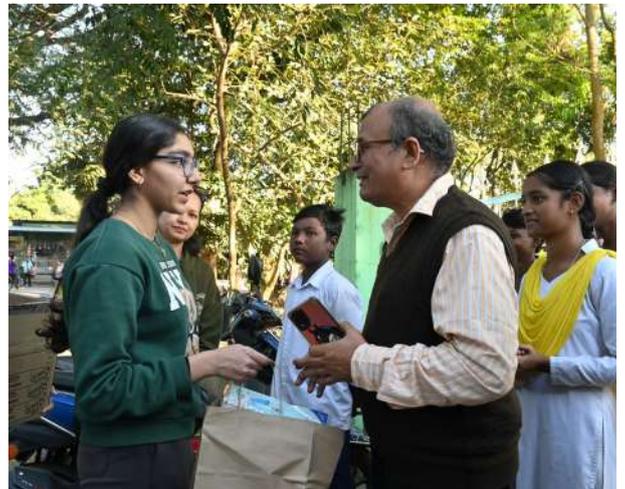
DAY TWO

KAZIRANGA NATIONAL PARK



- Raisah Yasmin Hazarika, XI

For the second day of the Round Square Conference 2025 at the Assam Valley School, the delegates spent a fulfilling day in their venture to the Kaziranga National Park. As soon as they reached the park, all set out on their safaris to see the wildlife habitat. It was an incredibly lucky day for the lot with various appearances of the famous one horned rhinoceros , buffalos, deers and wild boars. At the end of this venture each person seemed to have left with a heightened sense of love for the nature of lives these animals led which were full of peace and tranquility.



- Timzenla Ozukum, XI

KEYNOTE SESSION II

On 18th December, the second keynote speech at Kaziranga was delivered by Dr. Sonali Ghosh, a distinguished Indian Forest Service officer with over 25 years of experience in wildlife governance. As the first woman Field Director of Kaziranga National Park, she spoke passionately about rhino and tiger conservation. Through an interactive session, she explained rhino behaviour and the persistent threat of poaching driven by myths surrounding their horns. She also discussed tiger monitoring using camera traps, emerging AI-based acoustic recording technology, and highlighted the importance of biomimicry in conservation.

Dr. Ghosh shared encouraging news about the rise in Kaziranga's rhino population over recent years, a testament to dedicated conservation efforts. At the same time, she underscored the

ongoing struggles between human habitation and wildlife, emphasising why it is essential to understand and protect these species. Wildlife, she reminded delegates, is not only vital for ecological balance but also plays a critical role in sustaining human life, from maintaining biodiversity to supporting natural systems that humans rely upon.



DR. SONALI GHOSH



In the venture to Kaziranga National Park for the Round Square Conference 2025 at The Assam Valley School, AVE had the unique opportunity to speak with Dr. Sonali Ghosh, the first female Field Director of Kaziranga National Park, whose dedication has been instrumental in rhino and tiger conservation.

AVE: In your years of service to wildlife and forestry, what is one thing you've learned about wildlife that has stayed with you?

SNG: Having worked in this field for almost 27 years, I've had the chance to observe a lot of wildlife. One key takeaway is that if we don't harm them, they don't harm us. There is no greed in these animals, only the instinct to survive.

AVE: Has your interest in wildlife and forestry always been present throughout your life?

SNG: As a child, I didn't have much knowledge about wildlife, especially since we didn't have the exposure to television or nature shows that children have today. But I was always extremely empathetic and full of compassion towards animals while growing up.

AVE: What is one thing that keeps you inspired and driven in your work?

SNG: It's the happy faces I see each time tourists or students, like you all, visit the park. When visitors leave with smiles and a resolve that these beings must be protected, it inspires me. My hope to bridge the gap between people and their appreciation for wildlife is what keeps me motivated.

AVE: Could you tell us about some challenges you faced and overcame in becoming the first woman Field Director of Kaziranga National Park?

SNG: One challenge was overcoming the mindset that it was a "man's job" and that certain tasks could only be done in a specific way. It wasn't so much bias as it was the nature of the job; patrolling and fieldwork weren't seen as options for women at that time. But eventually, my dedication and love for this work paid off, and I was able to break through those barriers.

AVE: What is one simple action you believe students can take today to serve meaningfully?

SNG: I believe everyone can make a difference. For students, it starts with reducing their environmental impact and cultivating compassion and empathy for other living beings. The more you see and explore wildlife, the more you will learn to love it and feel compelled to protect it.

kaziranga's gallery

Photography by Ashmit Phukan, XI
and Mr. Rajendra Chauhan



baraza groups

Rippan Kaur

- Sreestee Paul, IX

The session for the day buzzed with excitement, filled with eager faces and curious minds. To break the Antarctic ice, we began with 21 Truths, followed by Human Bingo, which proved chaotically successful.

We then moved on to discussions around the key theme of the day, which was service. Delegates shared their ideas, allowing us to

explore a broader perspective and opening new ways for everyone to engage in acts of service.

Many also spoke about their own inspiring experiences, stories that have shaped them into better individuals through service. The keynote speaker's words further helped delegates articulate their thoughts, leaving them motivated and reflective.

Jody Williams

- Ashwika Mahanta, IX

Baraza 6 began their session with a brief icebreaker, shaking off initial unfamiliarity through a short game of Mafia. Named after Jody Williams, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate recognised for her tireless work to ban landmines and promote human rights, the group's discussions reflected her commitment to meaningful service. Delegates shared questions and unique perspectives on what service means to them.



The morning concluded with a fun game of Human Bingo, allowing everyone to connect and enjoy themselves. On day two, the group went on a safari tour of Kaziranga National Park and participated in the second keynote session, actively ideating and collaborating on potential service projects. Day three was dedicated to reflection and introspection, giving delegates the space to evaluate their journey and the lessons they had learned throughout the conference.

Bunker Roy

- Sneha Ngangom,
Deputy Editor, XI

On their first day, the group engaged in a thoughtful interactive session, exploring how sports can teach valuable life lessons and serve others. They also debated whether donating or providing a job is more impactful, concluding that giving someone a job can create lasting change. After lunch, they participated in a service activity, planting saplings on campus. Day two began with a visit to Kaziranga National Park, followed by a trip to local schools where they donated stationery. The day ended with a reflection session, allowing them to consider the impact of their work. On the final day, they enjoyed a fun game and held an effective discussion, reviewing and sharing what they had learned throughout their Baraza experience.



Abdul Sattar Edhi

- Sneha Ngangom, Deputy Editor, XI

The Baraza group kicked off with a creative icebreaker, Human Bingo, a fun way to get to know one another. After a short break, they participated in a service program on campus, tagging trees and learning more about the greenery around them. The day also reflected on

the values promoted by Abdul Sattar Edhi, the renowned humanitarian who dedicated his life to helping those in need, inspiring delegates to think deeply about selfless service. The day ended with a reflection session, where they shared what they had learned. Day two took them on an exciting safari at Kaziranga National Park, offering a glimpse of Assam's rich wildlife. Later, they engaged in donation and service drives for underprivileged schools, making a tangible impact on the community. Day three was a gentler, reflective day, dedicated to discussing and sharing their learnings and experiences from the conference, rounding off their Baraza journey with thoughtful insights.

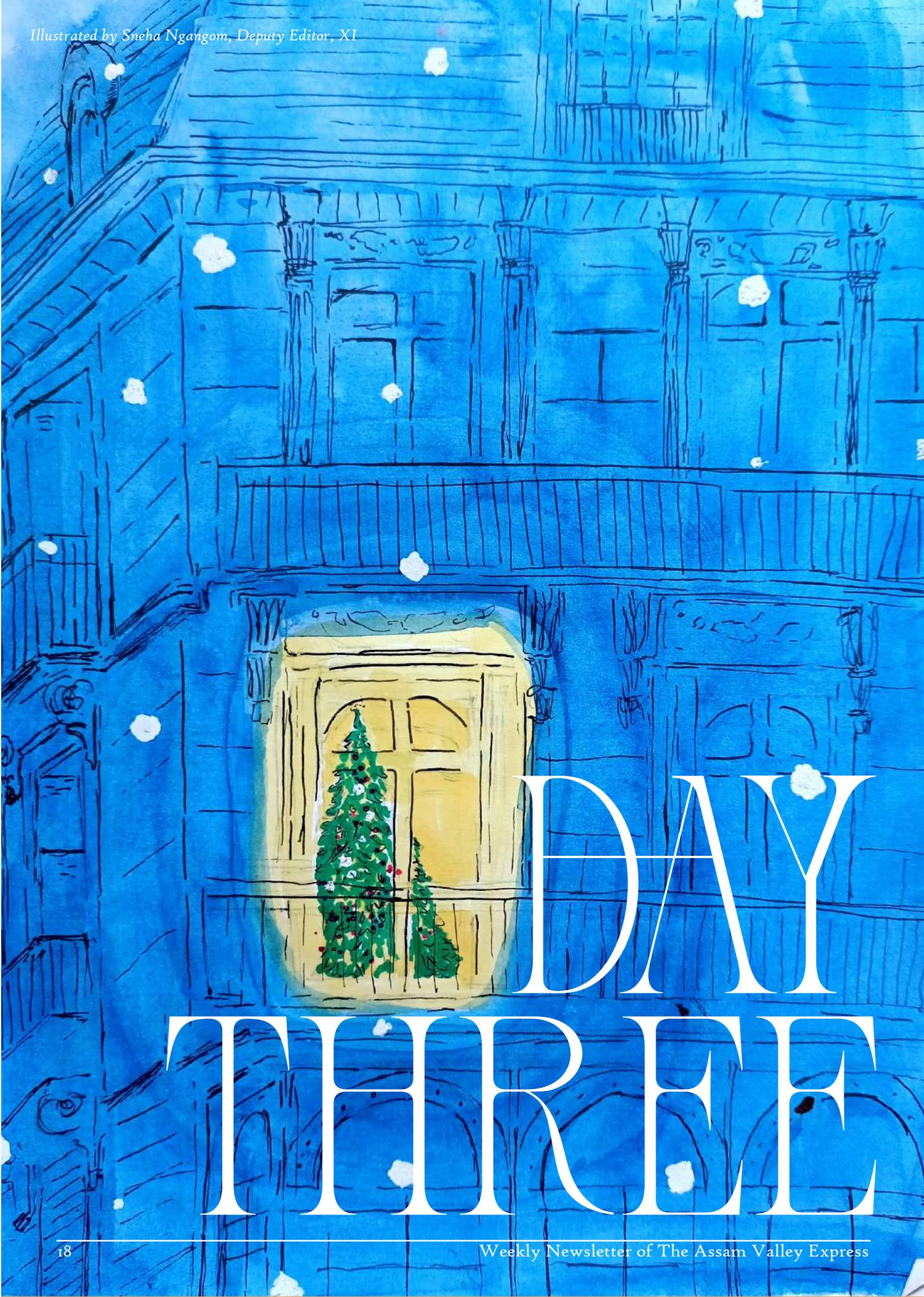
The multicultural evening on day 2 of the AVS Round Square 2025 was a vibrant and memorable celebration, with each participating school bringing its own unique flair and cultural essence to the stage. The evening opened with Lawrence School, Lovedale, whose dance performance was a stunning explosion of colour and energy. This was followed by Maria's Public School, who paid a heartfelt musical tribute to Dr. Zubeen Garg with songs such as Mayabini, Anuradha, and Prati Dine. Yadavindra Public School, Patiala, came next and truly lifted the atmosphere with their high-energy Bhangra performance. The Doon School then presented

an empowering play centred on service, highlighting the importance of standing by a friend in need. Step by Step School, Noida, followed with a soulful musical presentation featuring Illahi, Every Breath You Take, and Suraj Ki Baahon Mein. Podar Pearl School, Doha showcased a thoughtfully crafted skit accompanied by dance, depicting Qatar's pearl-diving heritage, the 2022 FIFA World Cup, and its leaders, Sheikh Tamim and Sheikh Jawaher. Vivek High School, Chandigarh, further raised the tempo with yet another spirited Bhangra performance. The host school, AVS, returned to the stage with a graceful

North-Eastern dance, beautifully representing the rich cultural heritage of the region. The Rajkumar College, Rajkot, then impressed the audience with Garba, a traditional folk dance. Lawrence School, Sanawar, brought infectious excitement with a lively Bollywood dance performance. Emerald Heights, Indore, surprised everyone with a cleverly written poem on flight delays and cancellations, paired with a dance set to the popular song Sapphire. The evening concluded on a powerful note with Daly College, Indore, presenting Gondhal, a traditional dance form that left the audience enthralled.

- Aahil Faraj, VIII





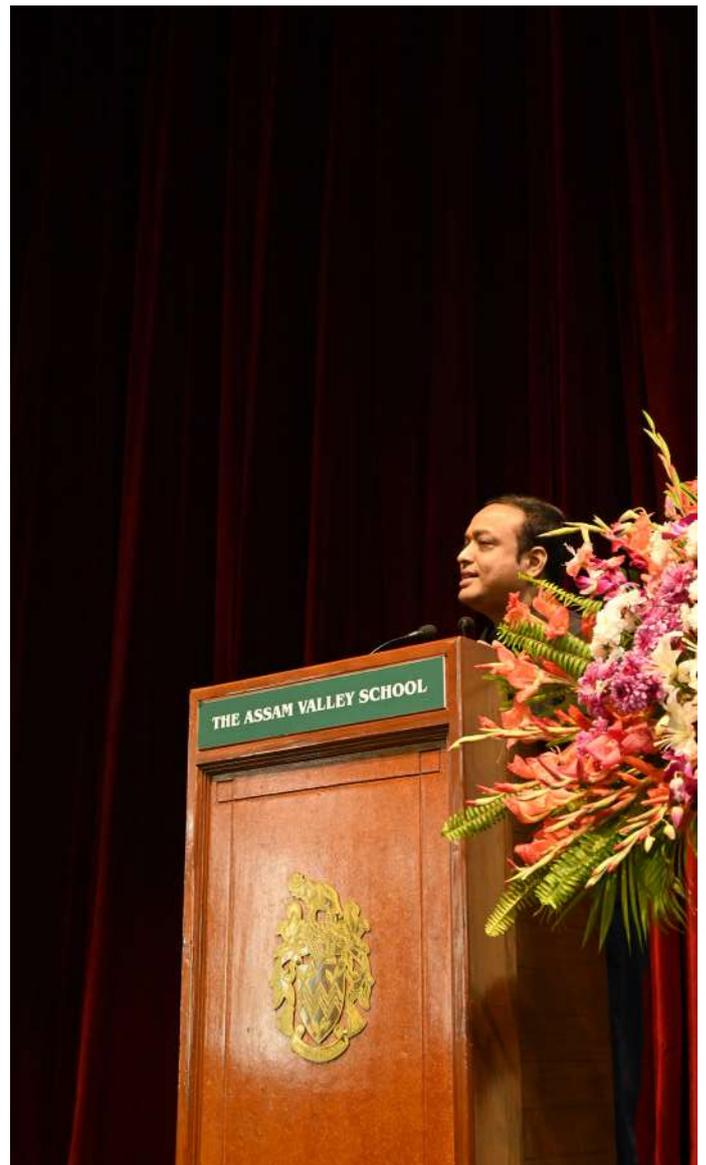
DAY THREE

KEYNOTE SESSION - III

On the 19th, the third keynote speaker, Mr Miguel Das Queah, an alumnus of Manas House, ISC Batch of 2005, addressed the delegates. A committed child rights activist and the founder of UTSAH, he spoke passionately about empathy as the cornerstone of his work, emphasising that authenticity is essential in order to navigate the many challenges that arise in this field. He shared that learning to face these challenges is, in itself, a source of deep fulfilment. Motivated from a very young age to work in the field of child rights protection, Mr. Queah shared how his early experiences shaped his calling.

As a young adult, he had the opportunity to meet Dr. A. P. J. Abdul Kalam, an encounter that left a lasting impression and became a source of deep inspiration. Disturbed by the widespread disregard for child protection and the urgent need for stringent laws to safeguard children, he initially intended to work from Delhi. However, a chance meeting with the renowned author Mamoni Raisom Goswami proved to be a turning point in his life. Inspired to return to his roots, he chose to work from Assam, leading to the establishment of UTSAH. Through powerful and often jarring case studies of child

abuse, Mr. Queah compelled the delegates to confront the realities of a system that is frequently insensitive and complex. His address urged young people to begin change from their own homes and conversations, reminding them that small, empathetic actions can create lasting impact. The interactive question-and-answer session that followed, marked by thoughtful exchanges, reflected the profound impact and success of his keynote.



Mr. Miguel Das Queah

AVE: Could you tell us about some of the fond memories you have of AVS from your school days?

MGD: It would definitely be the regular singing practices, the late-night talks, and the school fetes that used to take place — especially the school performances in the WMH. I was incredibly fond of participating in cultural events as a student.

AVE: In your experience, what is the fastest way to break down barriers and establish trust with an audience or community you are trying to serve?

MGD: Empathy is one of the most important factors in earning a community's trust. When you are authentic and genuinely feel for these communities, it reflects in your body language, and people notice. When a community knows that you are truly interested and ready to listen, it changes everything.

AVE: What has been your impression of the AVS Round Square Conference 2025?

MGD: My experience at the conference has been truly enriching, even though my stay has been short. The session following my keynote speech was incredibly interactive, and as an alumnus, I feel genuinely happy to be back on the stage

of the WMH once again. Frankly, in my eyes, everything the school does is always fantastic.

AVE: Young people often want to help but don't know where to begin. Could you share some tips on where one might start?

MGD: I believe it always begins at home — from putting up small informational notes on notice boards to having meaningful conversations with your family. It is in these little steps that change begins. Being active on social media on socially conscious issues and spreading awareness among peers can also have a profound impact.

AVE: Could you share some of the challenges you faced while working towards impactful victim support?

MGD: In a society where we are especially hesitant to discuss issues like child sexual assault, one of the biggest challenges has been convincing parents and families to take legal action. Many are reluctant due to concerns about how their children may be perceived or treated. The system itself is also incredibly complex and often insensitive, which can be intimidating and frightening for families.



On the third day of the Round Square Conference 2025 at The Assam Valley School, AVE got the opportunity to have a conversation with the keynote speaker, Mr. Miguel Das Queah, founder of the NGO UTSAH, which promotes child rights. Mr. Queah, is an Aviator, House Prefect, Manas/ISC- 2005.



BARAZA GROUPS

Ela Bhatt

- Khyaati Borah, IX

The Baraza session, named after Ela Bhatt, a pioneering social activist and founder of SEWA who dedicated her life to empowering women through service and self-reliance, included games such as Human Bingo, Hot Potato, and 21 Truths. These activities helped everyone relax and communicate more openly. The discussions reflected the values Ela Bhatt stood for, as we spoke about what service means to us and shared memories of our own service experiences.

The group's friendly and interactive nature made the conversations easy and enjoyable, with laughter over embarrassing moments and shared hobbies helping everyone bond. The delegates also fondly reflected on the Kaziranga visit organised on the second day, which once again highlighted the importance of protecting nature and wildlife, leaving everyone with a deeper sense of responsibility towards the environment.

Chuck Feeney

- Nishika Patodia, IX

The first session was both interactive and insightful. Named after Kurt Hahn's close associate, Chuck Feeney, a philanthropist known for dedicating his life and wealth to improving education and healthcare across the world, the Baraza embodied the very values discussed during the session. We took part in engaging icebreakers that helped us get to know one another better. Growing comfortable with each other allowed us to move forward into a meaningful discussion on the keynote speech delivered during the opening ceremony. The conversation focused largely on the idea of service, as we shared our perspectives on the speech and reflected together. The session concluded on a cheerful note, with everyone enjoying the time spent together and collectively looking forward to the upcoming activities.

Savitrabhai Phule

- Sneha Ngangom,
Deputy Editor, XI

With a bit of hustle and bustle, the ice-breaking Baraza session came to an end, paving the way for discussions on service and shared experiences of carrying out acts of service.

In the afternoon, the group stepped out to plant saplings, putting their thoughts into action. The session also reflected on the values promoted by Savitribai Phule, a pioneering social reformer and educationist who worked tirelessly for women's education and equality.

On the second day, the delegates visited Kaziranga National Park. Later, they took part in various activities and games to lighten the mood and encourage interaction, followed by discussions on the diverse flora and fauna witnessed during the visit.

The day concluded with a donation drive at nearby schools. Day three was short and sweet, marked by farewells and a light discussion reflecting on all that had been accomplished over the course of the conference.



DELEGATE PICTURES



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virtue,
and
valour



*honour,
wisdom,
influence.*



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SCHOOL

THE
DOON
SCHOOL



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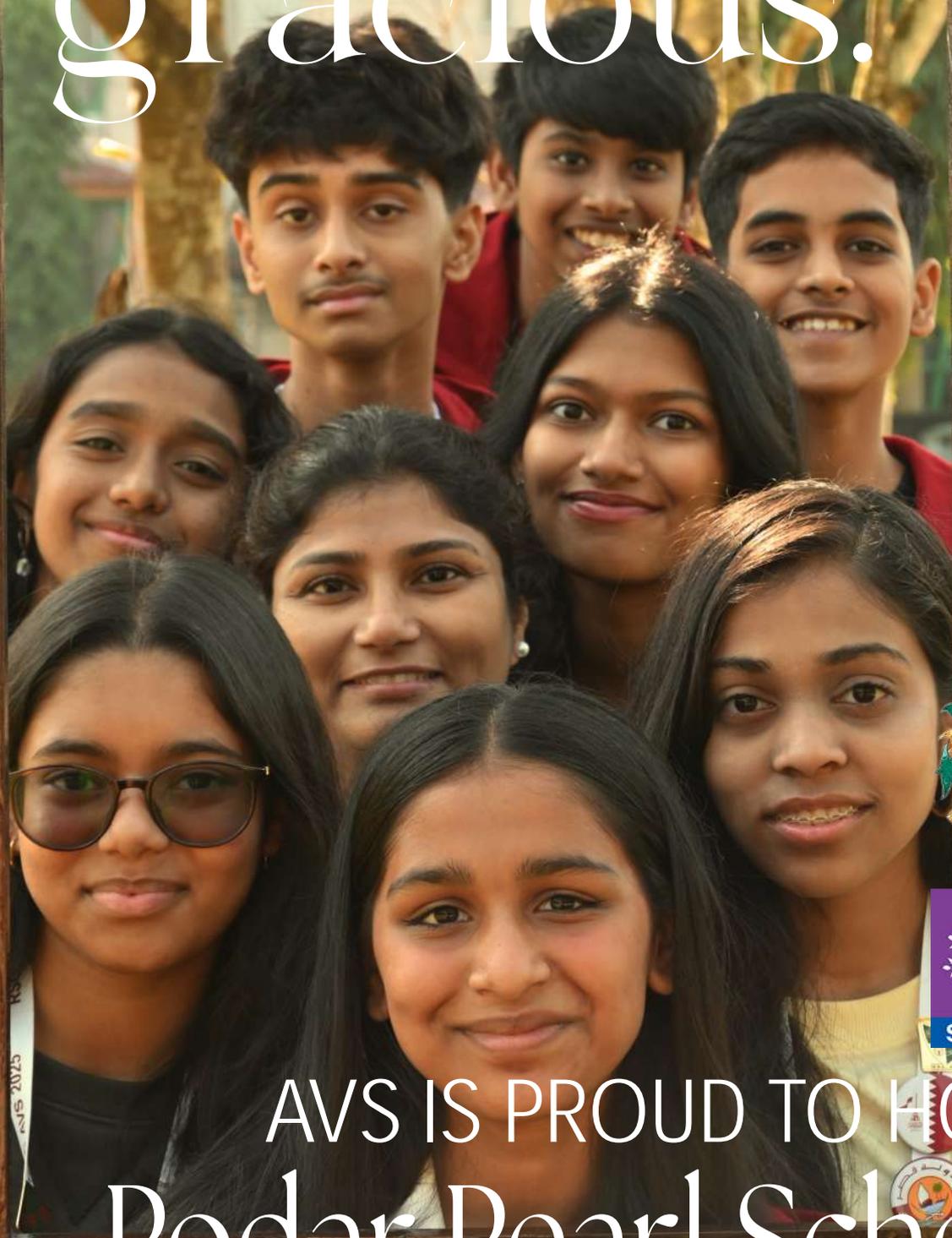
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AVS IS PROUD TO HOST:
THE EMERALD HEIGHTS
INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL



the *cultural* cut





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Design & Layout: Rianna

Illustrators: Sneha, Austin and Baibhav

Photographs: Ashmit Phukan

Mistress-in-Charge: Ms. Sarmistha Paul Sarkar

Publisher: The Assam Valley School, P.O. Balipara, Dist. Sonitpur, Asom-784101, India

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Weekly Newsletter of The Assam Valley Express



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