

# Highlights 2024-2025

As in previous years, Aravind achieved several milestones this year, reaffirming its dedication to serving society. A notable moment was the conferring of the Padma Shri on Dr. G. Natchiar, Director-Emeritus, Aravind Eye Care System (AECS). This national honour recognises her distinguished contributions to medicine and society, bringing pride not only to her but also to the institution.

In a press interview, she remarked, “Do good for the community and ensure the welfare of your fellow beings.” It is notable that three founding doctors from the same family have now received the Padma Shri, reflecting the collective commitment of the founders to eliminating needless blindness. This recognition comes not only from the government but also from the public, who have celebrated this honour.

To address the need of a large building to accommodate the growing patient volume at Aravind-Coimbatore, a new state-of-the-art eye care facility spanning 440 thousand square feet, was opened on 29<sup>th</sup> September 2024. It was inaugurated by the chief guest, Dr. B.K. Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, Chairman, Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Coimbatore, in the presence of Dr. Ganapathy P. Rajkumar, Member of Parliament, Coimbatore. Construction of a large facility in nearby area from its present location is also underway at Aravind-Salem, with completion expected in 2026. Once operational, it will provide comprehensive eye care with modern facilities for the region.



*Dr. G. Natchiar receiving the Padma Shri Award from Honourable President of India, Smt. Droupadi Murmu*

*Inauguration of the new facility at Aravind-Coimbatore*





Aravind's new Tertiary Eye Care Centre at Thanjavur

The extension of services to Thanjavur, a historic town, marks another key milestone, and is set to open in April 2025.

As Aravind nears its fiftieth year of service, preparations are underway for a yearlong jubilee celebration to honour the institution's rich legacy rooted in the vision of Dr. V.

### Establishment of "Centre for Advanced Research in Glaucoma (CARG)"

ICMR (Intermediate-grants) project entitled "Adult stem cell derived exosomes: a cell-free therapy for glaucoma," and ICMR (CAR-Centre

for Advanced Research grant) project entitled "Early detection of open angle glaucoma in diabetes patients with increasing age and family history of glaucoma" worth 20 crores, have been awarded to explore the pathogenesis of glaucoma and to screen families for various genetic alterations that leads to glaucoma.

### WHO Consultation on eCSC and eREC

LAICO, a World Health Organization Collaborating Centre (WHO-CC), conducted a two-day consultation on 29-30 November 2024, in Aravind-Madurai, to achieve the global targets

### *In loving memory of Dr. V.R. Muthukkaruppan*

*Aravind mourns the loss of Dr. V.R. Muthukkaruppan, Founding Director of Research at the Aravind Medical Research Foundation (AMRF), on 16<sup>th</sup> June 2024, at the age of 90. As the Founding Director, he established the research laboratory and made remarkable contributions to the understanding of diabetic retinopathy, corneal epithelial stem cells, and the immunology of uveitis. Later, as Advisor – Research, he was instrumental in developing innovative programmes focusing on the application of adult tissue-resident stem cells in regenerative medicine. His dedication to genetic research led to the establishment of the Cancer Genetic Testing Centre at Aravind Eye Hospital, Madurai the only centre of its kind in India. His loss leaves behind a legacy of scientific excellence in eye research that the entire Aravind community celebrates and is committed to carrying forward.*







*Dr. G. Venkataswamy Memorial Award to Dr. Martin Henry*



for effective Cataract Surgical Coverage (eCSC) and effective Refractive Error Coverage (eREC) by 2030. Twenty-nine experts representing different WHO-CCs across India, Bangladesh, and Nepal attended the consultation. Since the interventions to improve eCSC and eREC are mainly led by providers, to facilitate monitoring at the provider level, hospital level measures like the effective Cataract Intervention Rate (eCIR)

*Participants of the WHO Consultation*



and effective Refractive error Intervention Rate (eRIR) were recommended. This consultation was an important step toward reaching the 2030 global targets and emphasises the need for provider led efforts, system-wide improvements, and ongoing collaboration among stakeholders.

### **Aurolab 2.0 - International Brand Launch**

The international brand launch of Aurolab 2.0 held at a webinar hosted by the International Business Group on 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024, providing in-depth insights into the attributes and focus areas of Aurolab 2.0. The new logo reflects the company's unwavering commitment to innovation and quality, assuring customers that it will continue to meet their evolving needs.

### **Dr. G. Venkataswamy Memorial Oration and Award Ceremony**

Aravind conferred the Dr. G. Venkataswamy Memorial Award 2024 upon Dr. Martin Henry Spencer an ophthalmologist Seva Canada, in appreciation of his significant contributions to revolutionising cataract surgical practices worldwide and improving the lives of the visually impaired in developing countries, enabling them to experience the world without constraints.



*Inaugurating of ARCORE Training centre at Aravind-Chennai*

At the grand ceremony, held at the LAICO on 1<sup>st</sup> October 2024, Dr. Spencer delivered the Dr. G. Venkataswamy Memorial Oration on the title, “Riding the wave of Dr. Venkataswamy’s Vision: A personal journey with Seva and Aravind.”

## ARCORE

In an effort to share its significant expertise in eye care, Aravind established ARCORE, a cutting-edge training facility at Aravind-Chennai, which was inaugurated by Rtn. Ravi Raman, District Governor 23-24, RI District 3232 on 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024. ARCORE is designed to facilitate hybrid skill enhancement by offering a range of courses across various skill sets, combining virtual and hands-on sessions with observation opportunities. The facility will broaden the horizons of learning and increase global connectivity through classroom and recorded lectures, live-streamed sessions, live wet lab demonstrations, and a comprehensive reference library. Global leaders such as Alcon, Zeiss, Aurolab, and Essilor are industry partners for ARCORE.



## *A Life of Curiosity and Commitment - Remembering Mike Myers*

*Aravind lost a dear friend in Mike Myers, a dedicated volunteer who supported the institution for over four decades. He was instrumental in introducing computer capabilities to Aravind in the early 1980s and later played a key role in developing the communications department. Photography was his greatest passion, and here his contribution to Aravind was immense. He ensured that the photographers were equipped with the best tools and skills, raising the standard of the institution’s visual storytelling. Despite the barriers of language, he worked closely with the media and communications staff, inspiring them through his spirit of curiosity and his belief in continuous learning.*

*Deeply moved by Dr. V’s vision, Mike chose to spend increasing amounts of time at Aravind. “Everything else I’ve done will be forgotten. Things I’ve done here get built upon. It’s great to be a small part of what’s happening at Aravind,” he once said.*

*Mike passed away on 4<sup>th</sup> October 2024 after a brief illness at Aravind, which he considered his second home, ten thousand kilometres away from his native land. His loss has left an indelible mark on all who knew him, along with unforgettable memories captured in his photographs.*

*Mike was one of the most generous souls, giving freely of his time, knowledge, and encouragement. Even in his passing he left a generous gift to Aravind which will continue to further Aravind’s work in photography, videography, communications, and digital resources, fields that he nurtured with great passion and vision. Mike’s legacy will live on.*