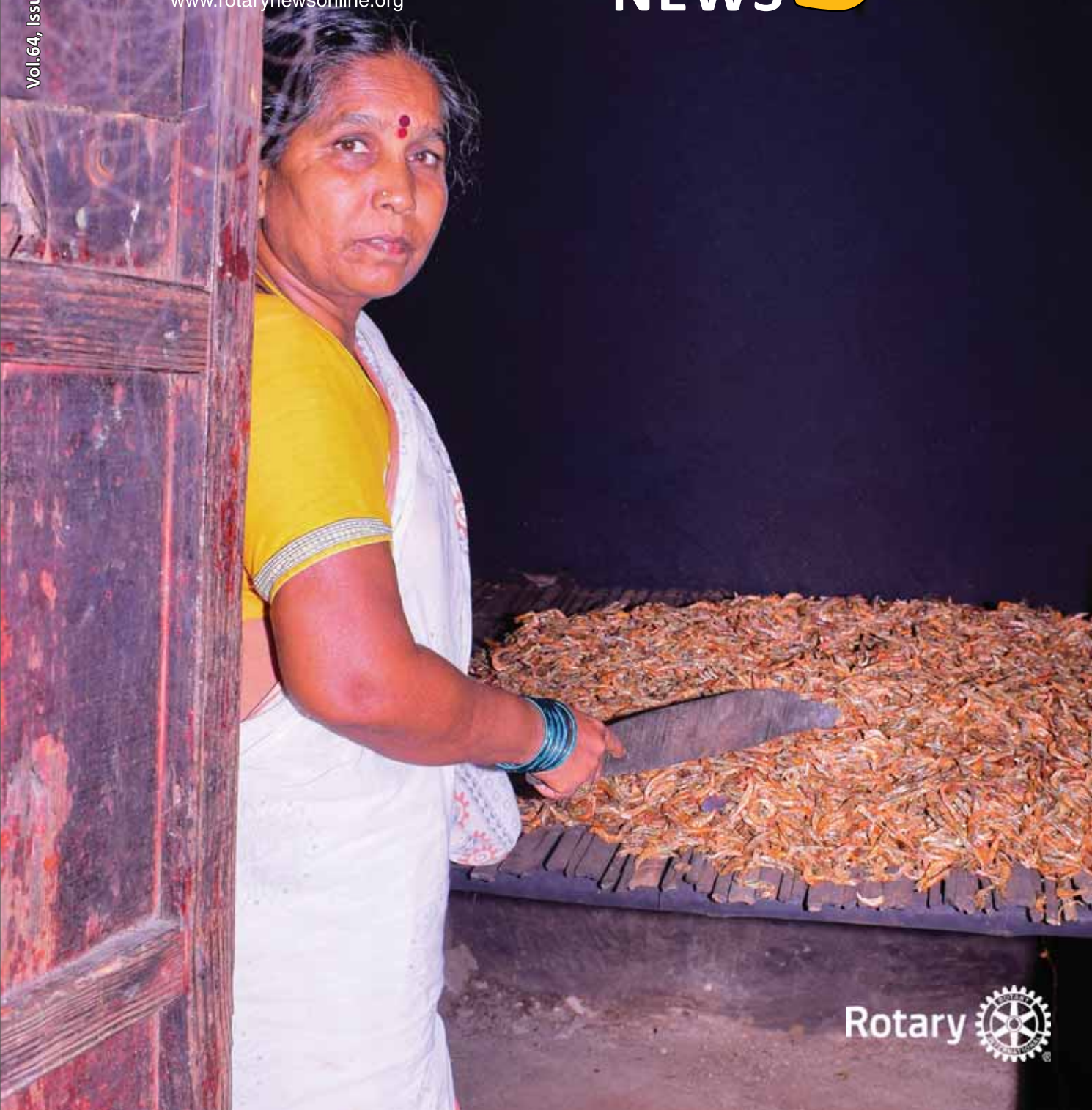


Rotary

NEWS

INDIA

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A picture taken in
Helsinki in 2013
during a safer era
is yet symbolic of
the times our world
would face in 2020.

Picture by
Rasheeda Bhagat



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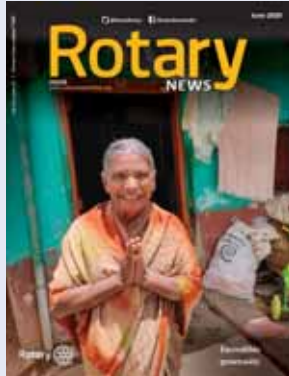


On the cover: A beneficiary of RC Kakinada's livelihood enhancement endeavour.

Incredible generosity

The cover photo and the story on the incredible generosity of Kamalamma are wonderful and inspirational. The variety of articles such as *The post-Covid world*, coverage of Rotary activities and the obit on PRIP Frank Devlyn are commendable. Zoom meetings with Union Ministers Nitin Gadkari and Dharmendra Pradhan, which I attended show the advances made by Rotary in India which wants to partner with GoI for community services. Glad to see many good and inspiring articles with photos and illustrations in the June issue. My compliments to the Editor and her team for an excellent Rotary magazine

C R Nambiar
RC Payyanur — D 3202



The cover photo of Kamalamma in the June issue is superb. Her face exhibits the satisfaction one gets in giving even a small amount to feed the hungry. I attended the RI virtual convention and listened to RI President Mark Maloney's impressive speech. Both the RI directors have inspired us to march ahead in the post-Covid world.

The post-Covid world article by Rasheeda Bhagat is excellent, giving a concise idea about the hardships and challenges awaiting us. I am delighted to read that the Rotary Disaster Response Fund was rightly utilised to fight the Covid pandemic everywhere. Heartfelt condolences to past RI President Frank Devlyn's bereaved family.

An Ironman Club President is an interesting article and we need young energetic people like Niket Doshi in the forefront to lead Rotary in the dark days ahead. The entire June issue is packed with information and interesting photos and articles. Best wishes to the editorial team for their commendable work.

Philip Mulappone M T
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211

An excellent July issue

Once again a wonderful issue. A new Rotary year has begun with new leaders having new vision and ambitions. RI President Holger Knaack says Rotary will open opportunities and reach greater heights. The cover story *Young at heart* was interesting and so are the articles *AKS added 100 new members this year*, and *Sri Lankan Rotarians work with government to combat Covid-19*. The article *Rotary-UNEP implement Africa's largest river restoration*

project shed light on the need to preserve freshwater systems in the world by highlighting a major project in Africa. *Transforming a slum* was interesting to read too.

Dr Arun Oommen
RC Cochin
West — D 3201

RI President Holger Knaack's profile titled *Young at heart* was the perfect start to the new Rotary year. It provided good insight into the president's life and family and told us about his fun-loving, open-minded persona. PRIP Rajendra

Saboo has penned an inspiring article on Sir Clem with a poignant description of his contribution to our world, the 3-H concept and Rotary's fight to eradicate polio from the world. Renouf was a true and complete Rotarian and a role model.

Your team is doing a wonderful job in coming out with the magazine in these trying times.

Dr Jayasekharan V P
RC Payyanur — D 3202

Nice article

Thanks a lot for the article *RC Alleppey turns 70* as it vividly

narrated the club's humanitarian projects, and the club bulletin which has brought out 3,700 issues over 70 years. The write-up has highlighted major milestones. But I've been in this club for 44 and not 25 years as mentioned.

Tomi Eapen
RC Alleppey — D 3211

A transformed magazine

These are indeed, very difficult and harrowing times. I fully appreciate the hard work put in by you, your editorial team and

LETTERS

your office, to hand over *Rotary News* to subscribers every month. Words are not enough to praise you for the wonderful publication that you have turned our old *Rotary News* into!

The entire look of the magazine has changed and now I really look forward to reading each and every article. I pray for you and your entire office team's wellbeing and safety. During these difficult times Rotarians from the ordinary club member to our respected leaders world over have proved in action our motto *Service above Self*. During this adversity, we have proved that "Rotary opens opportunities"! Looking forward to the next issue of *Rotary News* in August 2020.

PDG Shyamashree Sen
RC Calcutta Metro
City — D 3291

Rotarians' work deserve appreciation

The achievements of Rotarians during the pandemic, as elaborated by the editor, deserve appreciation. RI Director Bharat Pandya has rightly said that the most precious possession in life is good health. He appreciated the services of the frontline warriors who had staked their lives during the pandemic and urged all of us to support them.

RI Director Kamal Sanghvi has beautifully explained Franklin D Roosevelt's thought: We cannot always build the future for our youth, but we can build our youth for the future.

Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080

Rotarians can serve even under the most adverse circumstances, as you have highlighted aptly in the editorial *Heroes emerge, at gloomy times too...* Especially during this pandemic, the service of Rotary is considerably great and spectacular. The disaster management grants were sanctioned for the clubs in record time. Clubs also donated to the cause of providing relief during the pandemic. Excess of human freedom impeded a healthy environment. We should care for the flora and fauna. During this global pandemic, the service of the Rotarians will continue as they believe in *Service above Self*. However, your note of optimism touched my heart.

Arun Kumar Dash
RC Baripada — D 3262

RI President Mark Maloney speaks about the Aloha spirit which means mutual regard and affection (June issue). The editorial

pays a nice tribute to the late PRIP Frank Devlyn.

The commendable work of RC Mysuru Heritage in providing food to the the stranded and hungry people is nicely translated into words. The article *Making agriculture a profitable venture* has taken us back to 1960s and 1970s when former Agriculture Minister C Subramainam, we use to call him CS, took bold steps to usher in the Green Revolution. *On the Racks* by Kiran Zehra has given a gist of three novels that are worth reading.

RS Muniandi
RC Dindigul — D 3000

I was delighted to read the article, *Rotary and Art of Living to work together for world peace* (June issue). Shri Shri Ravi Shankar said during the current Covid period, the mental health of the people is affected due to depression, aggression and fear. He has asked us to encourage a healthy mind and free spirit and

urged everyone to see life in a wider perspective and spread love, by serving the people and to spread joy in the world.

KMK Murthy, RC
Secunderabad — D 3150

I find our magazine wonderful, excellent and *zabardast* (fantastic). Congratulations and good wishes to Team Rotary News.

Sandesh Randad
RC Akola
Midtown — D 3030

In the June and July issues, I was overwhelmed to read the following articles: *Be a calm mountain* by Bharat and Shalan Savur; *Kamalammal's incredible generosity* by Rasheeda Bhagat (both in June issue) and Sheela Nambiar's *Withstanding adversity* in July issue. These articles carry awesome messages which motivate our lives. Thanks for such great content.

P Murugan
former ISRO scientist

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor:
rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com

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Rotary must adapt to stay nimble



Dear Rotarians, Rotaractors, and friends,

The year 2020 has brought monumental changes that have already included a global pandemic and a renewed call for social justice. We are reminded that we live in a constantly changing world, and Rotary is a reflection of that world.

We must be ready to listen and adapt, always drawing upon our core values of service, fellowship, diversity, integrity and leadership. If we live these values and apply The Four-Way Test to all aspects of our lives, we will be prepared to lead at all times.

I am proud of how we have proven our ability to adapt. Faced with a pandemic, Rotary has not stopped. We moved meetings online and found new ways to serve. We turned the cancelled 2020 Rotary International Convention in Honolulu into our first virtual convention. Each week, we are proving that Rotary is a flexible gathering that happens anywhere — in traditional meetings, on cellphones, and on computers. Rotary offers a way to connect for everyone who wants to, at any time, and will continue to do so.

Some have even told me that they enjoy Rotary's mix of online and in-person meetings more now than before! How can we build on this momentum and seize the opportunity to embrace change so that Rotary keeps thriving?

For me, supporting new types of clubs is key. They are no longer just experiments but a real part of Rotary today. In addition to traditional clubs, we have e-clubs, Rotaract clubs, cause-based clubs, and passport clubs. These help make Rotary more inclusive, more flexible, and more attractive to new members. Visit these clubs,

exchange ideas and partner with them, and promote them to one another and to our communities.

We all agree that we need to grow Rotary, but sometimes we can get caught up in the numbers game and lose sight of the bigger picture. After all, an increase in membership is meaningless if next year, those new members leave our clubs. Let's grow Rotary sustainably. Rotary's flexible options for participation will engage members and show the community how we're different from any other club. Let's celebrate that Rotary is now less about rules and more about joining together in a variety of ways besides traditional meetings.

I recommend that each club hold an annual strategy meeting to ask — and honestly answer — if we are doing all we can for our members and if our club reflects the community we serve. We are taking this approach at the international level too. I am proud that six women are serving with me on the RI Board of Directors this year, the most we have ever had. Let's keep Rotary moving in this direction at every level. We need more perspectives, more diversity for Rotary to thrive.

It's fascinating to imagine how we will find new ways to adapt and stay nimble this year and beyond. But I am also inspired about what hasn't changed and never will in Rotary: the friendships, the networking, the ethics, and the service. Indeed, these are the values that make Rotary attractive to all.

As Rotary's founder, Paul Harris, said, we have to be revolutionary from time to time. Now is such a time. *Rotary Opens Opportunities* — countless ones — for us to embrace change that will strengthen us even as we remain true to our core values.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Holger Knaack".

Holger Knaack
President, Rotary International



Let's walk away from racism and colourism

In a world getting increasingly divided by strife, prejudices, conflict and violence, one of the strongest and most relevant points, particularly relevant to our country, that RI President Holger Knaack made at the virtual convention pertained to racism. Addressing the district governors and club presidents, he made no bones about the fact that he expects Rotarians across the world to show zero tolerance to racism. He reiterated that “promoting respect and celebrating diversity” were among the central tenets of Rotary and urged Rotary clubs to ensure “a fair balance in membership. Look out for minority groups who are not represented. Remember, Rotarians are not speechless and we must raise our voice against racism of any kind,” he said in response to a question on how Rotary would tackle systemic racism.

When we talk about prejudice and racism, one of the worst kinds is related to colour. While it took the merciless strangulation to death of the black George Floyd by a white male cop in the United States for the long simmering issue of prejudice and discrimination against blacks in America to explode, we in India are no better when it comes to our dislike for darker skin. Oh yes, we promote colourism to no end, going by the colossal demand for skin lightening creams and lotions in India. It took violent and persistent protests across the US, and the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter on various social media platforms, for Unilever to finally wake up to the fact that its huge money spinner, the Fair and Lovely face cream, only promotes discrimination against dark-complexioned people. And it decided to change its name to Glow and Lovely.

For decades now so many of us have been protesting against such so-called beauty products only deepening and widening the discrimination against dusky women. The advertising was obnoxious enough; if you, as a woman, aren't able to find a husband, a job, particularly as an air hostess, or lack confidence, use this cream, and see the magic after 10 or 15 days. As though this doesn't raise your heckles, matrimonial ads are even more irritating with their quest for a “fair-complexioned” bride, and Indian movies have done little to fight this prejudice.

In Bollywood films of yore, the dark wife was always shunned by the husband, and in numerous film songs and dialogues, the village beauty is always referred to as a “gori”. I remember yesteryears top star Meena Kumari chiding Krishna in that exasperating song “*Krishna, o kaale Krishna/Tune yeh kya kiya/Mujhse badla liya/Rang deke mujhe apna*” (Oh Krishna, why have you taken revenge on me by giving me your colour!) And the poor comedian Mehmood was made to croon: *Hum kale hei toh kya hua dilwale hei* (I may be black but I have a great heart). As though this is not enough, in Indian movies, the domestic help is several shades darker to the heroine, who in multiple cases, must have gone through painful bleaching and other skin lightening processes to get there in the first place.

Generations of prejudice will not go away quickly; as your President tells you, go out there and ensure that you as Rotarians raise your voice strong and hard against such utterly rubbish stereotypes of beauty.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Message from

One-to-One



The Covid crisis has made us realise that change comes to us when we least expect it. Often change is thrust upon us. Rotary has always accepted change of leaders as a yearly process. But our meetings, projects, structure usually followed 'tradition'. We were comfortable with old problems rather than new solutions. I am optimistic that with the new norms Rotary will move forward into a brighter future as a dynamic, evolving organisation. Today clubs and Rotarians across cultures, borders and boundaries are collaborating and connecting through fellowship and engagement.

The buzzwords defining Rotary today are connections, collaboration and communication. The new Rotary is not restricted to meeting rooms, halls and hotels. Rotary has come into our homes, our living rooms, kitchens, bedrooms; in fact, in every nook and corner of our houses. A recent RI survey showed that over 90 per cent clubs in our zones had met online reasonably frequently during the last three months and 55 per cent of clubs indicated that they will have a combination of in-person and virtual meetings once things normalise. This augurs well for membership.

August is Membership month, the best time to introduce a friend to Rotary. People join Rotary for different reasons but the strongest is that they want to be Rotarians. Communicate the values and benefits of Rotary well and membership growth is not difficult. Retention is of prime importance. Emphasise on the members' talent, not just time. Membership is not about numbers but our members are our most important, valuable assets who will make our clubs vibrant, attractive and meaningful to work in. A Rotary club should become: *a place to relax; a place of belonging; a place where the member's talent, time and contribution are valued.* Change the trend, bring a friend and retain that friend.

How do we keep members engaged in these times? There are still people in need; hungry to be fed, homeless to be sheltered, illiterate to be educated and sick to be healed. These opportunities were present yesterday and they are there today and will be there tomorrow. There are still minds to be mended and lives to be rebuilt. And some of these lives would be of our Rotarians who require our helping hand. These are action points for Rotarians to serve. We can help to rebuild, reshape and restore our communities. This is what Rotarians do and this is why we are in Rotary.

This is our call, this is our time and this is the moment for which we joined Rotary. As we connect with each other, as new and different opportunities open up before us together we can and we will change the world.

Dr Bharat Pandya
RI Director, 2019-21

RI Directors

Focus on growth

It's the second month of the new Rotary year and a bold new world, with our mantra being 'grow Rotary'.

Allow your members to choose their own experience with Rotary; either full engagement, or that which suits their needs — particularly for younger members. This will tell Rotarians we are sensitive to their needs.

In a marketplace saturated with similar organisations, offering personalised opportunities will get us more members. Do focus on multi-generation outreach, not only the millennials. It is important to build and nurture a relationship with every age group in Rotary. A few strategies to attract a mixed age group:

Baby boomers respond better to traditional techniques and are more likely to respond to phone conversations and face-to-face meetings, rather than social media marketing. Reach them by creating live, in-person events that provide plenty of opportunities to network and mingle.

Generation Xers are more rules-oriented and appreciate when organisations go by an accepted set of engagement rules, and they love humour. Focus on building a relationship through human interactions via live events and emails.

Millennials appreciate the social aspect of the Internet. They expect to build authentic relationships through social media, trust and rely on reviews — even those from complete strangers, and love to support a cause. They live on their smartphones. Offer sharable digital experiences.

Gen Zers and **Rotaractors** are the masters of social media, and lured to video mediums such as Snapchat, Instagram and YouTube. Like the millennials, they are mobile-first, and expect all content to be optimised. They expect getting information quickly and easily. Provide them innovative and intuitive tech experiences.

YouTube has been around for over a decade, but surprisingly, a small percentage uses it. Yet, with over a billion users, YouTube attracts almost a third of all Internet users. Chances are high that your members are on YouTube, and if they're there, you should be, too.

Those who prefer Facebook to YouTube should know a video on social media generates multiple times more shares. Create videos of your activities and post it on YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms.

During these difficult times, let us adopt out-of-the-box solutions. Virtual meets enable clubs to have speakers from across the world; invite your guests, relatives, fellow workers who after seeing your great work might be inspired to join Rotary.



Kamal Sanghvi
RI Director, 2019-21

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ROTARY NEWS / ROTARY SAMACHAR

Editor

Rasheeda Bhagat

Senior Assistant Editor

Jaishree Padmanabhan

ROTARY NEWS / ROTARY SAMACHAR

ROTARY NEWS TRUST

3rd Floor, Dugar Towers,
34 Marshalls Road, Egmore
Chennai 600 008, India.

Phone : 044 42145666

e-mail: rotarynews@rosaonline.org

Website: www.rotarynewsonline.org

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RC Kakinada helps women shrimp-makers

Rasheeda Bhagat



A group of women in Chinna Boddu Palam village, located on the shores of the canal connecting to the Bay of Bengal and just 20km from Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, is engaged in income generation through the preparation of a regional delicacy, salted and smoked shrimps/prawns. But the long and arduous methodology they used will now be dramatically improved thanks to help from the Rotary Club Kakinada, a 77-year-old club in RID 3020.

The village itself, with a population of around 2,000, is a fishing village and the local men make a livelihood through

fishing on paddle or half HP motor-operated mini boats, says Club President Pavan Kumar Mangalampalli.

As he is associated with WWF India (World Wide Fund for Nature) and passionate about environment and ecosystems, around 2015, while doing some

awareness camps for WWF, he came across a passionate village sarpanch Narisimha Raju, who was interested in ensuring that the several schemes and projects that the government launched were continued and really helped improve people's lives. Interestingly,

The Jithika totally eliminates the risk and health hazards the women face while staying in the traditional shrimp-cooking huts.



this village has a rich history of various Central and State government projects, as well as research methodologies of voluntary and scientific organisations. And yet all these had hardly helped the local people because of the total absence of one crucial feature — sustainability, the mantra that every TRF global grant harps upon.

So with hardly any focus being put on the sustainability of either the projects that were initiated or individual livelihood, the villagers hardly benefited. “This included women, who are very active in getting additional income for the family and become its sole breadwinners during cyclones or high tides when men aren’t allowed into the sea for fishing,” says Mangalampalli.

The women add to the family’s income by preparing the salted and smoked shrimps for which there is a high demand and food agents readily procure this delicacy from them. But getting this premium product ready for the market is a cumbersome procedure which requires long hours of arduous



Above and below: Village women engaged in processing the shrimps.

work, which is detrimental to the health of the women engaged in this activity as it involves a lot of smoke ingestion.

For instance, traditionally, the shrimps are prepared by women through a tiresome 8–10 hour long process. The prawns, which the women procure from the wholesale market, are placed in a small hut — each family engaged in this activity has a separate hut of its own — that is closed from all sides. In this hut, the shrimps are salted and placed on a bamboo belt or shelves and fire is lit under it, so that the shrimps get cooked with the heat rather than direct fire. The end product is salted and smoked shrimps, which have a ready market. But remaining in that hut for long hours and imbibing the smoke is a huge hazard for women, and results in respiratory diseases.

About 10 years ago, some kind soul in the DRDO (Defence and Research Development Organisation), carrying forward the norm of initiating yet another project in this area, developed a device called Jithika to help ease the burden of the shrimp makers. Jithika (see picture) is an iron box consisting of six shelves, arranged vertically, with





Rotarians giving a sturdier Jithika to women in Chinna Boddu Palam village.



an extra tray placed underneath, where the fire is lit.

When the raw shrimps, which have been salted and dried for days, are placed in the Jithika, they are cooked within a few hours. This equipment totally eliminates the risk and health hazards the women face while staying in the traditional shrimp-cooking huts, as well as the danger posed by an accidental fire.

A wonderful scheme, but with a catch; over a period of time the poorly-made Jithikas given to the women stopped working and couldn't be repaired, and the women were back to the old hazardous huts. To understand the kind of hard work the women of this village put in, let's return to Mangalampalli and RC Kakinada.

"To buy these shrimps in bulk, the women get up at 2am, take an autorickshaw, and travel a distance of around 10km to the wholesale shrimp market, buy the shrimps, return home and then start the long process of preparing them for the market," he says. So when his year as club president was coming up, he decided to donate better-designed,

bigger, sturdier and more durable Jithikas to the women of Chinna Boddu Palam village. He embraced this as one of his major projects. The first Jithika, costing around ₹37,000, designed by the club with help from a scientist from the marine fisheries department, and fabricated in Kakinada under the Rotarians' supervision, was donated to the village women in the first week of July.

As 15 families in this village prepare these shrimps, a premium product, he wants to make 14 more such Jithikas and distribute them. The village has great potential and good infrastructure such as a government operated school, a library, community hall and above all "hardworking and motivated men and women and the dynamic leadership of ex-sarpanch Raju, who is always ready to work with us to improve the local people's lives and livelihoods. We have adopted this village and want to make it a model village."

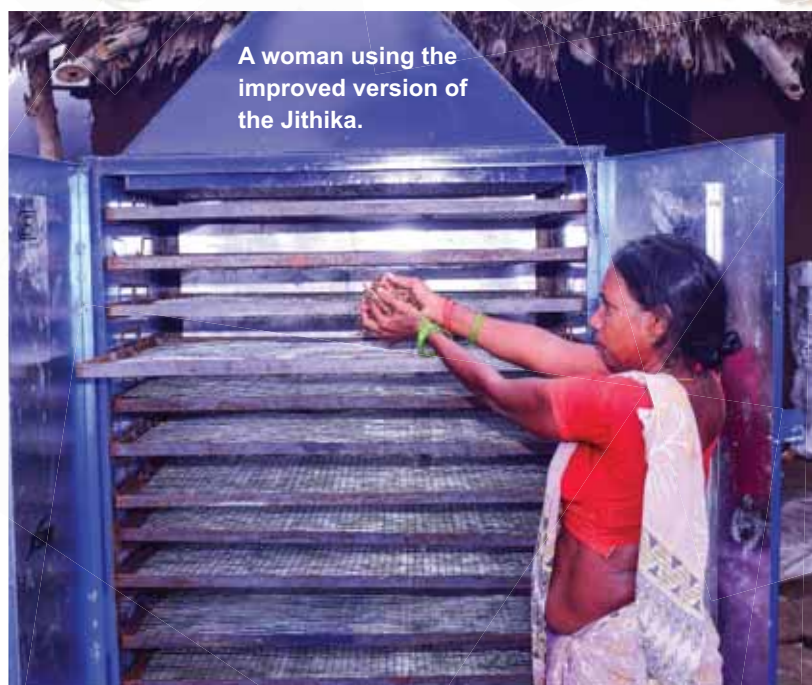
Money for the Jithikas has been collected through donations from "our club members, clients and friends. We have designed a device that will last at



Shrimps being cooked in a traditional hut.



The women's income through use of Jithika will go up by at least one-fourth — from ₹6,000 to 8,000.



A woman using the improved version of the Jithika.

least for four years and have told the villagers that the onus of maintaining them rests with them so that this scheme will be sustainable," he says.


Now that this project is seeing good support and inquiries are coming in from people wanting to contribute funds, Mangalampalli, sees scope to expand it. He is happy to report that the women's income through use of Jithika will go up by at least one fourth — from ₹6,000 to 8,000. "Apart from improving their health, it will also cut down the time they spend on processing the shrimps, and we are sure these enterprising and hardworking women will use that time for more productive work," he smiles.

Designed by Krishnapratheesh



Pune Rotarians avert water crisis in Marathwada villages

Rasheeda Bhagat



Several districts in Marathwada and North Maharashtra region have always suffered from deficient rainfall, and been afflicted with frequent and severe drought. With water storage facilities being near-nil in several villages, which had received barely 50 per cent of the annual monsoon rainfall in 2018, a “high-magnitude drought resulted in several villages near Pune, hitting hard the livelihood and survival of destitute people living in these areas,” says Pankaj Patel, past president of Rotary Club of Pune Far East, and District Director (RID 3131), Happy Village.

Quoting statistics, he says around 60 per cent or 85.76 lakh hectares of the total cultivable land in Maharashtra had been hit that year, affecting adversely some 82.27 lakh farmers. The State government urged NGOs and corporates to work together to tackle the scarce water resources and give a solution to villagers and farmers. Women were particularly hit as they had to trudge

long distances to fetch water in pots for drinking, cooking and other use.

The genesis

Interestingly enough, the seed for this project was laid not during arid conditions but on a fine cloudy day, with greenery all around. Patel recalls that along with some Rotarians they had gone to visit a historic place called Nane Ghat. “Near a culvert we saw a man resting, using a stone as his pillow. As we were admiring the sky on a cloudy day, he said: ‘Isn’t the whole area very beautiful and green and filled with water? But if you come on an arid day you won’t even get a glass of water to drink, as all the rainwater would have disappeared.’”

As they spoke a huge herd of cows passed by and the elderly man, who happened to be a farmer, said: “Forget us human beings, there won’t be any water available for Laxmi too.” The ‘Laxmi’, the Rotarians found out, was a reference to the cow; in that region the cow is hugely respected and called ‘Laxmi’.

So when the opportunity came to do a large project in the area, his

club, RC Pune Far East, RID 3131, partnered with Tata Technologies to undertake a significant project in one of Rotary's major areas of focus — Water and Sanitation.

After intensive community mapping by both the partners, it was found that many villages receive rainfall during the monsoon season but have no storage capacity to retain that water, resulting in scarcity of drinking water for both humans and cattle, as also for farming. Provision of robust storage facilities such as construction of bunds and deepening of streams to increase water percolation and raise the water table of wells and borewells in the area were the crying need of the day.

The survey found that if a comprehensive water harvesting and conservation project was undertaken, "it could build a one-time water storage of at least 120 million litres, with good percolation multiplying the storage capacity by 1.5 to 5 times. The borewells and wells could also be recharged for a whole year and till the onset of the next monsoon."

Four villages were identified for this project, the total cost of which exceeded \$96,000, collected through a contribution of ₹22.75 lakh from Tata Technologies, RC Pune Far East, RC Springdale, RID 6110 (international

partner), and supporting Rotary Clubs of Pune University and Pune Central. These are Nagnathwadi (Satara district), Pimpalgaon Lingi (Osmanabad district), Ghatghar and Tambe, both in Pune district. Four huge rainwater harvesting pits were created in these villages by excavating soil. Thanks to its cascading effect, six other neighbouring villages — also benefitted from this water conservation project with an increase in the water table. About 13,000 people in the four villages were direct beneficiaries, with additional benefit to dwellers of six other villagers.

Project begins

The first part of the project began at the Pimpalgaon Lingi village in Osmanabad district, where a 2km-long *nullah* was deepened through desilting. Later two more *nullahs* were desilted. New bunds were created and existing ones repaired to prevent water runoff.

In Nagnathwadi village, 13 bunds were constructed on an existing water stream coming from the mountains to block the draining away of water and facilitate better percolation.

In Ghatghar village, a storage dam, that was almost defunct, was

One of the major reasons for the success of this programme was the involvement of the local community — both the villagers and the farmers — right from the beginning.

Pankaj Patel
past president, RC Pune Far East



deepened by excavating the accumulated soil. This allowed water storage and percolation upward of 131 million litres. In Tambe village, where RC Pune Far East runs an excellent school, with e-Learning facilities, 11 bunds were constructed on the existing water stream to block water runoff and facilitate better percolation.

“What was most satisfying to us was that 1,120 farmers were major beneficiaries; thanks to this project which created or rejuvenated so many waterbodies, these farmers now have new farming opportunities which will enhance their income.”

Training of farmers

With help from the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, the Rotarians also conducted training of 200 farmers in modern agricultural techniques and farm-based self-employment opportunities, and more important, soil and water conservation techniques.

As the project was on for nearly 18 months “we Rotarians would regularly go to the field as the excavators and other equipment were pressed into service to broaden and deepen existing but now-defunct waterways. This project materialised thanks to a major contribution from Tata Technologies,

and Anubhav Kapoor, who was then heading global corporate sustainability at the company and who is now a Trustee at the Cummins India Foundation. Our international partner Rotary Club of Springdale, USA, also took active interest in monitoring this project,” Patel said, adding that his club member Raj Kumar Magar was appointed to lead and monitor this project.

500 hectares benefit

One outcome of the project is that about 500 hectares of agricultural land in these villages has benefited by the harvesting of rainwater;

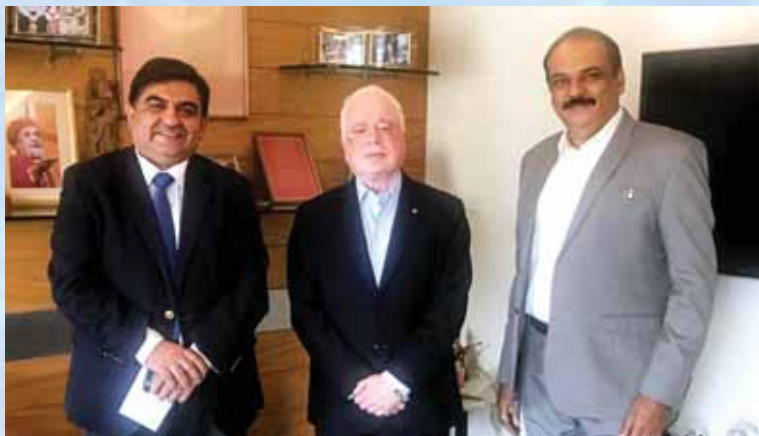
Rotarians from RC Pune Far East with farmers and local people at a waterbody Rotary rejuvenated in partnership with Tata Technologies.



A Rotary-Tata partnership

Anubhav Kapoor, former head of global corporate sustainability at Tata Technologies, recalls the April of 2018, when he and Pankaj Patel met the incoming RI President Barry Rassin in Mumbai. Both of them had worked together in literacy and wanted to do a large project. Rassin invited him to the Toronto Convention, which he attended to speak on CSR. “He suggested I explore Rotary’s Global Grants Programme.”

Meanwhile, in Delhi he met the then TRF Trustee Sushil Gupta; “a significant meeting that shaped up Tata Technologies’ CSR programme. I had one of the best Kavha teas in his office and his passion and knowledge on water management and watershed projects in India had me thinking for many weeks thereafter. He convinced me that water is an extremely important issue in India,



From L: Anubhav Kapoor, former head of global corporate sustainability, Tata Technologies, PRID Sushil Gupta and Pankaj Patel, past president, RC Pune Far East.

and necessary for the sustainability of the nation and its millions,” says Kapoor.

In July 2018, Tata Technologies signed an MOU with TRF for ₹1 crore to support four global grants in education and literacy at the TRF office in Delhi.

He adds that the Toronto Convention left him “overwhelmed”

about the size and scale of the work Rotarians were doing “everyday to make our world a better place”. Further discussions with Sushil Gupta shaped the Water Management Programme of Tata Technologies and the water harvesting project done by the Pune clubs in four villages of Maharashtra.



the groundwater level has gone up recharging borewells in the region. “We are happy to find that now villagers have water available for drinking and daily domestic chores, and no longer have to depend on tankers to bring in the water,” he added.

The women, specially, are very happy, as the most arduous part of their daily labour — walking for miles to fetch water — is now behind them.

Another positive outcome of this project was that the nutrient-rich soil excavated from the dry waterbodies was distributed among the farmers to enriching the soil in some of their barren fields.



“We are now optimistic that with sufficient water available for their crops, the farmers will have increased income and will no longer have to migrate to urban areas for their livelihood. Water availability will also help in growing multiple crops and improve the quality of life of our farmers in the coming years,” Patel added.

To make the project sustainable, the accent was always on training for better income generation opportunities. A comprehensive training programme conducted for the villagers, again with the help of Krishi Vigyan Kendra, focused on self-employment. The course material covered topics such as nursery management, post-harvest technology, vermiculture, setting up a hi-tech polyhouse to get better farming results and crop patterns. Training was also given for entrepreneurship-based programmes such as beekeeping, poultry and goat farming. This was done at the Krishi Vigyan

Kendra campus and on the farmer’s fields by specialised scientists from the Kendra.

“One of the major reasons for the success of this programme was the involvement of the local community — both the villagers and the farmers — right from the beginning. As water is

their lifeline, they took keen interest in this project, provided land for the water pits, put in labour and were keen to ensure that this becomes a sustainable project for a long term.”

The villagers have been given the onus of maintaining the waterbodies, desilting them regularly so that they get a sustainable supply of water and the monsoon rainfall does not just drain away for lack of storage capacity, he added.

The best reward these Rotarians got was when the local MP, Dr Amul Kolhe, soon after the completion of the project, requested the Rotarians to accompany him to one of the villages where rainwater harvesting had been done and which came under his constituency. After examining the waterbodies brimming with water, he said: “This is fantastic work; you Rotarians have managed to do what the government could not do in 17 years.”

Sushil Gupta convinced me that water was an extremely important issue in India, and necessary for the sustainability of the nation and its millions.

Anubhav Kapoor
former head of global corporate sustainability, Tata Technologies

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

We'll emerge stronger from this pandemic



There is a world of difference between a problem and a challenge. If a honeybee faces a giant hornet alone, the bee has a problem. But if the honeybee faces the hornet with a swarm of other bees, then it is the hornet that has a problem.

This is true in nature, but it is also the human predicament. So when the situation I confront is greater than the resources I have, then it can be termed as a problem. However, if the resources I have are greater than the situation I am faced with, then it is just a challenge. Sometimes we overestimate our problems and underestimate our ability to overcome them.

The Covid-19 pandemic seemed like a situation that might overwhelm The Rotary Foundation. But as things have progressed, we have not allowed it to do so. As of June 4, we have funded 208 disaster response grants for \$5.2 million and 169 new global grants at \$13.8 million — all in three months. We have leveraged individual Rotarians' generosity with Foundation funds and in many cases other corporate funds to make projects larger and more impactful.

We never allowed the pandemic to overpower us. Indeed, history shows that Rotarians are a curious breed. We are visionaries, an idealistic lot that dreams big dreams of a better world. At the same time, we are resilient and able to withstand challenges that others might succumb to.

We were not idle during the pandemic lockdowns. We raised funds and did projects just as we would have if there had been no lockdown. We remembered that it's the same business that we always do — reaching out to people in distress — except the methodology by which we did it changed.

Our process of preparing and delivering the projects changed. The way we communicated what we did changed.

The Rotary Foundation is more than 100 years old and has already weathered many storms — some of them mild and others devastating to the world. Thanks to the strength, sacrifice, and compassion of Rotarians and the level to which they have extended themselves, I believe the Foundation will continue to face the future with renewed hope and inspiration.

Our Foundation will emerge from this pandemic much stronger and more resilient as long as you continue to have trust and faith in it.

KR Ravindran

Foundation Trustee Chair

Let's shore up our Annual Fund



The Rotary year gone by has been like no other that we have seen in our lifetime.

The world is facing the Covid pandemic, many precious lives have been lost and till an effective vaccine is developed, we must all be careful, follow guidelines and stay safe.

Notwithstanding the troubled times, the new district leadership has motivated their respective club presidents and Rotarians to contribute generously to our Rotary Foundation.

In 2019–20, districts in the four Zones contributed in excess of \$22 million, with India contributing just over \$20 million, retaining the No 2 position in the world. Equally important, seven of our districts are among the top 50 districts in TRF contribution. This is truly commendable and worthy of high praise.

This Rotary year will be equally challenging. But, in the words of Seneca the Younger, "Man is affected not by events but by the view he takes of them." Challenges strengthen the mind as labour does the body! We in Rotary have learned to adapt to the 'new normal' brought on by an unseen entity, this deadly virus.

I trust that you are aware of the changes brought about by the pressure on our World Fund. And while I am generally pleased with our total contributions in 2019–20, I am disappointed with our contribution to Annual Fund (AF), and hope this year we will shore up the AF. Only then will the World Fund increase and so will DDF.

That's why TRF seeks giving from every Rotarian; every rupee counts and no contribution is too small. One of my favourite quotes: "If you think you are too small to be effective, you have never been in bed with a mosquito."

In our zones, we habitually make contributions towards the end of the Rotary year. This puts immense pressure on the RISAO staff. Let's begin contributions to TRF from now itself.

Rotary opens opportunities for all those who reach out for our helping hand. But TRF can only help them all with your generous contributions. Stay safe, stay well.

Gulam A Vahanvaty

Trustee, The Rotary Foundation

District Wise TRF Contributions as on June 2020 (unaudited)

(in US Dollars)

District Number	APF	PolioPlus	Other Restricted	Endowment Fund	Total Contributions	EREY Donors (in numbers)	EREY %
India							
2981	152,977	17,179	0	105,194	275,350	593	13.1
2982	155,545	48,840	230,824	110,730	545,939	553	18.3
3000	162,225	3,008	240,993	44,089	450,315	266	5.2
3011	234,763	4,975	471,407	6,667	717,812	551	15.5
3012	294,209	51,500	549,585	140,002	1,035,296	1129	30.4
3020	90,770	67,271	2,250	12,129	172,420	175	4.6
3030	48,026	18,862	104,405	2,828	174,120	85	1.8
3040	44,331	3,274	44,506	0	92,111	175	8.6
3053	128,215	6,031	169,544	0	303,789	216	7.5
3054	25,405	3,811	225,047	0	254,264	74	1.3
3060	287,416	112,352	460,629	76,161	936,558	1852	45.8
3070	45,547	1,904	28,430	0	75,881	214	6.9
3080	182,155	31,540	19,639	1,013	234,348	534	15.6
3090	42,111	703	736	2,000	45,549	117	5.9
3100	49,963	100	8,978	0	59,040	119	6.3
3110	41,706	1,810	1,145	0	44,661	65	1.7
3120	69,083	1,317	140,199	0	210,599	153	4.6
3131	302,873	12,495	1,293,289	43,250	1,651,907	1468	28.0
3132	35,829	969	45,378	30,000	112,177	212	5.7
3141	856,811	25,775	2,862,955	245,425	3,990,967	2010	36.6
3142	327,646	9,971	127,826	80,513	545,956	1171	36.2
3150	112,582	8,205	76,291	204,668	401,745	705	19.8
3160	34,675	3,715	0	19,422	57,812	136	5.1
3170	340,464	24,118	336,107	13,087	713,776	1192	21.3
3181	346,515	17,874	70,509	0	434,898	856	24.0
3182	93,713	7,629	26,593	0	127,935	370	11.8
3190	677,919	57,941	456,376	1,287	1,193,523	2227	46.7
3201	229,711	39,960	971,751	35,509	1,276,931	928	17.3
3202	239,324	84,325	405,046	26,044	754,739	461	9.3
3211	34,165	1,053	166,869	1,422	203,509	41	0.9
3212	274,585	79,946	14,946	9,482	378,959	207	5.2
3231	7,189	2,082	45,390	0	54,661	79	2.1
3232	281,106	105,416	795,858	19,500	1,201,879	841	16.0
3240	334,466	47,989	38,333	0	420,788	823	27.1
3250	81,091	2,477	73,906	14,000	171,474	332	8.7
3261	43,605	0	76,425	0	120,031	64	2.5
3262	73,036	6,069	5,507	1,000	85,612	164	4.9
3291	151,755	7,427	111,005	16,900	287,087	248	7.0
3220 Sri Lanka	109,064	12,357	150,829	1,000	273,249	270	13.8
3271 Pakistan	9,785	110,692	30,020	0	150,497	16	1.2
3272 Pakistan	46,170	22,694	300	0	69,164	137	8.3
3281 Bangladesh	185,649	11,145	435,793	8,000	640,586	559	9.8
3282 Bangladesh	41,009	15,886	16,477	2,000	75,373	133	2.8
3292 Nepal	273,376	24,143	1,778,537	25,900	2,101,956	881	18.9

Source: RI South Asia Office

Mat Caparas, a reservoir of hope

Rajendra Saboo

*If you have built castles in the air;
Your work need not be lost;
That is where they should be,
Now put foundation under them*

- David Thoreau

The citadel has fallen. An era has gone by. The epitome of Rotary in Asia, particularly in South Asia, has passed away. And yet, it would be wrong to say that he was from South Asia. He was a gift to the entire world through Rotary. This visionary, who is no more with us, is Mateo Armando Tengco Caparas. His passing away at 96 must be considered a celebration of life. No one is immortal but he will be immortal for what he has done and the legacy he has left.

I met Mat, as he was fondly known, in April 1977 when as a district governor I attended my very first Rotary Institute in Manila, Philippines. I hardly knew then that he would become my mentor, guide and philosopher in my Rotary journey.

Mat became RI Director in 1979. RI President Jim Bomar Jr visited Philippines in September, 1979, and administered the first dose in what became Rotary's global fight to eradicate polio. On that occasion, Mat had commented: "Great things always have a small beginning." He and Dr Benny Santos were responsible in getting the polio doses offered by

Rotary International to immunise 5.3 million Filipino children. In the second year of his term, Mat became RI Vice-President under President Rolf Klarich.

Following Mat, I became RI Director in 1981–83. The configuration then was such that South Asia, including India, comprised Zone 2; the rest of Asia, except Japan, formed Zone 4, which included two major Rotary countries, Korea and Philippines. A single seat for an RI Director alternated between Zones 2 and 4. Thus the seat on the RI Board vacated by Mat came to me. I recall that at the changeover ceremony at his last Board meet, Mat got up from his chair and ushered me to his, making very flattering remarks about me.

From that moment, not because of his remarks but his remarkable courtesy, I grew closer to him and took him as my mentor. He was much senior to me having been district governor in 1964–65; I was DG in 1976–77. He had higher



PRIP Mat Caparas with PRIP Rajendra Saboo.

educational qualifications and a much larger international exposure. Hence, I regularly sought his guidance on Board matters, difficulties and problems as also protocol. Mat's wife Nita treated my wife Usha like her sister. Both Mat and Nita guided and smoothened our passage of two years when I was director.

In 1984, I was on the Nominating Committee to choose the RI President-nominee to serve as president in 1986–87. It was the turn of a non-American. One candidate was a very senior and capable Rotarian from South Africa, Gordon Valentine. Among other candidates was Mat Caparas. Very strong advocating for Gordon was done by my guru Hugh Archer. I opposed him on the ground that a president from South Africa, a country having apartheid, would split Rotary and proposed the name of the equally capable Mat Caparas. Ultimately, Mat was chosen as RI President.

Mat was very concerned that Rotary had not penetrated into rural and neighbourhood areas and was confined to urban and affluent places. Hence it was not fully using its potential to spread community services. He saw in his own rural areas women carrying water buckets up the hills to their homes. He felt that if through community service and with self-help supported by Rotary the villagers could construct a water well, these women would be spared this laborious task. Such thoughts prompted him to initiate the new programme — Rotary Village Corps (RVC) from July 1, 1986. He asked me to be the Chairman of the Committee to promote this programme, and we started promoting Rotary activities through RVC



(From L) PRIP Mat Caparas, his wife Nita, Usha and PRIP Rajendra Saboo.

members, and Mat became known as its father. Subsequently, the name was changed to Rotary Community Corps. Speaking at the Munich RI Convention in 1987, I said that Rotary's efforts to tap human resources in neighbourhoods and villages around the world for self-help and development were at the very heart of the RVC concept. It was received by the audience with applause, which pleased President Caparas.

Another example of Mat's vision was seen when RI purchased the One Rotary Center on Sherman Avenue as the new premises of Rotary Headquarters, which shifted from 1560, Ridge Avenue, Evanston. It did bring financial strain on RI for 2–3 years and thereafter was considered as a sound investment. Now in hindsight, it has proved to be a blessing.

During 1986 when Mat was president, a significant development came up when the US Supreme Court decided that the women members of the Rotary Club of Duarte, California, were rightful members of Rotary. This judgment opened the door for women's entry into Rotary in US, and a long debate

on admission of women into our organisation was almost settled. This led to the Council on Legislation in 1989 in Singapore changing the RI Constitution, removing gender bias and allowing women's admission in Rotary clubs all over the world.

Back to my journey with Mat, when time came for nomination of the RI President in 1989, he indicated that I should wait for two years. This was good enough for me. However, another very good Filipino friend, an angel in Rotary, Dr Benny Santos, insisted that it was my time and I had to put in my name. My reply was, "I would not do anything without Mat's approval." Benny was then visiting Calcutta and I too was there. Benny talked on an international call for almost 45 minutes and convinced Mat that Raja ought to go this year. Mat talked to me and gave his wholehearted approval. The rest is history.

My good fortune, as RI President, was to have Mat as the TRF Chair. I could not have asked for a better combination. Mat loved

India, which he visited both as RI director and president, as well as later. He came to Chandigarh and inaugurated permanent homes for leprosy patients — a combined project of RCs Chandigarh and Chandigarh Midtown — who had stopped begging, tested negative, were gainfully employed and fully rehabilitated. These were the kind of projects that Mat and Nita loved and that's why he came to India during his presidency. Mat was an ardent votary of polio eradication and as an outstanding speaker he promoted polio. No wonder Mat and Nita were aides to President Carlos Consecro and Maria Aurora. President Carlos was instrumental in taking the PolioPlus programme forward in the Rotary world. Mat too was totally committed and involved.

Mat was appointed in 1988 by the then Philippines President Corazon Aquino as Chairman of the Presidential Commission on Good Governance, as its fourth chair and was tasked to retrieve the Marcos administration's ill-gotten wealth and return it to the national treasury.

Usha and I visited Nita and Mat at their Mountain View home in California many times. Their affection always attracted us. Nita's health started failing and a time came when she could not entertain guests at home. Mat was a regular at International Assemblies and attended conventions once in a while. He would bring Nita's photos and news about her, and connect such events to Nita through a technical video system. That was their mutual love and love for Rotary.

The couple suffered tragedies in life when their young son and young daughter passed away. And yet they

believed in destiny and their faith carried them in their life journey. When Nita died, Mat accepted the resulting loneliness with fortitude. He continued to love Rotary and his family — two sons, Jorge and his wife Charissa, Mateo and his wife Chona, and one daughter, Pilar de Villa and her husband Jovy, and grand and great grandchildren.

He was an impassioned positive thinker. This probably was the

A Christmas letter

*Edited excerpts from a letter written by
PRIP Mat Caparas to PRIP Saboo*

A very confused season is upon us again to remember people, greet and gift friends, and assume a happy appearance that one may not necessarily feel. It is Christmas time, many use the day to brag about their children or grandchildren, or other good things that might have happened to them during the year. I have never had anything to brag about in the past, nor the ability to design and make pretty cards to say so, but with God's grace I have continued to live and remain lucid, and that has been the usual content of my Christmas letters, including this one that I write in extremely different circumstance. I write it alone without my wife, so I write this with many pauses, which I hope will not affect its trend. The seven past presidents who lost their wives and have remarried will understand.

Let me answer your charge that I tried to stop you from putting your name for president when you did. That is true, but not because you

were not yet ready for the office. You could be a good president after your term with the board expired. (When it happened) all of India was jubilant on your election. India began to make great strides since then in Rotary, thanks to your leadership, and the great inspiration and support of our dear Usha.

I have just given you a demonstration of how I am spending my life these days. "Passing time" is the usual way of saying it. But time is life, and I can still spend it in service to others through Rotary. That is why I stick to Rotary despite my unhappiness with many things our leaders do. Most of my friends are Rotarians, and now that I can move very little, I am inspired by my friend who continues to serve beyond the grave. I will be so happy if everyone with whom I share this letter will join me in ways to serve beyond the grave. Then maybe they will generously support the major projects of the Foundation that friends are establishing in my name on December 28.

genesis of the powerful theme he gave to the world, *Rotary Brings Hope*. He believed that, "Hope is a waking dream". His dreams were to build castles in the air and he put a foundation to them.

The divinity in Mat propelled him in the journey beyond the mortal world and now he has reached the stars.

*The writer is a
past RI President*

PRIP Mat Caparas' high praise for Rotary in India & Rotary News

Excerpts from a letter written by Past President Mat Caparas to a few senior Rotary leaders in India on Oct 4, 2018.

First, congratulations to Sushil (Gupta), whose nomination is now official. I need not tell you how pleased I am to have a governor of my year called to the presidency. I am even more pleased that your current activity is actual service to people near at hand who need it, and show visually the benefit it brings. I hope such all-embracing service will get much impetus and success in your year as Rotarians strive for world peace through friendly service to others.

I also want to join in the expression of great thanks and admiration for the couple Ravi Shankar and Paola Dakoju for their magnificent gift of \$14.7 million to our Foundation. Some may wonder who persuaded them to give away such a big amount.

What surely influenced the couple's decision was what they saw Rotary and Rotarians do — acts of kindness with heartwarming results that they found fully deserving of what help they could give. Their generosity was won by the admirable state of Rotary in the country to which its premier leaders — you guys — have brought it. Congratulations!

But I suggest proper recognition be given also to *Rotary News*, which gave Rotary work the transparency and honesty that our marvellous donors appreciated. The magazine has continually improved in these last three years with the new Editor, who deserves much praise. As an organ of our organisation, *Rotary News* may have already become better than our official magazine, *The Rotarian*.

Mat Caparas
Past RI President (1986–87)
Philippines

In the RI Presidential changeover ceremony on June 30, 2015, at the Rotary headquarters in Evanston, officiated by PRIP Mat Caparas (centre), K R Ravindran (L) takes charge from Gary Huang.



Sprightly, humorous, ever smiling **Mat Caparas**

Kalyan Banerjee



It is difficult to believe that someone whom you have known, admired, respected and loved through your long Rotary life, will be there no more for you to listen to, even though he may have lived more than half way across the world in California. Difficult, because whenever you thought of Mat Caparas, you visualised a sprightly, humorous, smiling man, whose words always dripped with simple but uncommon wisdom.

But frankly, I am not really the best person to write about Mat Caparas. It was our PRIP Raja Saboo who had been his closest colleague and friend and a co-director on the RI Board. But I have always admired Mat, as a leader ahead of his times, with his vision and his depth of thought.

He was born Mateo Armando Tenao — in short, MAT — Caparas in December 1923, in Cuyapo in the Philippines, had his schooling in Bulacan, and graduated in 1950. As a practising lawyer, like his father, he transferred his practice to Manila in

1980, after he had served as a district governor in District 980. Manila was, of course, Asia's first Rotary Club, chartered in 1919, and there, he rose rapidly in Rotary, first to the post of RI Director and then, RI President in 1986–87, the only Filipino ever to be in that exalted position. But even as he served Rotary, he continued to serve his country too, as Chair of President Cory Aquino's Committee on Commitment of Good Governance.

Mat was a person who would never hesitate to think afresh. At our Udaipur Rotary Institute in 1984, he heard several speakers like late Justice B P Beri, late PDG B B Bhargava, PDG Madhav Chaudhuri and others, speak of the need to take Rotary to the villages, and carry there the concepts of self-help and service. Those speakers helped Mat, present at that Institute as RI Director, to conceptualise the Rotary Village Corps (RVC). An RI Committee was then set up to explore the possibilities, and on their recommendation, the RI Board accepted the plan and the Rotary Village Corps was born. Still later, it was further



developed to include big metropolitan cities too, as the Rotary Community Corps (RCC), which still serves communities across the world.

As RI President, Mat had a very simple theme for the year — *Rotary Brings Hope* — simple, yes, but one of the most meaningful and lasting of Rotary themes ever.

Apart from starting RVCs, it was in his year as president that RI admitted its first woman member, after a CoL decision to do so in 1985 in Singapore. And again, it was Mat who kicked off Rotary's campaign against polio in the Philippines and initiated Rotary's first efforts to control the spread of polio by our plan to raise \$120 million in 1986. The idea was to raise the amount from our members

worldwide; they were asked to contribute for the first time ever to a common, international cause. I remember doing my bit to raise the funds in India under the guidance of late PRID Manchanda, late PRID Sudarshan Agarwal, PRID Sushil Gupta and Lalit Mehra. Of course, it's well-known that Rotary ended up finally collecting more than \$240 million for the cause. But that's another story.

After Mat and his wife Nita settled in California, Mat would still be seen at all Rotary conventions and at International Assemblies at San Diego, conferring with the other Past RI Presidents, and I was always amazed at the sharp and simple insights he would bring in at these discussions. And at home in California, he was always a

Mat Caparas' words always
dripped with simple but
uncommon wisdom.

gracious host to his numerous admirers, among them, many visiting Indians too. And at the conventions, you would find him chatting amicably, surrounded by his fans at the House of Friendship.

Mat passed away at his home in San Francisco on July 15 at the age of 96, leaving desolate his family and thousands of his friends across the world.

Let me end this piece as an ardent admirer of Mat with a story to highlight his self-deprecating sense of humour. At the Madras Rotary Institute in 1989, convened by late Director Sudarshan Agarwal, President Mat was an invitee and he made a wonderful, moving speech, sharing many thoughts on Rotary and his life and wound it up with the following story.

Once a club in the Philippines had invited a speaker who went on and on and on, boring every one to death. Suddenly, a man wielding a long and sharp knife, jumped on to the stage and moved towards the lectern. The alarmed speaker said: 'Sir, Sir, please don't do anything violent. I'm done. I'm finished.' The intruder told him: 'No, No. Go on please, as long as you want. I am here looking for the man who invited you to speak today!'

And then as the audience applauded, Mat added: before you go looking for Director Sudarshan, let me stop here.

May he rest in peace, forever.

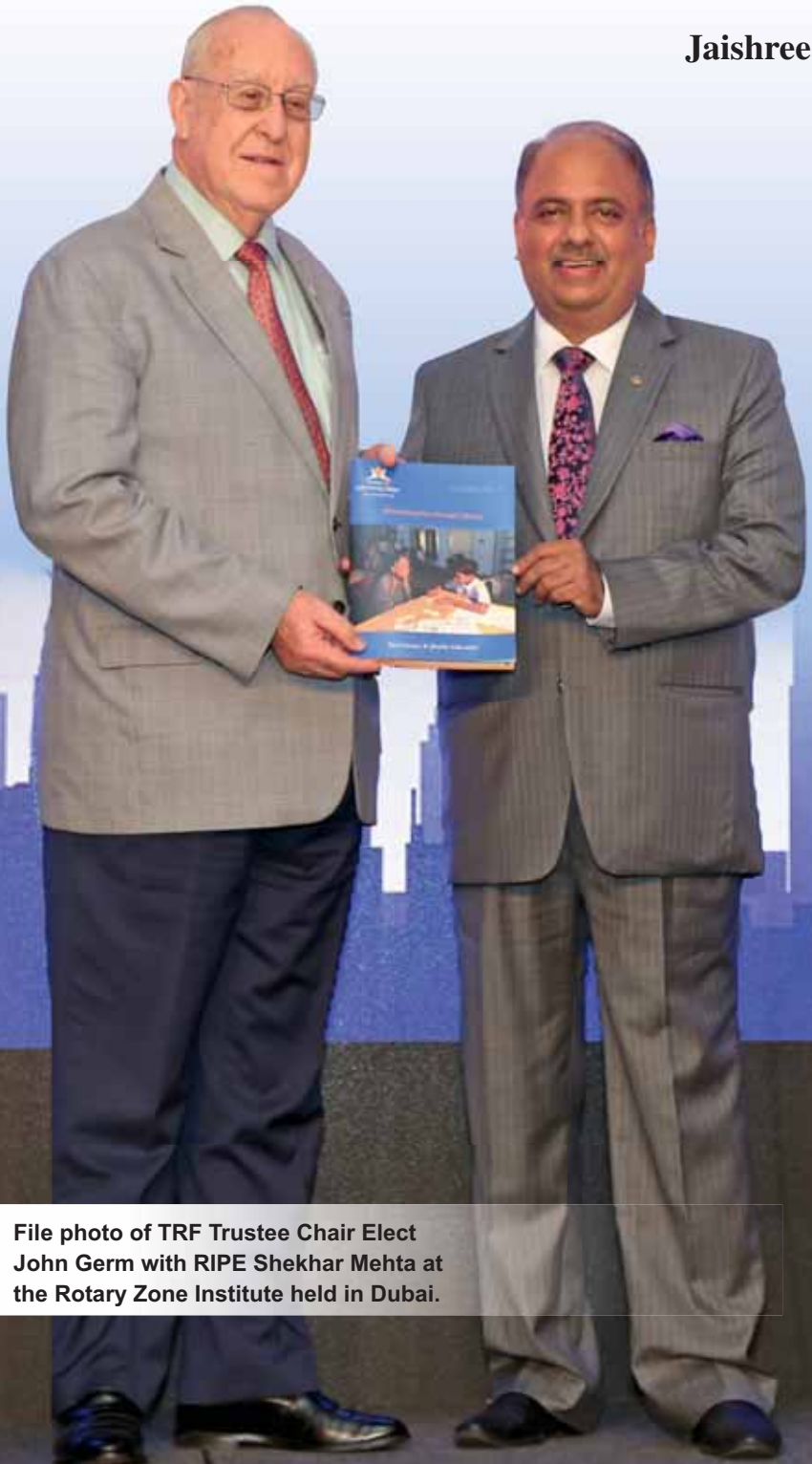
The writer is a past RI President

PRIP Mat Caparas and his wife Nita met with Pope John Paul II in late '70s, the first time the Pope publicly received Rotarians at the Vatican.



Coffee with RI and TRF leaders

Jaishree



File photo of TRF Trustee Chair Elect John Germ with RIPE Shekhar Mehta at the Rotary Zone Institute held in Dubai.

Rashi and I look forward to having two great years at Rotary International; together let's accomplish more," said RIPE Shekhar Mehta addressing about 800 district and club leaders at a breakout session, moderated by PRID Bryn Styles, at the Rotary virtual convention.

Mehta, elaborating on his plans for his presidential year 2021–22, said that his priority is to increase membership. "For 20 years we have been saying our membership is 1.2 million, it is time we move to 1.3 million," he said, and urged every Rotarian to introduce at least one of his acquaintances to Rotary. He suggested the DGEs form committees for growth and retention.

He shared his thoughts on growing membership based on a region's density and population. "In my city Kolkata there are 12 million people but only 2,000 are Rotarians. That is, for every 10,000 people we have just one Rotarian, which is 0.01 per cent. We must have at least 2–3 Rotarians per 10,000. Getting new members is as important as contributing to TRF," he said, adding that new members means more funds for the Foundation.

Retaining members is equally important for Rotary to grow. He suggested that the DGEs coordinate with the AGs. Retention will happen only if clubs are strong. The role of the AGs is significant to build the clubs' strength and make them interesting and worthwhile for members.

He appreciated a thought on encouraging the concept of ‘Rotary for life’ for Rotaractors. “They should have a smooth transition as Rotarians. We must cash in on their passion for Rotary. The *#Elevate Rotaract* has upgraded Rotaract as actual members of Rotary rather than a programme of Rotary. They are not the ‘feet on the ground’ or ‘hands to do your job’. Treat them at par. Involve them in your service and even global grant projects.”

Mehta said he plans to invite 60 Rotaractors to the International Assembly during his presidential year.

There will be six Presidential Conferences during his year — five in various countries and the last one at the RI Convention to be held at Houston — and several Rotary Days. Rotary Days are opportunities to showcase Rotary’s work to the public. “So invite non-Rotarians and show them what we do. Celebrate our projects; conduct project fairs to showcase our People of Action. Besides propagating our work, it is a perfect way to attract members,” he said.

Mehta recommended inviting corporates and international partners to visit project sites while executing GG projects. “Let them see what their contribution is doing for the community.” They are the best PR agents when they go back to their clubs and tell people how their funds have helped people in another country. “When you do a GG to facilitate paediatric heart surgeries,

invite your partners to see how their money has helped in saving little lives. When you construct a toilet for a community, show them how it has helped in ushering in better hygiene and sanitation there; or when water gushes out from a tap in a remote village in Africa, let them see the joy on the faces of the locals to understand the magic of Rotary.”

He urged the district and club leaders to dream big and do bigger projects. “We must take the level of our service to be worthy of a 115-year-old organisation.”

To a question on how should Rotary deal with the political issues ravaging the world, Mehta quoted Rotary founder Paul Harris who has said, ‘Tolerance is the cornerstone of Rotary.’ “Let us remember our core values — diversity and inclusiveness. The RI Board is taking steps to address those issues. We work for peace and we have to acknowledge other people’s thought process,” said Mehta.

TRF, the heart of Rotary

TRF Trustee Chair-elect PRIP John Germ shared his thoughts about the Foundation with the district and club leaders.

“TRF is the heart of Rotary and our focus is to make the world a better place for everyone. The solution to the challenge is very simple: Every Rotarian Every Year — EREY. I urge every Rotarian to contribute whatever you can every year to make your Foundation robust and well-equipped to heal the world,” he said.

Speaking about how the Foundation rose to meet the challenges of the Covid pandemic, Germ complimented the Foundation staff for acting fast to assist Rotarians to carry out relief activities. “We combined emotional response with pragmatic action,” he said, adding that TRF gave \$5.1 million in approving 207 disaster grants and 216 GGs, valued at about \$14.2

When water gushes out from a tap
in a remote village in Africa, let
your partners see the joy on the
faces of the locals to understand
the magic of Rotary.

Shekhar Mehta
RI President Elect

million. “That is a total of \$20 million for Covid relief work.” Funds were made possible through DDF transfers and General Fund and “several Rotarians diverted their convention refunds to the Covid Disaster Fund.”

He urged the audience to find ways to get corporates to work with Rotary. “Let us work together to improve our membership. Without increasing our membership we cannot grow TRF except through Endowed Gifts,” he said.

The Foundation is all about increasing Rotary’s impact. “Think about our work in polio where we started with \$760 million for 3-H grants to immunise six million children in Philippines, and the number of peace scholars passing out of the various peace centres across the world. Think about what we can accomplish when we reach our goal of \$2.025 billion by 2025.”

To a question whether it is right for clubs to have their own foundations, Germ said it is fine as long as they contribute significantly to TRF.

Polio will be the topmost priority for TRF, he said. “We will be asking every club to contribute \$1,500 for the polio campaign and each district to budget 20 per cent of their DDF for the Polio Fund. If DDF is matched \$1 for \$1, then with Gates Foundation’s match of 2:1, you can see how that builds up.” ■

I urge every Rotarian to contribute
whatever you can every year to
make your Foundation robust and
well-equipped to heal the world.

John Germ
TRF Trustee Chair Elect

Raise your voice against racism: Knaack

Jaishree

We have no tolerance for racism. Promoting respect, celebrating diversity, demanding ethical leadership, and working tirelessly to advance peace are the central tenets of our work. Educate Rotary clubs to have a fair balance in membership. Look out for minority groups who are not represented. Remember, Rotarians are not speechless and we must raise our voice against racism of any kind," said RI President Holger Knaack to a question on how Rotary would tackle systemic racism.

He, along with TRF Trustee Chair K R Ravindran, shared their priorities and plans with the current year district governors and club presidents in a breakout session moderated by RID Stephanie Urchick at the Rotary virtual convention.

Greeting the incoming leaders Knaack said, "Each of our roles carry a lot of responsibility and none of us can achieve success without working together as a team. We are all volunteers and leading volunteers is a challenge." He urged the club presidents to involve Rotaractors in their

programmes and suggested to the district governors to appoint them in district committees. The key component of every plan must be to grow Rotary. "We need more representation of women, minorities and young professionals. Look for people with real business ethics. But select your members carefully and only those who are the right fit to your club. You are choosing friends for life," he said.

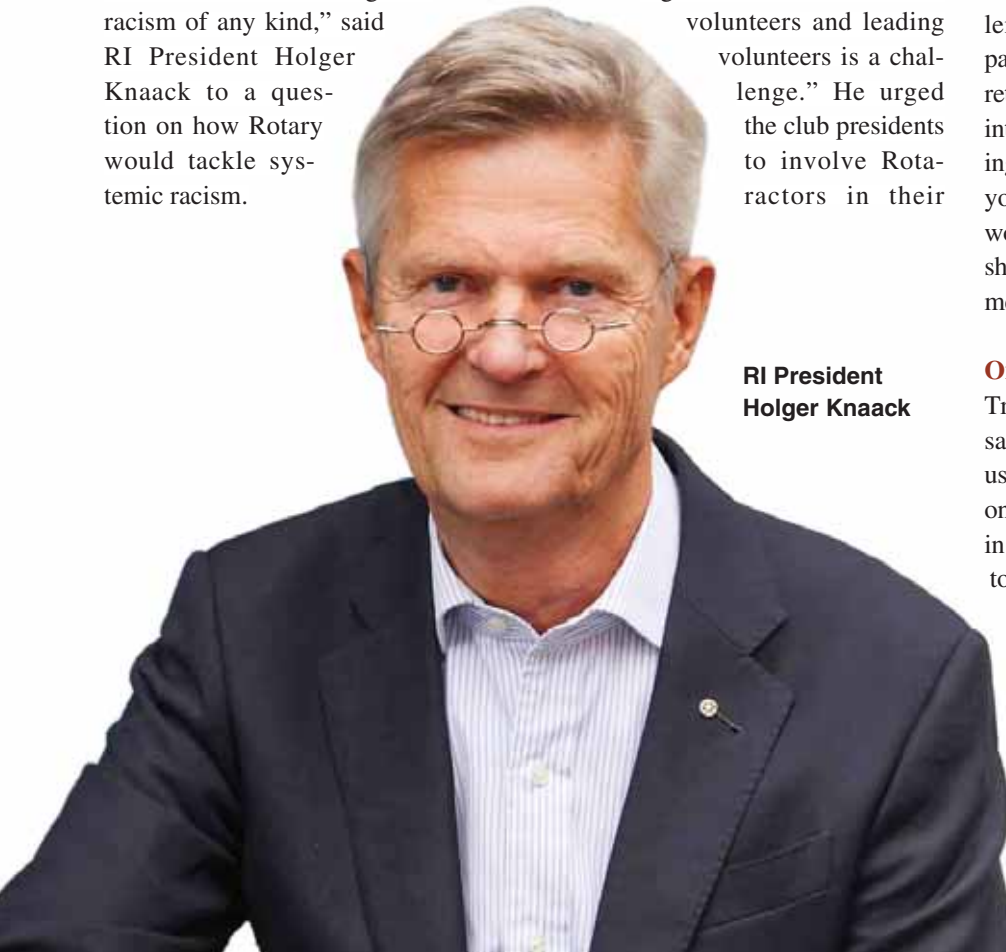
Replying to a question on the challenges ahead for Rotary during the pandemic, Knaack stressed the need to retain existing members and keep their interest alive. "We are in danger of losing relevance if we are not attractive for young professionals, Rotaractors and women. Even during this pandemic, we should not see any significant drop in membership," he said.

**RI President
Holger Knaack**

On the TRF front

Trustee Chair Ravindran, in his address said, "It is not going to be business as usual. We are bound to face challenges on two fronts for the Foundation. First, in our ability to raise funds and second, to carry out our projects worldwide.

Because of Covid-19, we have hit the pause button for polio as it has become impossible for our polio workers to do house-to-house immunisation. We did this knowing fully well it might lead to an increase in polio cases. But



if we continued it would expose our volunteers to coronavirus.”

Polio surveillance will continue while also supporting Covid surveillance, he said. The polio infrastructure that Rotary has helped build is being used to prevent Covid by supporting preparedness and response activities in many countries just like how Rotary responded to outbreaks of Ebola, yellow fever and avian flu in the past.

Moving on he said, “We can definitely expand our reach. We are masters of distribution of vaccines. Very soon, there will be a vaccine for Covid. I think we are perfectly well-placed for the UN and WHO to take advantage of our expertise and use Rotary’s network to get these vaccines out especially to the African and South Asian countries.”

Commenting on the Trustees’ decision to stop matching cash for grants, Ravindran explained, “The global grant (GG) programme, the flagship programme of our Foundation, has been an enormous success. In 2013–14, when GGs were introduced, TRF had awarded 868 of them worth \$47.3 million. By 2018–19, this number had risen to 1,403 grants worth \$86.6 million.” But while this demand shot up by 80 per cent, the corresponding Annual Fund contributions showed only a 7 per cent increase.

Each of our roles carry a lot of responsibility and none of us can achieve success without working together as a team.

Holger Knaack
RI President



TRF Trustee Chair KR Ravindran

This unpredicted growth in the demand for grants has resulted in “a big strain on providing a match. And therein lies our fundamental problem,” he said, adding, “Last year, we fully expended our World Fund budget for global grants by mid-May 2020. We then realised we had become victims of our own success.”

This year, unfortunately, TRF had almost \$12 million less in its World Fund for GGs; 25 per cent less compared to Rotary year 2020. This was not related to Covid; and resulted from the Annual Fund contribution decreasing significantly two years ago. Given this \$12 million shortfall, the Trustees have initiated a new policy that has “eliminated the match, on cash contributions to global grants. Of course we knew it was going to hurt; but we had little choice. The shortfall in cash was going to have repercussions

somewhere, and the question was where,” said Ravindran.

In this situation, the alternatives were reducing the percentage of DDF match on GGs; reducing the DDF match on PolioPlus (which in turn gets doubled by the Gates Foundation; reducing the grants to the peace centres, a favourite in the US; or eliminating the \$2 million grant on large scale projects).

“Having examined, discussed and debated all these options, we decided on the one we pursued, as the consequences on the alternatives appeared even more dismal,” he said.

Big West Rotaract MDIO Director Joey Vaesan urged Rotary club leaders to reach out to Rotaract presidents, invite them over to their club and build a relationship with them. Rotary and Rotaract should work together from the inception of a project, planning and execution, he said. ■



PRIP Barry Rassin (centre) and Elevate Rotaract Task Force Chair David Stovall (fourth from R) - File photo.

Rotaract annual dues **pegged at \$5 & \$8**

Jaishree

B

Beginning 2022, Rotaractors of university-based clubs will have to pay annual dues of \$5 and community-based clubs \$8. The dues have been introduced to cover the cost of additional support for Rotaract clubs, which can participate in global grant projects from July 1, 2022. They can be international or host sponsor of a GG if they have previously partnered with a Rotary club on a similar grant. This was announced by the Elevate Rotaract Task Force Chair David Stovall at a breakout

session of the RI virtual convention. At this session PRIP Barry Rassin, Rotaract Committee Co-chairs Elyse Lin from Taiwan and Ronald S Kawaddwa from Uganda, discussed various changes following the resolution to elevate Rotaract which was passed at the CoL 2019.

Rassin had formally proposed expanding the definition of Rotary membership to include both Rotary and Rotaract at the CoL “to make Rotary more appealing and welcoming to young professionals. We

keep telling Rotarians to find a way to bring in young people, when we have them already, but we seem to forget them,” he said.

The Task Force, comprising both Rotaractors and Rotarians, was created last year by President Mark Maloney to discuss ways to update Rotaract policies and create an inclusive and flexible membership experience. “We included Rotaractors world over in a survey to look into what services Rotary can offer Rotaract. The focus was to give more autonomy and flexibility to Rotaractors and treat them as equal partners,” said Stovall.

With Rotaractors now having Rotary membership, they will now get more support from RI, including access to administrative tools on My Rotary, take advantage of products and services such as new leadership development resources from Toastmasters International, updated online goal-setting tools and an improved online club administration experience.

On the advice of the Task Force, the RI Board in October 2019 approved several changes to Rotaract — the most notable being the removal of Rotaract’s upper age limit. From July 1,

Rotaractors will no longer be required to leave their club when they turn 31.

The Task Force observed that only four per cent of Rotaractors were becoming Rotarians. “That means we have lost most of the Rotaractors who could have stayed with Rotary,” said Kawaddwa. The age limit was an obstacle for Rotaract members who wanted to stay involved with Rotary but either didn’t feel ready for a traditional Rotary club or found Rotary dues expensive. “Once those members leave, it’s very hard to get them back into the Rotary family. With the rules changed, hopefully some recent alumni will rejoin Rotaract,” said Elyse.

There was a concern that Rotaractors will never move on to Rotary and Rotaract will be slowly taken over by older members. “Rotary clubs need to transform themselves to be more relevant to the younger Rotaract members so that they want to join a Rotary club,” said Rassin. To the Rotaractors, he said, “If you can’t find a Rotary club that you want to join, you can form a new one.”

It’s all about individual relationships. Rotarians should frequent their Rotaract clubs and vice versa. “Rotaractors will not have any reason to join

a Rotary club where they don’t know the others. When they do service and fellowship together, they are likely to stay together,” he said.

Elyse highlighted another concern worrying Rotaractors. Many of them feel that their club leadership team will become older when the age limit is removed. However, Rassin pointed out, Rotaract clubs will still be able to set their own age limit, if they wish.

Letting Rotaract members stay in their clubs longer gives them more time to learn about Rotary, Kawaddwa said. “We hope that these changes will produce stronger Rotarians, members who have served longer and gotten more experience and mentorship while in Rotaract.”

Other changes

New Rotaract clubs won’t have to rely on a Rotary club to sponsor them; they can now sponsor themselves or choose another Rotaract club as their sponsor. And Rotaractors are now eligible and encouraged to serve alongside Rotarians on district and RI committees. Recognitions such as the Citation for Meritorious Service and the Distinguished Service Award have now been extended to Rotaractors too.

Goals

RI has set a 100 per cent increase in the number of Rotaractors reported to Rotary by 2022 and 20 per cent increase in the number of Rotaractors joining Rotary clubs. “We have to move from the present rate of four per cent. I’d want all Rotaractors from community-based clubs to stay in Rotary,” said Rassin. Another goal is one million Rotaractors by 2029.

“We set audacious goals. Some thought I was crazy. But I truly believe these goals are achievable. I have an incredible belief in the possibilities of Rotaractors,” said Rassin.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Clockwise from top L: Rtr Elyse Lin, PRIP Rassin, Elevate Task Force Chair Stovall and Rtn Ronald Kawaddwa in a Breakout session during the RI Virtual Convention.

Varanasi Rotarians care for destitute women

Kiran Zehra

His house is 500m from the State Women's Old Age Ashram in Varanasi; in 1991 when he was club secretary Arun Gupta, a general physician by profession, requested his club, RC Varanasi Central, RID 3120, to adopt the old-age home as he felt "the home needed help." Thirty years later, at age 72 the charter member

continues to serve as the in-house doctor at the home "with full support of my club. All the new and old members love this project."

Recalling the "good old days," he says, "We had no idea we'd have to chase away monkeys which visited the ashram for food and troubled the old women." A steel mesh costing ₹40,000 was

constructed around the balcony and corridor of the home. That fixed the monkey problem; "but the building was deteriorating and needed a quick fix." Soon the club sponsored the renovation of the building and constructed a compound wall around the home and set up a mini garden for the women to gather outdoors and get some fresh air. Water stor-

age tanks were installed and toilets and bathrooms were revamped.

Today the home has a washing machine and refrigerator but the women were most happy when an LED TV was installed. "Now they regularly watch *Saas bahu* soaps," says Gupta.

The oldest woman at the ashram Champa Devi died at the age of



Members of RC Varanasi Central distributing warm clothes to the needy. Past President Sanjay Gupta (R) and IPDG Sanjay Agrawal (second from R) are seen in the picture.

102. The club had earlier sponsored her gall bladder and hip-joint replacement surgery. Gupta performs the final rites and conducts prayer ceremony for the persons who die in the ashram. Past President Sanjay Gupta says, “we contribute the money while Gupta puts in hard work. He doesn’t care for pictures and always steps back when there is a photo session.” Arun Gupta says, “I don’t need a photo; I come here every day and have made countless memories.”

Through *Project Annapurna*, the club provides Sunday lunch to the inmates of the home. Every Friday club

members visit the old-age home and ask the inmates for the lunch menu. The meal choices are discussed and approved by Arun Gupta. The food is freshly prepared at Hotel Amaya, owned by Rtn Lalla Ram Maurya. “In 2019 we started this Sunday lunch tradition giving the destitute women a chance to eat what they want. We also get an opportunity to spend time with them,” says Sanjay Gupta.

During the lockdown the club continued to provide dry ration, milk and fruits to the ashram. Last winter the club members distributed 1,000 blankets in villages around Varanasi. ■



A club member interacts with an inmate at the old-age home.

Super Star Kalakar recognises young artistes

Team Rotary News

An online singing and dance competition titled *Super Star Kalakar* was organised as a public image-building programme of RC Bharuch Narmada Nagari, RID 3060, and to recognise and motivate young talent during the pandemic lockdown.

The club arranged two rounds of live-streaming event for audition and final contest, and they were held on Sundays for the programme to get more traction. Celebrities and

Rotary personalities, including IPDG Anish Shah, DG Prashant

Jani and DGN Santosh Pradhan, spoke at the event to motivate the

contestants and also to spread the message of Rotary.

The entire live programme was planned and designed by women Rotarians and spouses of members with support from Event Chairman Sahejada Pathan.

Out of around 160 participants, 95 made it to the grand finale in both singing and dance categories. Club President Shailesh Shah and Event Co-chair Punam Seth provided support to make the show a success. ■



Rotarians on a greening spree

Jaishree

Supporting the environment has been added as Rotary's seventh Area of Focus. A task force under the leadership of PRIP Ian Riseley worked on the policies to handle environmental projects in Rotary's sanctioning of grants. On June 26, the closing day of the RI virtual convention, the decision was announced and within eight hours over 2,000 Rotarians had liked and shared RI's announcement on Facebook. TRF will accept grant application for environment-related projects from July 1, 2021.

Meanwhile, greening initiatives are gaining momentum as Rotarians are planting trees across the country.

Creating a distinct area of focus to support the environment will give Rotary members more ideas to nurture

planet Earth and address ways to increase green cover, rejuvenate water-bodies, conserve energy and water resources, check pollution and shun plastic use, says DG M Ranganath Bhat, RID 3181. The district, with its 82 Rotary clubs, aims to plant five lakh saplings during the year.

RC Coimbatore Cosmopolitan, RID 3201, has struck a twinning





of RID 3053, made the pavements and medians green by planting saplings. “We have also put up tree guards to safeguard plants,” says Club President Rajshree Chowdary.

RID 3060 has announced a target of planting 200,000 saplings in July and the Rotarians are actively pursuing the goal. RC Rajpipla has planted 82,500 saplings and is confident of finishing with 100,000 by the month-end.

Rotary Bangalore Southwest, RID 3190, spread the message of greening endeavour through a 130-km bike rally even as they planted saplings on vacant areas along the way.

“Would you like to breathe fresh /free oxygen, provided by mother nature or paid oxygen from oxygen cylinders? The choice is yours!!” reads an FB post of RC Mumbai Versova, RID 3141, as it announces a mass tree plantation endeavour through seed bombing on Aug 15. The district had planted 20,000 saplings of fruit-bearing trees recently and plans to scatter 250,000 seedballs of native trees across the district. The Rotaractors are attempting an entry into the Guinness Book of World Records by planning to prepare 20,000 seed balls in a day. ■

partnership with RC Fondu-lac Morning, RID 6270, USA. The club members have planted saplings of fruit-bearing trees, naming them after members of the partner club. “We have appointed a horticulturist to nurture the plants. When they yield fruits after two years, we will give them to an orphanage in the locality,” says Project Coordinator Srinivasan Joshi.

In RID 3240, DG Subhasish Chatterjee had called for all the 3,100 Rotarians across 92 clubs to plant at least one sapling each across three days starting July 17. The project — *Shyamalima* — however surpassed the target of 3,240 saplings with 3,638 saplings planted. “Due to the lockdown restrictions, club members planted saplings in their gardens, terraces or balconies,” says Chatterjee.

RC Jodhpur Padmini, an all-women’s club

Rotary Face Mask & Hand Sanitiser



These guidelines are for clubs and their members who are interested in buying, designing, donating, or selling face masks, including Rotary-branded face masks, and buying, producing, donating, and selling hand sanitiser.

During this global pandemic, we need to be sensitive while meeting the needs of the community. Distributing face masks or hand sanitiser to the public that feature large or conspicuous Rotary logos may be seen as capitalising on this health crisis to raise money or promote membership. For that reason, we'd like any face masks or hand sanitiser distributed or sold to the public by clubs to have a discreet design. If the design includes the Masterbrand Signature, Mark of Excellence, or another Rotary logo, the logo must be small and unobtrusive. Face masks designed specifically for club members' personal use may have a larger and more prominent Rotary logo.

There has been a renewed focus on proper hand washing and sanitising practices in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. We know that many clubs have been donating and providing hand sanitiser as part of their community response. We encourage clubs to continue to share information from Rotary's water, sanitation, and hygiene initiatives to help keep people safe.

Rotary Face Masks

Buying or designing face masks

Licensed vendors have begun to sell approved Rotary-branded face masks. Some licensees can also help clubs create their own designs. See a current list of licensed vendors worldwide.

If you want to produce your own face mask design or have a face mask design manufactured or produced by an unlicensed vendor, submit a release request along with a sample design of the face mask.

When creating a custom design, include your club or programme logo. (This is required if these face masks will be sold to the public and for certain donations, see below.) Visit brandcenter.rotary.org to create your club logo. If you decide to include your club or programme logo, remember that it must be small and unobtrusive. Your custom design will be reviewed and, if approved, Rotary will grant authorisation for production.

Questions about buying or designing a Rotary-branded face mask can be sent to rilicensingservices@rotary.org.

Donating face masks to the community

If you are donating face masks to the public, consider using Rotary branding on the packaging instead of on the face mask itself. If the face mask is Rotary-branded, it should have a discreet design. If the design includes a Rotary logo, the logo must be small and unobtrusive.

You can obtain face masks from a licensed vendor or obtain permission to create custom-designed face masks through a release request. If your club wants to donate Rotary-branded face masks to the public, donated face masks must include a club logo or programme logo unless you are donating stock masks purchased from a licensed vendor.

Selling face masks to the community

If your club wants to sell Rotary-branded face masks to the public, it may do so on a limited basis through June, 30 2021. The face masks must be custom-designed to include your club logo or programme logo. We would suggest your club give away the face masks in exchange for a donation to show #RotaryCares. Clubs do not need a license to sell face masks, as long as they use their club logo or programme logo and the design has also been approved by RI through a release request.

All face masks offered for sale should include a disclaimer on the promotional materials such as: “Cloth face coverings are intended for personal use only. They are not intended for medical use and are not a replacement for medical-grade personal protective equipment.”



Insurance and Risk Mitigation

The US Rotary Club and District general liability policy is not intended to address the unique needs of clubs or districts that are selling, manufacturing, designing, or distributing face masks or hand sanitiser. This may also apply to club insurance policies outside the United States. Any club or district that is engaged in the manufacturing or distribution of hand sanitiser or face masks should obtain separate product liability insurance to protect its interests. Additionally, all clubs and districts should:

- Review contracts with vendors to ensure they do not assume

risks or responsibilities beyond their control. For example, the seller of a product should not agree to assume responsibility for claims arising out of the manufacturing or design of a product.

- The indemnity provision in a vendor contract should spread the risk of loss to the parties who are actually responsible for that loss. Contracts with vendors should also include a provision requiring that all parties maintain adequate insurance.
- We recommend you consult an attorney to draft or review any vendor contracts.

Buying or producing hand sanitiser

You may purchase hand sanitiser from licensed vendors. See a current list of licensed vendors worldwide. If you want to produce your own hand sanitiser or engage an unlicensed vendor to produce hand sanitiser with your club or programme logo, you must abide by all applicable local, national, and international regulations and guidance, including labelling guidance and guidance or regulations adopted on a temporary basis during the Covid-19 pandemic. You must submit a release request along with a sample design. Non-branded hand sanitiser is not subject to Rotary International review.

Questions about buying or producing hand sanitiser can be sent to rlicensing@rotary.org.

Donating and selling hand sanitiser to the community

If you want to donate or sell hand sanitiser with Rotary branding, you must include

a discreet club or programme logo, unless your donations were purchased from a licensed vendor.

While we don't encourage selling hand sanitiser, if your club chooses to do so, we would suggest your club provide it in exchange for a donation. Clubs do not need a license to sell hand sanitiser, and may sell on a limited basis through June, 30 2021, as long as they use their club logo or programme logo and the design has also been approved by RI through a release request.

All hand sanitiser, alcohol-based or non-alcohol-based, offered for sale or donation must comply with all applicable local, national, and international regulations and guidance, including labelling guidance. Don't use statements like “effective at eliminating over 99.9 per cent of germs and bacteria” or “kills flu or coronavirus” in conjunction with your distribution or sale.

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RC Bombay and Rotary India host Chhoti si Asha for India's children

Jaishree

Chhoti si Asha, a star-packed fundraiser for the future of disadvantaged children, was launched as a joint initiative by Rotary India, RC Bombay and Wizcraft International Entertainment, and supported by Being Human - The Salman Khan Foundation. The three-hour programme was aired on the *Colors* channel on Jun 28. The event was presented by Salman Khan, who spent long periods of time entertaining the audience, along with his song and dance sequences. Amitabh Bachchan recited a poem penned by lyricist Kausar Munir. Salman Khan said he was only too happy to give his time for this project and he was "delighted

to participate in this endeavour for the future of our children. The good that we do in the present will decide a better future."

RIPE Shekhar Mehta said, "As we celebrate 100 years of Rotary in India, Rotary will play a bigger role in our nation building, hand-in-hand with the government." RI Director Kamal Sanghvi added, "We will work in the fields of education, nutrition, sanitation and together let us gift a bright future for our nation's children." Funds collected through this programme will be used for Covid-relief work and long-term projects related to children's health, nutrition, education and skill development.



While we are fortunate to have three square meals a day, there are children out there who do not get even a cup of milk. Let us unite to promote the health of such innocent children, because healthy children translates into a healthy nation,” said RI Director Bharat Pandya.

Union Ministers Prakash Javadekar, Nitin Gadkari, Harsh Vardhan, Ramesh Pokhriyal Nishank and Gajendra Singh Shekawat highlighted Rotary’s various initiatives including its role in polio eradication and ushering in a polio-free India.

Bollywood celebrities narrated stories of Rotary’s activities that have impacted communities over the years. The show brought to focus signature projects of RC Bombay such as the *Bavishya Yaan*, a skills enhancement programme for less privileged

children initiated by the club a decade ago. “It is heartwarming to see it grow from 40 children in one school to 1,600 children in six municipal schools. Many of our children have become engineers, chartered accountants and have entered areas like hospitality and travel,” said Club President Preeti Mehta. The *Jal Jeevan* programme being implemented by the club equips schools with drinking water facilities.

DGs Jose Chacko Madhavassery (RID 3201), Thomas Vavanikunnel (3211), PNB Murugadoss, S Muthupalaniappan (3232), Saumya Ranjan Mishra (3262), Subhasish Chatterjee (3240), Alok Gupta (3012), Sunnil Mehra (3141), Dr Sandeep Kadam (3142), PDGs Anish Shah (3060) and Ravee Dhotre (3131) and RC Bombay President Preeti Mehta pledged ₹50 lakh for the cause. Sonu Sood spoke

about the migrant crisis and his initiatives in helping workers reach their homes amid the Covid-19 lockdown.

PDG N Subramaniam, RID 3011, was featured in an interview where he spoke about building immunity against coronavirus. “Eat healthy. Include vitamins such as Vitamin C and Zinc, exercise, keep yourself hydrated and get enough sleep. At the same time, do not neglect non-Covid medical conditions,” he said.

Apart from Salman Khan and Kamal Khan’s dances, some of the best past performances by Arijit Singh, Neha Kakkar, Amit Trivedi, Shankar Mahadevan, Salim Sulaiman, Jonita Gandhi, B Praak, Benny Dayal, to name a few provided the entertainment quotient. The programme came to a close with a fitting finale by AR Rahman singing *Chhoti si Asha* before bringing the curtains down with *Jai Ho*. ■

A Rotarian's hospital turns into a Covid treatment centre

Rasheeda Bhagat



When Sanand, an automobile hub of Gujarat, located on the outskirts of Ahmedabad, saw a spurt in Covid-19 infections in the second week of May, and a strict five-day lockdown was announced from May 13, the Gujarat government sought the help of the Sanand Janta Multispecialty Hospital, owned by Dr Tapan Shah, from Rotary E Club of Galaxy 3051, RID 3051. The Collector of Ahmedabad had conveyed the need for setting up a designated Covid-19 hospital in Sanand.

“We called an emergency online meeting of our club,

discussed the increasing incidence of corona positive cases in our area, the ignorance of the less-educated residents of the town facing a global pandemic, and a strong need for an affordable private set-up for Covid-19 treatment,” he says.

In a record time of 24 hours and taking up the work on a war-footing, with help from some of his club members, the space in his Sanand Janata Hospital, which has 35 beds, was renovated within 24 hours. To tackle this emergency isolation space was provided for patients, along with necessary medicines, oxygen supply, food and

also ICU treatment for the seriously afflicted.

“We had to do this, and did it willingly after a few private hospitals had shown reluctance to take in Covid patients, and the refusal of doctors and other medical staff to take the risk of being infected by treating corona cases,” says Shah.

What is more, he adds, keeping in mind that the residents of Sanand are mostly low-wage earners, “we have partnered with the government and in the last few weeks all the facilities for Covid patients are provided completely free of cost by the hospital as these people simply cannot afford treatment in a private hospital. Nor do they have proper insurance and are less inclined to visit government hospitals of a neighboring city.”

Shah said there were challenges as there was delay in receiving the “limited budget and grant” promised by the government. “But the hospital management was not deterred and we survived with the funds infused by our doctors and made sure that all of doctors continue to serve patients

“ The recovery rates can match the best of private hospitals across the country, with a low mortality rate, and this has boosted our confidence and morale.

without any charges. As there was limited availability of PPE kits, N95 masks and other disposables, most of the staff, including a few doctors, were on 24x7 duty. The only wealth earned by our doctors and staff members during this difficult time is the blessings from our patients,” smiles Shah.

This is corroborated by a local resident, Akbar Momin, who says his uncle Ahmedbhai Momin had tested positive for Covid-19 and needed hospitalisation. “At first we thought of taking him to a private hospital and not the Sanand Janata Hospital as it had been designated a government Covid centre, because many people told us that a government centre might be dangerous and not have proper treatment facilities. But we went there and found the

“The only wealth earned by our doctors and staff members during this difficult time is the blessings from our patients.

Dr Tapan Shah

Member, Rotary E Club of Galaxy 3051

arrangements to be excellent.” He is all praise for the dedication of the staff, cleanliness and hygiene, facilitating the 14-day isolation of the entire family, the food served, etc. “The entire service was free of cost and even after he was discharged and we returned home, and my uncle had to undergo home isolation, they were in touch with us on the phone to inquire if all was well,” he added.

Shah says that at the end of the day, he feels he and his staff have managed to “defeat corona, and that too in a place with limited resources, where the population lack awareness and knowledge about staying safe.” He claims that the recovery rates in his hospital can match the “best of private hospitals across the country, with a low mortality rate, and this has boosted our confidence and morale.”

Apart from Rotarians, “NGOs like Manav Sena Trust have always stood by us as also senior doctors of Sanand like Dr G K Chauhan and Dr Ajay Gandhi, who were available to help us whenever needed. Our club is constantly keeping in touch with me for any need we might have and have distributed fruits to every patient admitted.” ■

Hi-tech laparoscopic machine donated to PHC

Team Rotary News



Members of RC Madras Midtown with the laparoscopy equipment at the PHC.

To ensure better outcome of surgical procedures and replace existing ageing machine, RC Madras Midtown, RID 3232, provided a state-of-the-art laparoscopic device through a global grant

project to the Public Health Centre at West Mambalam, Chennai.

DG (2019–20) G Chandramohan dedicated the machine worth around \$50,000 in the presence of Club President Bhavesh Shah and Rotarians in a special event. The club also donated 5,000 sanitiser sachets on the occasion.

“The new laparoscopic machine will replace the 16-year-old device and with its high-definition clarity, will ensure better outcome of various procedures,” said Shah. Over 350 patients, mostly from the middle and lower middle-class communities, who undergo laparoscopic procedures at the PHC in a year will benefit from this high-end machine, he said. The club has roped in RCs North Fresno, RID 5230, and Cupertino, RID 5170, US, as global partners for this GG project to purchase the medical equipment. ■

Addressing Covid in **Bangladesh in true Rotary spirit**

Kazi Amdadul Hoque



Grocery bags packed and ready for distribution.

Bangladesh officially imposed its Covid-19 lockdown on March 24, but self-imposed restrictions in movement and work from home, mostly in the private sector, began from early to mid-March. The term used was “general holidays”, so as not to incite fear in the population.

However, as the world suffered, so did we. We realised that the lockdowns that were put in place around the world, were now at our doorstep too. It was a mixture of excitement and fear. What would it be like to be stuck indoors day after day? Would the authorities enforce a strict lockdown? We would soon know. For now, it meant extra time with the family, longer lunches, more frequent tea times and a break from a busy life. How bad could it be?

My question was answered very soon. One day, I was walking along the empty streets and noticed a cycle rickshaw puller wiping silent tears from his eyes. I stopped and asked him the reason and he said that he was out of income for the past few days due to the lockdown and he was the sole breadwinner of his family. I walked away, leaving him to his misery, not quite knowing how to help.

The next day, another incident happened.

A domestic worker I recognised from my apartment building, who was out of work due to the Covid scare, had come, quite hesitatingly, to ask for some rice from my apartment’s security guard. She had no food at home and needed to feed her child. She had come to him under the dark of the evening to hide her embarrassment, and the guard, another disadvantaged soul, was quietly helping her.

The two incidents were enough to jolt my conscience. I had seen

daily workers in my neighbourhood going to work early in the morning and returning home in the evening. I had seen enthusiasm and exhaustion on their faces, but never this silent gloom. I now understood the full impact of the word “lockdown” for someone with much lower income than I, or those like me. What was a new and a somewhat exciting experience for us, a mere inconvenience that would make a good bedtime story for our grandkids, was nothing but hell for daily

wage earners like domestic workers or rickshaw pullers. Being a Rotarian and wholeheartedly believing in our motto of “Service above Self”, I knew that something had to be done for these people and it needed to be done fast.

At our Rotary clubs, we believe that ‘Rotary is where neighbours, friends, and problem-solvers share ideas, join leaders, and take action to create lasting change’ and I wanted to implement this belief through action. On March 23, I sent a text to all my



Rotary and non-Rotary friends, shared my emotions, appealed to them to share their thoughts and support me when needed. Past presidents from my club, Halima, Mahjabeen, Masood, and other members, Taher, Mahfuza, Zakia, Sayeed and Aziz called or sent a text response immediately and offered help and encouragement to proceed for whatever I thought would be good for the people in need. They would provide assistance and financial support online while I would mobilise a group of volunteers who would

kickstart the work on a small scale. This trust boosted my confidence further and encouraged me into action at a time the whole country was locked down in fear and silence.

A lone warrior

I knew I had to start the mission as a lone warrior. I started work on March 23 by going to various neighbourhood slums and far flung areas where I knew daily workers lived. I got support from volunteers who would come with me to feel the pulse and analyse the gravity of

the situation. Our job was not poverty alleviation, nor was it hunger reduction for the poor. It was simply to help the worst affected during the Covid pandemic. We knew that the government was planning relief work for those hit badly by the lockdown and the pandemic but its implementation would take time. Until then, just to ensure that these people do not become victims of starvation, we were there for them.

Our plan was to distribute food and hygiene kits to the needy and this Covid-19 response was

perhaps the first of its kind for a Rotary club in Bangladesh. We listed 10 areas where we could work, made quick assessment and put together a list with cell phone numbers of people who were to receive emergency food and hygiene kits from us.

Mobilising support

Once that was done, we needed to put in place a collection system that respected social distancing norms so crucial to this pandemic. This was challenging but with the help of the volunteers of Shamajik Council — a local organisation — a plan was devised quickly and creatively.

We first identified some grocery stores near the homes of the people on our list. We then negotiated with the shopkeepers and devised a plan where they would pack care packages for us consisting of basic food and hygiene products, to last the family at least a week. Next, we gave tokens to the receivers, who had to drop them into a basket kept at the grocery store to prove they were the bonafide beneficiaries. We then called the receivers from our list and asked them to pick up the kits at different times so that a crowd could be avoided. The receivers dropped the tokens in the basket kept at the counter; the shopkeeper placed their package in the basket.



Next came the challenge to reach relief to those who were bedridden or too old to come out and take the packages from the shops. We arranged door-to-door service for these people, knocking on their door and placing the care packages outside their doorstep.

Covering the not-so-poor

Once the slums were covered, we started thinking about those people who appeared to be well off but were not; people who had jobs but no savings they could live off. Because these people were not daily wage workers, they did not quite come under the umbrella of the needy. However, needy they were, they were too embarrassed to ask for help. We knew that these people were under pressure and needed our help. We got their phone numbers, but protected their dignity, using not their names but only the last



digits of their phone numbers to identify them. Care packages were distributed to these people too.

The initiative, since then, has gained a lot of momentum and is now operating in full swing. Many others have joined this journey with us and are working alongside us to help those still in need of assistance. The project that started with helping 115 households, grew in a week to 1,500 households and

now many Rotary clubs — I would surmise it to be nearly 100 Rotary clubs across Bangladesh — are providing such relief, either on their own or with support from the district, and thousands of families are benefitting from it. Our club alone has reached relief packages worth 300,000 Taka to the beneficiaries.

We've now started giving small capital to those who have lost their

livelihoods... to start a vegetable stall, or similar small ventures, that will keep their families going.

The writer is a past president of RC Sonargaon Dhaka, RID 3281, Bangladesh. He has been a Rotarian from 1999, and when he was president of his club in 2010, he started a major cervical cancer screening project. He can be reached at hoqueka@gmail.com

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A Covid warrior from Panchkula

V Muthukumaran

At the Civil Hospital in Panchkula, Dr Rita Kalra, Admin Head, leads a specialist team to monitor round-the-clock the isolation and OPD wards to counsel those susceptible to the corona pandemic, educating them on hygiene, diet and a healthy lifestyle that includes yoga and meditation. Ever since the virus outbreak, the 350-bed district hospital near Chandigarh has

been transformed into a dedicated Covid Health Centre with special wards, labs etc in no time.

At this hospital, Dr Rita, a past president of RC Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080, heads the HR department which has 1,000 employees including doctors, paramedics and non-medical staff. Some of her key responsibilities include infection control, upkeep of hospital records and ramping up medical facilities. “After the WHO

declared coronavirus a pandemic, we had to set up an exclusive Flu OPD for screening patients and migrant families,” she said. Setting up Covid isolation wards and an ICU and supervising their effective functioning during the lockdown was a big challenge.

“We also prescribe a suitable diet regimen for Covid patients made possible through donations from NGOs and personal contributions. Our team has installed a molecular

lab for Covid testing,” said Dr Rita.

Isolation wards

Right from early morning, Dr Rita visits all the six isolation wards with over 100 beds for Covid patients, offering counsel and interacting with duty staff. She also checks the quality of special food being served to patients. The hospital gets around 250 people at the Flu OPD and 40 Covid suspects with fever and flu symptoms in a



day. “On an average we get seven ICU admissions per day and so far have recorded zero deaths. Out of over 200 Covid patients who were treated here, 150 have fully recovered and sent back.”

With rising Covid infections, the 22-bed ICU is being expanded and a revised HVAC (heating, ventilation and air conditioning) system has been put in place to provide a germ-free environment for patients, she said. A plasma therapy facility will be set up at the hospital’s blood bank with approval from the ICMR soon.

Most of the Covid-related facilities, PPE kits and equipment at this hospital were funded through government grants, MPLADS (MP Local Area Development Scheme), and contributions from NGOs such as Rotary which has instituted Covid Disaster Response Funds for quick disbursement of grants for Covid relief work. “I have applied for a global grant for two ambulances (vans) to strengthen Covid surveillance in outreach camps,” Dr Rita said.

Covid team

Dr Rita leads a five-member Covid emergency response team that operates in three shifts. “We have a roster system that allows doctors to visit



Dr Rita Kalra with a newborn and the mother.

Covid patients once a week in turns to monitor at least 20–25 people a day.” A healthy lifestyle is possible only through education and awareness on hygiene, sanitation, nutrition and exercise for physical, mental and social well-being, she explained.

Multi-tasking expert

It has been a hectic professional life for her

over the last four months with lockdown and Covid cases acting as a ‘double whammy’. Heading the Covid team as well as managing the hospital affairs is a tightrope walk, but she finds her regular yoga and meditation sessions useful to “fight stress and anxiety. I also find time for community-connect through Rotary.”

It has been hectic over the last four months with lockdown and Covid cases acting as a ‘double whammy’. Heading the Covid team and managing the hospital is a tightrope walk.

Prabha (38) and Kavita (25), who came out of the Covid infection nightmare, were all praise for Dr Rita and her team for their “compassion and sound advice with dos and don’ts to overcome the infection.” Another patient, Pradeep (40), said he felt at home given the cordial environment at the hospital. RC Chandigarh Midtown President Sanjay Bhatia said, “Dr Rita is the driving force in putting up support systems and taking preventive care initiatives at the hospital during the pandemic.” Her out-of-box ideas for patients, staff and medical teams are steps ahead of standard protocols, he said.

With a ‘never-say-die’ attitude and her dedication in giving 100 per cent to the community, “Dr Rita is an iron lady of Panchkula,” said Club Secretary Shuchi Thakur.

“While we have positioned ourselves as a Covid health centre at the moment, our aim is to turn it into a fully-dedicated Covid hospital. Our next effort is to set up an ICU, OT and delivery room for giving specialised care to pregnant women who have tested positive and their newborns,” she added.

Designed by
L Gunasekaran

A Covid warrior initiates relief work in Bengaluru

Anubha Jain

Mohammed Tasleel, President of Rotary Bengaluru Manyata, RID 3190, was conferred the Rotary Bangalore Annual Mclver Award by RC Bangalore, and the Community Service Award by Rotary Bangalore Centennial in recognition of his support for migrant workers and frontline staff since the start of the lockdown in March.

During the first two months, Tasleel worked independently with 2-3 volunteers. As the Shramik

train started operating for migrants during May-end, he continued the campaign with the support of 25 non-Rotarian volunteers and a club member.

Tasleel (42) joined Rotary in 2016, inspired by his Rotarian friends, Sanjeev Bijapur and Binay Pandey. "I was actively working with some orphanages in my native place for a long time. Rotary fascinated me as it offers a wide arena in the social service domain," he says.

Since the start of the lockdown, Tasleel meets

his team at 5am every morning at a warehouse where they pack and arrange grocery kits and food packets for distribution to physically-challenged people, daily wagers, migrants, frontline workers, and in labour camps and slums. They also provide masks, sanitisers and water to primary health centres, police stations, fire departments, traffic personnel, orphanage and old-age homes.

Rtn S Jayaraman, coordinating the district's Covid-19 relief initiative, is

all praise for Tasleel's dedication and support. "Over 10,000 masks, face shields, 5,000 bottles of sanitisers, and 32 tonnes of vegetables and foodgrain kits have been distributed to 16,000 families of physically-challenged people and over 1,000 grocery kits have been distributed by the team in and around Bengaluru so far," he says.

Tasleel has also been assisting doctors at the Victoria Hospital and providing essential commodities to the medical personnel who have been

RC Bengaluru Manyata launching the oxygen bank.



quarantined. Through his efforts over 40,000 meal packets were given to hospitals, Covid patients, migrant labourers and people in containment zones. Vegetables were supplied to the ISKCON temple and fodder was made available for 40–50 cows every day at the temple's *goshala*. He also provided financial support to 200 autorickshaw drivers who have been at home without work due to the lockdown.

Tasleel, with his team, arranged medical screening at the labour camps around the city and made arrangements for travelling migrants to stay overnight.

The club, Rotary Manyata, recently launched an 'Oxygen Bank' to provide oxygen concentrators and cylinder support services to the needy. Vitamin

tablets and oxygen kits are being distributed to the underprivileged in the city. Over the past three months, the club has distributed relief material worth

₹39 lakh with support from 50 volunteers.

The writer is member of Rotary Bangalore Southwest, RID 3190



Club President Mohammed Tasleel distributing fruits to people.

Rotary face masks for students writing Board exams

Team Rotary News



Rotarians handing over face masks to school authorities.

The literacy committee of RI District 3190 is helping the Karnataka government in providing safety for students writing SSLC exams that were postponed because of the nationwide lockdown. The pending exams were scheduled between June 25 and July 24. When the announcement came,

“we identified the need and reached out to our clubs in the eight revenue districts to help provide face masks to the students,” said District Literacy Committee Chairman Gurnagesh.

With support from 70 clubs, the masks were manufactured in eight units that included women self-help groups and livelihood initiatives by different

NGOs in the State. Under the project ‘Gift a Mask’, 250,000 reusable cotton cloth masks with the Rotary logo were distributed to 1,030 examination centres. Teachers who were assigned for invigilation were also given the masks.

“The initiative was a good public image exercise for Rotary locally,” said Gurnagesh. ■

An all-women Rotary club spreads cheer in Jodhpur

Kiran Zehra

Besides contributing ₹1 lakh to the PM CARES Fund, ₹1 lakh towards PPE kits for health workers, ₹66,000 for faces masks and sanitisers and feeding the returning migrant labourers at a cost of ₹1 lakh, RC Jodhpur Padmini,

an all-women club in RID 3053, has transformed three government schools into Happy Schools and renovated an anganwadi at Salwa Kalla, a village on the outskirts of Jodhpur where the club runs a vocational training centre and an adult literacy



Children learn computer applications at the vocational training centre run by RC Jodhpur Padmini.

programme. “We can’t wait to see the happy faces of the students when they come back to school,” says Club President Rajshree Chowdary. Coming from a rural background herself, she wanted to work on rural-centric development projects.

The club members reached out to the RCC members in different villages to find out the students’ strength and girl-boy ratio of each school in and around their villages. “Where the ratio of girl students was high, we decided to personally visit those



RC Jodhpur Padmini President Rajshree Chowdary (second from R) with club members at a Happy School.

schools,” says Rajshree. About 30 schools were surveyed and in the end three government schools from Budhnagar, Akthali and Piparalai villages were chosen.

Priya Mehta, a club member, recalls her meeting with thirteen-year-old Bhavna, a student of the Piparalai Municipal School. “Bhavna wanted to become a teacher. But was sad that her dream may not come true as she had attained puberty and would not be allowed to go back to school after the academic year ended.” The school had no gender-segregated toilets; “just a cubicle with no water connection or a handwash station,” says Priya.

To raise funds the club conducted the ‘Jodhpur Junior-thon’ and collected

a whopping ₹22 lakhs. All the amount was spent on renovating the schools, setting up WinS facilities, a library, play equipment, uniforms, shoes, school bags and furniture. “We can’t wait to see girls like Bhavna go back to school and hopefully fulfill their dreams,” says Rajshree. This year the club is working on a \$50,000 global grant with RC Kandy Hill Capital, RID 3220, Sri Lanka, and TRF,

“The club conducted the ‘Jodhpur Junior-thon’ and collected a whopping ₹22 lakhs for the Happy Schools project.

to install WinS facilities in seven government schools impacting 3,000 students.

Apart from this the club along with its Interact Club of Rajmata School, conducted sanitation and hygiene workshops for teachers and students at 17 government schools in Jodhpur. Through *Natak* (plays) and games they sensitised young girls and boys about menstrual hygiene. In early March the club, along with its RCCs, set up 200 bird-baths in different villages around Jodhpur. “The villagers were enthusiastic about this project and felt happy they could quench the thirst of birds and animals during the scorching summer,” says the Club President.

The anganwadi at Salwa Kalla caters to

children from five surrounding villages. The club renovated the facility, repaired the leaking ceiling and painted the walls at a cost of ₹30,000. “Despite the lockdown, food and milk were served to little children in the anganwadi, and in these tough times when villagers aren’t making any money to provide for their families this is a boon for their children,” says Rajshree.

In mid-April the club was informed about shortage of blood at two government hospitals in Jodhpur. Large blood donation camps where not possible given the Covid situation. So, club members split up and, in association with various other clubs, collected over 2,000 units of blood through 41 blood donation camps. ■

Scaling up to gift 10,000 desk-benches to schools

V Muthukumaran

Project Blue was launched with fanfare at the Excel Convention Centre in Komarapalayam in Namakkal district, Tamil Nadu, with a target of providing 10,000 desk-benches to 400 government high schools across the six revenue districts of RID 2982 in the next five years. “When we planned to give 324 desk-benches from a district grant, we found that there was a dire need for 10,000 such furniture sets from government schools. With support from Rotarians, private institutions

and corporates, last year we delivered 1,000 desk-benches to 90 schools costing ₹36 lakh,” said IPDG A K Natesan.

The desk-benches are made locally by MSME units at various locations in Namakkal, Salem, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Kallakurichi and Villupuram districts. Additionally, 322 hand-wash stations were also given to schools at the inauguration of Project Blue by TN School Education Minister KA Sengottaiyan who was accompanied by other State

ministers, Namakkal Collector K Megaraj and SP R Arularasu. In the coming years, the project will be expanded to neighbouring RIDs 2981, 3201, 3202 and 3000. Educational institutions such as Excel Group of Institutions, Kavery Institute of Technology, Mahendra Institutions, Muthayammal Engineering College, Gnanamani College of Technology and Christy Group have contributed to Project Blue.

RC Rasipuram contributed \$5,000 in July which was matched



TN School Education Minister KA Sengottaiyan along with other ministers inaugurating facilities at government schools and district hospitals. IPDG A K Natesan (extreme right) is seen along with past governors.

by a similar amount by Natesan to take up the school project in this area without delay.

Covid largesse to hospitals

RID 2982 donated a range of Covid-related equipment to 40 district headquarters, regional hospitals and primary health centres. “We are in the process of installing handwash stations at the hospitals,” said Natesan. The Covid donations to hospitals were supported by RIDs 5300, 5330, US, with PDG Cheab Elawar, Las Vegas, and PDG Manzoor Massay, San Bernardino, coordinating with the host RID 2982.

To prevent Covid infections, all the 71 clubs in this district are holding medical camps in which herbal and homeopathic medicines are given to the people to

All the 71 clubs in this district are holding medical camps in which herbal and homeopathic medicines are given to public to strengthen their immunity against Covid-19.

strengthen their immunity against the coronavirus. “So far, we have done over 95 such camps in the last three months benefitting around 50,000 people in this region. Our alternative medicines are endorsed by the district medical teams.”

Additionally, three lakh three-layered masks, 9,000 N95 masks (for hospitals, sanitary workers),

1,500 PPEs to six district GHs were given. An electric battery-operated ambulance costing ₹7.7 lakh, was donated to the Government Mohan Kumaramangalam Medical College and Hospital, Salem, from the Covid Disaster Response Fund.

Two Rotary Dialysis Centres

For the first time in the district, two dialysis centres were set up in Hosur and Namakkal with five machines each under a global grant project with help from RIDs 4630 and 4751, Brazil. Each centre has an RO plant, multipara monitors, fully-automatic Fowler beds and airconditioned treatment rooms. “PDG Antonio Cardoso from Brazil coordinated with us for the two dialysis units each costing \$73,000,” said Natesan. ■

RID 3070 takes up Van Mahotsav in a big way

Team Rotary News

PDG Surinder Seth, RID 3070, has come forward to donate ₹10 per plant as a token of appreciation to a club which plants the maximum number of trees in the district during the *Van Mahotsav* being observed in July by Rotary clubs in India. District Secretary Sunil Dutta has urged club presidents to take up tree plantation in a big way. “He has encouraged us to plant native saplings on barren lands or empty places,” said Jagdish Chand Patial from RC Sundernagar.

The monetary offer by PDG Seth has led to competition among clubs for planting more number of



RID 3070 Rotarians at a tree plantation drive.

trees than before to clinch the reward, he said. However, the survival of plants is

critical, for the new plants need caring, regular watering and fencing. “We must

also introduce a mechanism to check and ensure survivability of plants,” said Patial. ■

Cow trekking and cheese making in Switzerland

Rasheeda Bhagat

As I sit confined to the home, with a few intermittent visits to the office, and definitely, or may I say indefinitely, bound to Chennai, and India, for some time to come, memories come flooding in of travel to exotic places and fun-filled experiences, not to mention those that brought some moments of fear and palpitations too!

The mind goes back to a trip with a difference, an invitation by Switzerland Tourism in 2013 where 144 journalists from 33 countries were given a taste of rustic life in that gorgeous country. Swiss tourism does this experience to promote the country to international media

**A panoramic view of the
Rhine River.**



every year and that year's theme was "Living Traditions", and we were taken around the lush green Alpine region of Appenzell, the picturesque Rhine lowlands in Schaffhausen Canton, and the cyclists' paradise of Thurgau on Lake Constance, with its delightful little towns and villages.

Nation of cows, cheese, chocolates

Switzerland is known for its agricultural heritage, and is often called the nation of cows, cheese and chocolates. But during the summer of 2013, it was a hard time for farmers. Global economic blues had made

things very difficult for farmers in a country which pampers its agri sector. But many farmers I met during my five-day stay in the region, said only a part of the family's income came from farming, and the spouse had to make some extra money by part, or full-time teaching.

But then all crises bring innovative solutions and some of us journalists who had opted for spending half a day at a farm, were taken to the Bolderhof Farm — spread over 29 hectares — and owned by Doris and Heinz Morgenegg. An entirely organic farm, run in the beautiful Rhine lowlands in the Schaffhausen Canton, apart from

growing vegetables such as peppers, tomatoes, zucchini, cucumber, broccoli and various herbs, it included dairy farming. It had 25 cows and 30 buffaloes; about 300 litres of milk was produced here daily. Part of it was sold to customers and the rest went into making delicious cheese.

The Morgeneggs also ran a butchery, and calves, heifers and water buffaloes could be ordered online. "Our customers can tell us exactly what sort of meat they'd like and how it should be cut," Heinz said. Surprisingly, not only was the entire farm and its work run totally on solar power; the couple sold extra



Walking through a swamp filled with freezing water packed with minerals, was really refreshing.



power to the Government! Imagine this happening in India!

Farm tourism

Those of us who have travelled to Switzerland know what a frightfully expensive country it is, and the locals also feel the heat often due to the high cost of living. Heinz said that as his dairy and other produce were insufficient to provide a decent livelihood for his family, he and his “boss” (wife Doris) decided a few years ago to organise tourism-related activities on his farm. Cow trekking was one of the tourism activities, as also cheese making.

There were 14 of us at his farm that day. Our first activity was to make cheese, nothing daunting in that for an Indian woman used to the heat in the kitchen!

So we were all packed off to the kitchen. A hands-on farmer, Heinz first poured fresh and creamy milk into a huge cauldron for boiling. But before doing that, he gave each of us a role in the cheesemaking; one had to monitor the temperature, another to stir the milk, add the enzyme rennet, and then the fermentation culture. Once the milk coagulated and became like a soft jelly, each of us had to make deep cuts. Trust me, even though all that swirling and thickening/solidifying milk looks heavenly, it is quite a lot of heavy-duty stirring for your arms.

The most exciting part was to stir the semi-solid huge chunks of milk with a cheese harp, so named for its resemblance to the musical instrument. “Keep doing this briskly until you get granules the size of a peanut,” Heinz gave a brisk command.

A small group of us was packed off to finely chop the red and yellow peppers, green onions, herbs and spices piled on chopping boards. The sharpest Swiss knives were assigned for the job, incentive enough to make a beeline

for the task. The chopped veggies and herbs later went into the cheese, layer by layer.

All that hard work, combined with the freshest of air you could breathe — oh, for those mask-free days when there was no fear of lurking coronavirus — had made us ravenously hungry. The farmer had kept aside a big jar of fresh cream; each of us was taught to make our own fresh and yummy butter from that cream, which we filled in little jars and spread generously on a slice or two of freshly-baked bread. The delicious combo was washed down with a glass of chilled white wine.

As we were stirring and churning the cheese, Heinz was busy taking our pictures and he surprised us, as we were leaving, with a beautiful little wooden box filled with a portion of the soft cheese we had made, with each of our pictures making that cheese. The lid had an official looking cheesemaking diploma in each of our names!

Later he marched us off for a crash course of how to milk a cow. We went to milk the cows, after a two-minute crash course on how to handle the



Cheesemaking in progress.



cow's udders. Two minutes of the activity, one gulp of the warm, fresh, sweet milk, and it was sheer bliss to be a part of this authentic rustic experience on a Swiss farm.

Riding a Swiss cow

But the *piece de resistance* of the half-day we spent at the farm was cow trekking. We had been warned in advance to carry an extra pair of clothes, particularly trousers. I thought this was due to the mud that was bound to be splashed around on a rainy day. Until Oliver, our tour guide, helpfully related the story of a Japanese journalist who had arrived in spotless white trousers for the cow trek. "You know how these animals like to go close and rub each

other... so another cow came close to our friend's cow and decided to ease itself." The result was the white trousers getting generously sprayed with cow dung!

As though this was not scary enough... it was the last day of our tour and one didn't want to return home with jeans sprayed with cow dung, the disclaimer form that Heinz wanted us to sign, absolving himself of all liability for what the cow might do to its rider, I made up my mind. I joined half of the group which said "no thanks" to the ride. But strangely, while Heinz left the others alone, a couple of them half my age and with no grey hair, he came up to me and said: "Trust me, you can do it".

He just wouldn't take 'No' for an answer, and when he said this would be one of the most memorable moments of my life, I agreed, gingerly accepted the helmet and walked up to my cow, Umbra. Like most Swiss cows, she was huge. But I failed to notice one thing... more of which will come later.

"Talk to your cows, touch them, pat them... get to know them. The cow has to be comfortable with you," Heinz let out a string of instructions. But when I tried to do all this to Umbra, she let out a grunt of displeasure, moaned, and flipped her tail violently. My helper, a soft-spoken German woman called Sabine, said it was only to drive away the flies bothering her, but it petrified me nevertheless.

Next, we were asked to firmly hold a black plastic stick in one hand, the rope tied around the cow in the other, and walk in front of the cow. "Never allow the cow to lead you. You have to show your cow that you are the boss," Heinz said, adding, "otherwise she will do what she wants". Sure, like tossing you off, I said to myself!

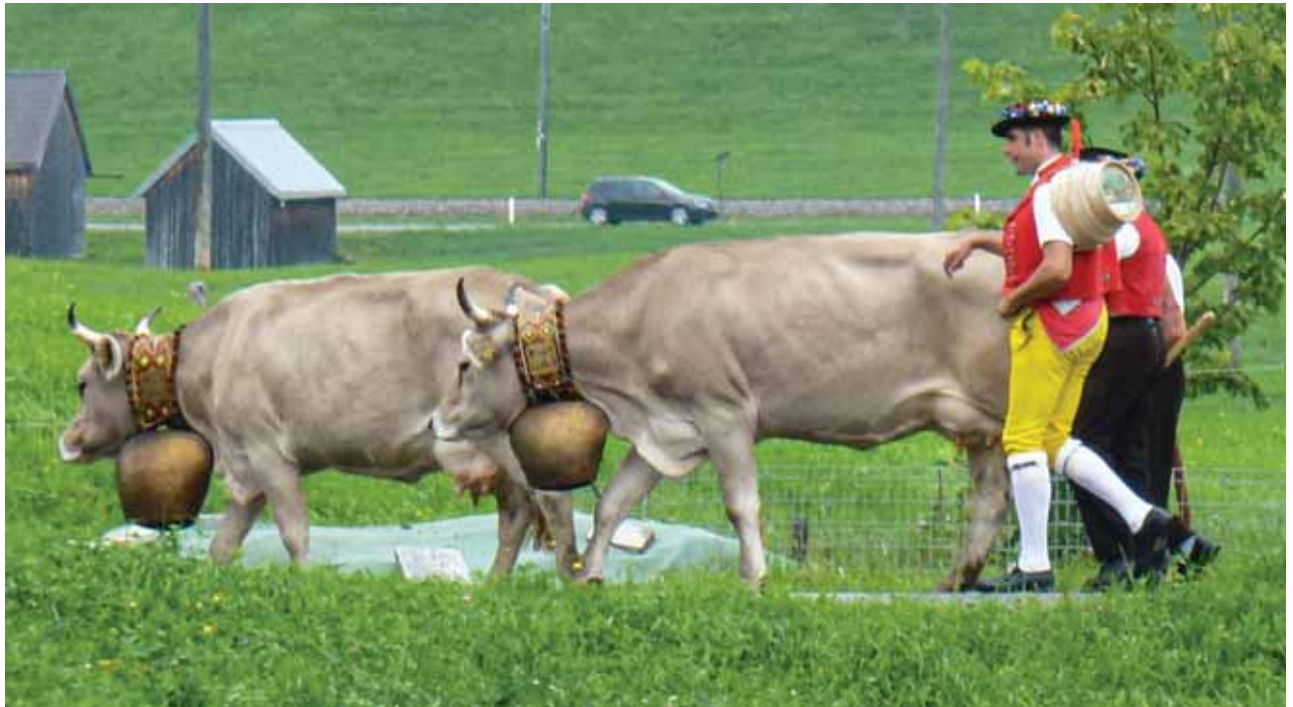
Umbra, the real boss!

The other cows, seven in all as more than half the group decided to walk along, with names such as Paloma and Nina ambled along after a shaky start. But Umbra seemed totally disinclined for the journey. She put her head down and started grazing. A tug on the rope, a gentle tap on the back, got no response. "You have to hit her much harder," said Heinz. But I just couldn't do it.

Sabine came up and petted Umbra, talked to her a bit and presto! Umbra was walking once again. Soon it was time to get atop the cow, and with my short stature, I managed to do so taking support from Heinz's strong arms, pressed together to provide a kind of step for me. After a few pictures were clicked and Heinz was out of sight, I quickly jumped off — actually carefully slid down — Umbra's back and would have happily walked her to the Rhine river, our destination about 2 km away. But the farmer's eagle eye caught this truant journalist and Sabine was despatched to get me up on Umbra again! "Just stay there for five minutes and you will not want to get off Umbra again. And trust me, this will be one holiday moment you will never forget," Heinz assured me.

I was still petrified, thinking of what would happen to my bones in a distant land, if Umbra gave me a small toss, but with some encouraging words from Sabine for both the cow and the rider,





The cows, and farmers, dressed in all finery, coming down from the mountains for a special occasion.

we made it all the way to the Rhine river. Here, all the seven cows took long sips of the refreshing cool water, resting their aching heels on the river bed.

Soon Umbra left the other cows behind and started wading further into the water and, blessing my stars that I knew how to swim, I braced myself to jump into the cold waters if she broke into a trot. Fortunately, a

desperate appeal to Sabine, who was on the shore, helped and Umbra responded to her stern commands. We were on our way back to the farm. The trip ended well, and mercifully, I did not need a change of clothing!

This was the most fun part of the trip, which took about four hours and cost some €120 per cow; a shorter ride could be had for about €90. For those

not brave enough to ride the cow, Heinz organised a cow carriage in which 20 people could ride for an hour (€350). These are of course 2013 rates.

A quick and refreshing snack of freshly-made mozzarella cheese, tomatoes, meat, bread and some white wine, and we were ready for the long and restful river cruise from the charming little town of Stein am Rhein to Schaffhausen, where the Rhine Falls, Europe's largest, awaited us.

This is a trip down memory lane, during a lockdown, when every flight that passes by us as we religiously do our morning and evening walks on the terrace, makes you look up, assuring you that maybe near-normal times are beginning to return. But it will be a long, long while before many of us will venture out on such exotic and exciting holidays in far away lands. But reliving these precious moments at an eerie time like this reminds you how lucky you have been!

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat
Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



A typical farmhouse in a Swiss countryside.

RC Panaji Riviera restores eyesight of villagers

Kiran Zehra

With a smile on her lips and tears of joy, Faustina D Mello (77), an inmate of the St John Old Age Home, Goa, thanks the Rotarians of RC Panaji Riviera, RID 3170, for restoring her eyesight following a cataract surgery. “When I opened my eyes after the surgery, I felt I was seeing angels,” she says. The

club has been organising cataract surgery camps for the last seven years and has completed close to 900 surgeries so far at a cost of ₹1.3 crore.

Last year, about 1,000 elderly people were screened through eye camps conducted at eight villages near Goa at a cost of ₹24.45 lakh. While spectacles and medicines were given for

450 patients, another 200 were referred for cataract surgeries. “Due to the lockdown, we were able to do only 163 surgeries,” says Club President Yogish Kulkarni.

Pond restoration

The scenic village of Pilerne, 12km from Goa, is a famous birding destination. “But unfortunately, the ponds

are covered under a blanket of weeds and plastics,” says Kulkarni. On World Environment Day, the club carried out a massive cleaning and desilting project in one of the ponds, a source of irrigation to many paddy fields. The accumulated sludge, silt and sediments were removed from the waterbody, thus increasing its storage capacity. Three wells close to the pond were also revived, thus solving the drinking water problem of the villagers. The project cost ₹80,000.

The club is supporting the Keshav Seva Sadhana School for special children, located 30km from Goa in Bicholim village. “We first gave the school a physiotherapy equipment to aid the treatment of students and later started vocational training for them,” says Kulkarni. The children learn to make candles and incense sticks, and to sew. With the help of a global grant and partners from Rotary clubs in the UK and US,

**Faustina D Mello,
a beneficiary
of RC Panaji
Riviera’s cataract
surgery project.**



When I opened my eyes
after the surgery, I felt
I was seeing angels.



Club members on the banks of a pond restored by the club.

a vocational centre has been established at this school. Apart from this, the club has transformed the Pragati High School, Nerul, into a Happy

School and runs MHM awareness programmes in the village schools around Goa.

In March 2020, the club installed a mammogram

at Rugnashray, a charitable organisation through a GG of \$40,096, and provided Covid relief for the needy through a GG worth \$99,565.

The United Nations and UNAIDS appreciated the club's efforts in supporting an NGO that cares for HIV-positive children during the lockdown. ■



RC Madras Marina feeds migrants at shelter camps

Team Rotary News

Following a request from the Revenue Officer of Chennai Corporation, members of RC Madras Marina, RID 3232, distributed food to about 800 migrants accommodated in shelter camps at Basin Bridge during the lockdown.

The Rotarians identified a shutdown hotel in the neighbourhood to prepare 2,000 rotis with subzee every day until May 17 for them.

Besides food distribution, the club donated 750 stainless steel plates, 900 tumblers, 600 detergent soap cakes, 4,800 sachets of shikakai powder, 150kg of edible oil and 500kg of wheat flour to the migrant families. The project cost of ₹7.75 lakh was met through donations from club members. ■





He has a \$2 million goal for TRF giving

Sanjiv Rai Mehra

Audit and tax consultant, RC New Delhi, RID 3011

When many Rotarians felt that membership would be a great challenge during these Covid times we have formed 17 clubs and inducted over 500 members,” says Sanjiv Rai Mehra who is confident of chartering 40 clubs and effect a 50 per cent increase in membership by the year-end. He plans to induct the new members in weak clubs with less membership and make the clubs vibrant.

During the lockdown, Mehra has launched two international programmes — one is a business forum, “where we connect with districts worldwide to exchange cultural and business ideas.” The next is an international elocution competition. “Youngsters are stuck at home and their creative energies are stifled. To give vent to their creativity, we are planning a competition within India with the final round in September in Delhi and an international round with the finals in October,” he says.

Another goal of this DG is collecting \$2 million for TRF; “it could be a challenge but I am going to put my best foot forward.” He plans to enhance Rotary’s public image by distributing water aerators in every household in Delhi after the lockdown is lifted. “We will talk to them about Rotary’s good work and tell them that if they want to contribute their time, they can join Rotary, or they can donate their money to the Foundation.”

Mehra is concentrating on another project — to spread awareness in Delhiites about the pollution caused to River Yamuna. As it flows 22km across Delhi, it accumulates 76 per cent pollutants which are carcinogenic, containing heavy metals such as arsenic. The groundwater also gets polluted. It costs a massive ₹92,000 crore to clean up the Yamuna. Rotary can support this drive through global grant and act as a catalyst in partnership with the government to change people’s outlook, he says.

Mehra joined Rotary in 1978 at age 25. He installed the first Rotaract club in 1982 in Delhi. His most cherished moment was when India was declared polio-free. He recalls an occasion in 1994 when he went to the local administration to take permission to use their veranda of their dispensary for giving polio vaccines for children. “They gave me permission but mocked our efforts saying, ‘these people are thinking of eradicating polio but they don’t know the enormity of the problem.’ We have achieved a near-nil status for which we should take pride.”

His father who is 100 years old was a Rotarian since 1952. “He now follows Rotary through *Rotary News* and *The Rotarian*.” Mehra’s mother was an Inner Wheel member, his son and daughter are also planning to join Rotary.

Meet your Governors

Jaishree

All set to become second-level AKS member

Rashmi Kulkarni

Architect, RC Pune Parvati, RID 3131

As the first woman governor of RID 3131, Rashmi Kulkarni, along with her husband PDG Vinay Kulkarni, has committed to become second-level AKS member, thus joining the Trustee Circle. Rashmi will probably be the first woman governor to become AKS member in India and, along with PDG Kulkarni, will be the first governor couple in Rotary to reach the AKS' Trustee Circle.

Rashmi has lined up a slew of projects for her district. Her first priority is water conservation and restoration projects such as watershed management and desilting of lakes, rivers at a cost of ₹8 crore. She was installed online in the presence of RIPE Shekhar Mehta, TRF Trustee Gulam Vahanvati, PRIPs

Rajendra Saboo and Kalyan Banerjee.

She plans to do at least 25,000 cataract surgeries during her tenure and right now is actively involved in Covid-related projects including its prevention and treatment projects through the Foundation.

She has plans to install dialysis units, supply equipment to hospitals, and set up blood banks. "I will be taking up projects under Happy Village and Happy Schools," she says. Rashmi has supplied cement roof sheets as part of relief efforts in the aftermath of Cyclone Nisarg at the affected villages in Raigad district of Maharashtra.



Strengthening membership, his priority

PNB Murugadoss

Chartered Accountant, RC Virudhunagar Elite, RID 3212

He has strategies for membership growth and raising funds for TRF. Murugadoss is confident of adding 1,000 new members and contribute \$1 million to TRF despite the pandemic challenge. He plans to become an AKS member during the year. "I want to lead by example," he says, adding that he is expecting many major donors from the district. He also aims at mobilising CSR funds. He plans to take Rotary's polio eradication efforts to the public and collect funds for the Polio Fund. "Not many people know that Rotary has done a lot for polio. So we are going to campaign Rotary's role through a series of videos and rallies. This will help the Foundation as well as increase membership."

Murugadoss is targeting bank professionals and pensioners to join Rotary. "There are 6,000 bank branches in our district. Many of them are interested but they have not been invited so far. Similarly, many pensioners feel that Rotarians are unapproachable and

Rotary clubs are for the rich. I want to break this barrier and burst the myth." He has appointed women leaders in district portfolios. This will be a motivation for more women to join Rotary, he says.

He is passionate about providing safe drinking water in schools. His Directed Gift of \$50,000 a few years ago helped the district avail GG to provide clean drinking water in 15 schools benefitting 15,000 children daily. "I want to continue that," says the DG.

He is encouraging his team with his theme 'Be better than the best' and is happy to have utilised this lockdown restrictions "meaningfully with Zoom meetings addressed by senior Rotary leaders such as RIPE Shekhar Mehta and Director Kamal Sanghvi." Murugadoss is a Rotarian since 1991.



Donate to TRF - the Rotary Mandir

Ramesh Bajaj

Textiles exporter, RC Panipat, RID 3080

He joined Rotary in 1991 after being influenced by three of his Rotarian neighbours. He was a Rotaractor in 1983–84. Ramesh Bajaj's most cherished moment was when, as a GSE team leader, he secured a \$40,000 grant from RID 6110, Arkansas, for the Him Jyoti School in Dehradun. "It was under construction then. And I was happy to get the grant for PRID Sudarshan Agarwal."

He is happy to share that the district has set up 130 schools in remote and rural areas. "We believe in taking schools to the children," says Bajaj. He is urging his team to plant and nurture fruit-bearing trees and herbal plants. "It is not enough to plant 20 or 50 trees. The success of the programme lies in nurturing the saplings," he says. He is keen to execute water conservation projects and is distributing water aerators to households to help save water.

His mantra for membership is 'each one, get one, retain one'. "I am a diehard fan of Rotaract and we

have 90 Rotaract clubs in the district." He talks about a unique plan to raise contributions for TRF.

"I call and wish every Rotarian during their birthday or wedding anniversary and tell them 'Just like you donate money in your mandir on your special day, contribute to TRF, the Rotary mandir'." He does not believe in feeding the hungry just for a day. "For me Annapurna Day should be an everyday activity." The clubs in his district have adopted 20 widows or 20 families as an on-going project for years and provide them basic necessities throughout the year.

Bajaj is in the process of applying for a GG or CSR grant to provide bicycles to girls to help them commute to school. "Each club will be giving 10–20 bicycles to school-going children."

His wife Rekha is a member of RC Panipat Central.



Building shelters for flood victims

Jose Chacko Madhavaserry

Civil engineering, RC Perumbavoor, RID 3201

The 2018 floods rendered 15,000 people in his district homeless and damaged 100,000 homes. "So, my focus is to build 1,000 shelters this year — 400 new homes, 200 renovations and 200 improved basic facilities," says Jose Chacko Madhavaserry, a Rotarian since 1990. His other focus projects include empowering youth and environment care. "We plan to create 1,000 Happy Schools, promote solar power and create Miyawaki forests across the district," he says.

Talking about promoting road safety awareness among the public, Madhavaserry says that last year the district saw 5,000 deaths due to road accidents. "The DGP has invited Rotary to partner with the police to reduce such gory accidents." The district is also

installing 'drug banks' through the clubs to provide life-saving essential medicines against prescriptions, following shortage of such medicines in the State recently.

He wants to induct 700 new members, especially youngsters, charter 3–5 clubs and promote women in leadership position. His target for TRF is \$1.3 million.

Madhavaserry's wife and brother are also Rotarians.



Designed by N Krishnamurthy

RC Calcutta New Alipore helps Amphan-hit villagers

Team Rotary News

Quick to act in the aftermath of largescale destruction by Cyclone Amphan in coastal Bengal, RC Calcutta New Alipore, RID 3291, accommodated over 200 villagers at its Rotary high school for girls at Keoratala village in the Sundarbans, one of the worst affected regions.

The villagers were given food at this shelter camp and the club distributed a week's food and dry rations to 50 families in the village. "We also

restored damaged houses in the area as the cyclone had not left a single roof intact. Over 200 asbestos sheets were arranged for the affected families so that they could rebuild their homes," said Ajay Baldawa, Club President.

The timely repair proved to be "extremely beneficial as another spell of cyclonic rainfall lashed the area in the following week. With roofs back on their heads, the 35 families were not only able to physically isolate



A hut badly damaged in the cyclone.



A club member gives food kit to a villager.

themselves during the global pandemic but also remain safe at a time of the year when cyclones are common in the Sundarbans," he said.

IPP Pramod Jalan and Rtn K K Mohta, along with the club's field coordinator Ratan Mistry, monitored the cyclone-relief project at the village. While the project cost ₹2 lakh, the limitations imposed by the lockdown made reaching the affected village

"a challenge in itself. But effective coordination ensured the project was executed timely and effectively," he said.

Having completed the housing project at the village, the club is now planning to upgrade the school infrastructure including providing smart phones to students of Classes 9 and 10 to aid their online studies as most schools have moved to virtual classrooms during the lockdown. ■



Wordsworld

City Sites

Sandhya Rao

Places are not simply spaces where people live. They have history and context, character and ambience, and very definite personalities.

The continuing lockdown intended for safety and the good health of the community can get us down worse than Monday morning blues. All I will say is: Take your medicine regularly and you'll be fine. Yes, the medicine is books. Books are the best antidote for frustration, boredom, anxiety, panic... name it and a regular dose of reading a good book will calm you down. It's all about soothing nerves and settling the mind, easing the soul and giving the brain something to chew on. The best thing about this course of medication is that if you don't like a particular book, you can always set it aside and pick up another. Not something you can say for pills and potions!

My bookshelves are in a bit of a mess following a major rehauling of my apartment some months ago. So, while I was rummaging around for a certain title, I realised that I had quite a collection of books about Indian cities. Every time I travel I pick up a book about the place visited — if such a book is available, of course. It's usually a collection of writings about the place by well-known personalities or long-time residents. Why not make a game of this, I thought. I would flip open each book at random and share

a small passage from the pages that are revealed. You could then guess which city the passage refers to. Here goes.

This author writes: "There are many stories about the existence of Goddess Laxmi in xxxx. It is said, late one night, when the goddess stood at the main entrance of the city at Teen Darwaza and knocked on the massive gates, the guard, Khwaja Siddiqui, allowed her to enter, left her there, locked the door from inside and went to the palace, to take permission from the sultan. He was beheaded for leaving the goddess standing at the gate. The sultan rushed to welcome the goddess but by then she had disappeared into the city. ... Jabbar Mirza comes from a family of caretakers of Laxmi's lamp, which has been kept burning in an alcove at Teen Darwaza. He continued the tradition till he died in 2013. Now, his family looks after the lamp."

Which city could this be? Of course, Google Auntie has all the answers but it's more fun to think about the places you know about. Here's the next passage. This author writes: "An essential feature of xxxx organicism is the way the white Baroque churches nestle with a surprising air of comfort and of true belonging into what is otherwise so archetypically an Indian landscape. It could be said that perhaps nowhere else in India do churches fit so comfortably into the landscape and the village as they do in those of xxxx. ...the most harmonious church sites are confined to instances where the Christians drew on the ancient Indian sensitivity to land with inherent numen..." This one should be easy. Think postcards.

These passages were chosen at random, and even randomly, the big picture that emerges is of a gloriously syncretic nation. Is that the reality or is it just a coincidence? A walking tour resulted in the following comments: "People who work on the 'east side' (in the Ashram, for instance) typically work indoors behind high walls. This is increasingly the case on the 'west side' too, as prosperity and changing styles raise a whole raft of barriers to visibility — doors, 'dressed up' shop windows, back rooms,





upstairs premises and even air-conditioned showrooms. Still, xxx's side streets maintain the tradition of small ground floor artisans completely accessible to the street. This arrangement makes each shop a small stage on which many people perform." That's what we could call drama in real life!

From here we go to witness drama of another kind: "While he is still resting in the temple, the director of the *filkhana*, the elephant department, comes to seek his advice and to receive orders about arranging an elephant fight. The Maharaja is then carried in his palanquin through covered passageways to the Moti Burj, a tower from where he watches the elephant fight take place. Thousands of spectators have also assembled to watch this lively scene. From here, he goes by another covered passage to the royal stables to inspect the horses and to play polo with the nobles. If any of the nobles particularly admires one of the horses, the Maharaja may give it to him. There is such a variety of them, with different breeds from Arabia, Iran, Kandahar, Turkey, Bhutan, Kabul and Kathiawar..."

And in the next extract, the author is overcome with nostalgia: "At dusk, the Gandhibazar main road filled your being: it wore the charm of a bashful young girl. At one end was the Ramakrishna Ashram; the other end had Tagore Park with B.P. Wadia Road to its rear. On either side of the road were gigantic trees. One evening, as these trees treated us to their green splendour, B.G.L. Swamy sauntered on the streets of Gandhibazar. Just as we had failed to notice the trees that provided shade to us all along, we had failed to notice B.G.L. Swamy who strolled by in a half-sleeved shirt and shorts, with a cloth bag slung over his shoulder. In and around Gandhibazar, there lived so many personalities who have gone into the pages of history."

Another author records another kind of history: "The Apsara sari shop opposite used to be a paratha restaurant. (Anil) Sharma, who is the fifth generation in his family in the paratha trade, reveals that there is less profit now in the business that stretches from

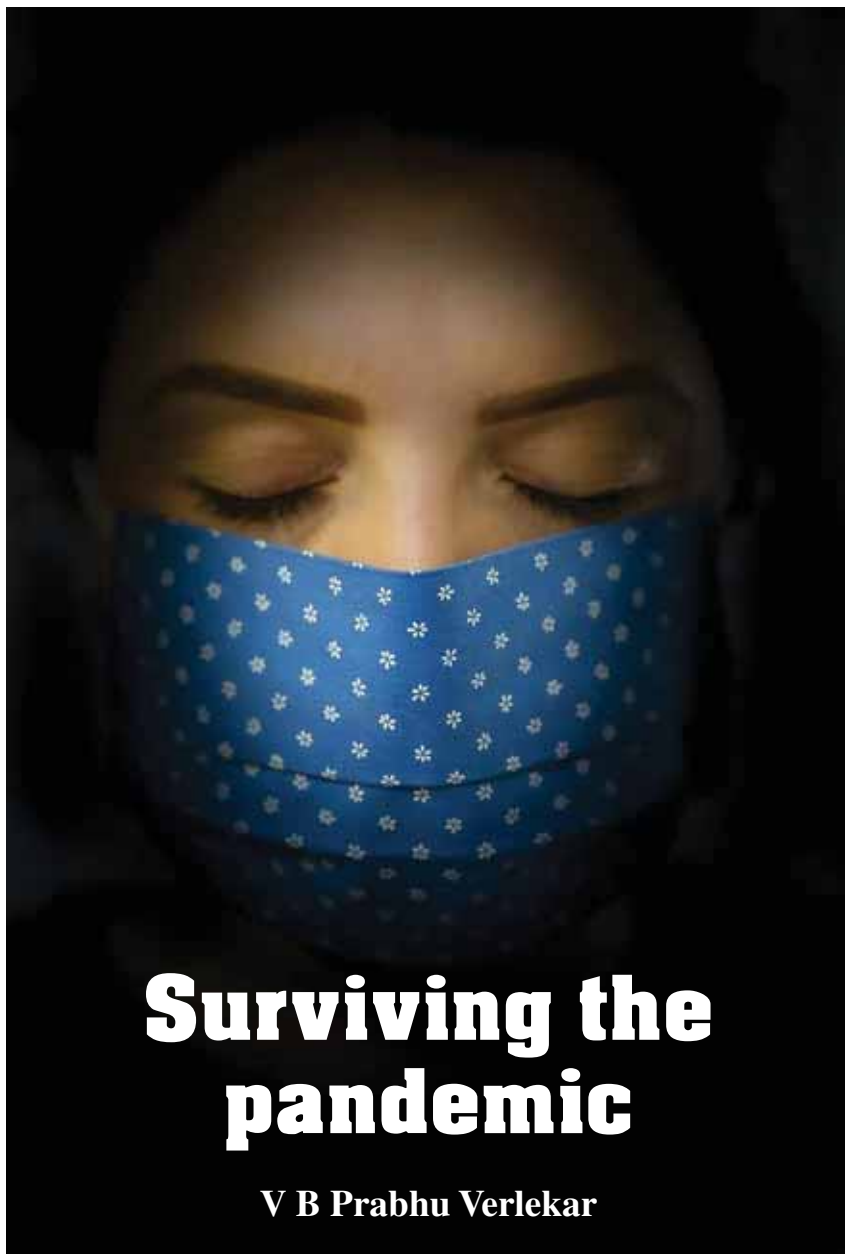
6 am to 12 pm. Some 25 family members are involved with the restaurant, making all the dishes themselves. Two servants clean up. 'The whole country knows us by our parathas. How many people even know each other in xxxx?' he asks."

The contributions of a beloved citizen are recalled in the next passage: "Of all of the merchant princes, Sir JJ's memory is most revered. Jejeebhoy's first recorded act of charity occurred in 1822, when he spent Rs 3,000 to repay the loans taken by several men jailed for debt. Over the decades, Jejeebhoy money would fund all sorts of endeavours, including a causeway between B_____ and M_____ that, in 1845, would consolidate the island's links with the mainland." It's not difficult to guess which city this amazing philanthropist is associated with; however, the following passage may prove a little more challenging.

"In November 1977," the author records, "a tiny, somewhat whimsical, slightly saucy journalistic voice piped up from among the steady drone of xxxx city's established media. For xxxites who had been conditioned to perceive journalism as something they savoured with their morning coffee....., *Aside*, India's first English city magazine, was something of an eye-opener. ... It neither rooted for the city, nor decried it — it merely watched. Oh, when it had finished doing that, it did comment, in a tone that was urbane, often irreverent, sometimes, biting, but always in a soft voice, just above a whisper."

Have you been able to identify the distinct flavours of each place and relish their individual tastes? That's what's special about this kind of writing — the town, city, village, landscape emerges vividly, triggering so many memories. And just in case you're wondering which cities we've talked about in this column, here are the answers, in no particular order: Puducherry, Mumbai, Goa, Delhi, Ahmedabad, Chennai, Jaipur, Bengaluru. Match on!

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist.



Surviving the pandemic

V B Prabhu Verlekar

The impact of lockdown due to corona pandemic has been devastating for all sectors of economy with disruption of business enterprises and huge job losses resulting in migration of workers. So far there has been no solution for treatment of corona flu and it might take a few years

to revive the economy. In such a situation, rather than living in fear and anxiety and locking ourselves at home, we should accept it as a normal part of our day-to-day life and move ahead confidently to face regular work routine after taking necessary precautions of maintaining hygiene, wearing masks and gloves and maintaining social distance at all times. Instead of focusing

on endless negative discussions on TV news channels and social media, build your immunity by enhancing your physical, emotional, mental and spiritual strength through exercises, *yogasanas* and meditation.

Invest in a health insurance policy to meet the prohibitive hospital expenses in case you fall sick and a term life insurance policy to protect your family in case of your demise. Ensure that all investments and bank accounts are either in joint names or with nominations. Execute a will to leave your investments to your family members as you desire.

If you are a permanent employee with a secure job or a successful professional or a high networth individual with a regular income flow, then you should liberally spend money on all good things of life. This will inject more money in the economy resulting in increased demand for goods and services and trigger economic revival. Do not bargain when you buy from street or local vendors. Their earnings are marginal. Support your neighbourhood stores who meet your needs during the lockdown, instead of buying online. Increased spending will be a great service to the nation.

However, those with uncertain jobs or business should conserve cash by minimising their needs and spending on bare essentials. At the same time, you should explore an additional source of income using your skills, competence and enterprise.

Employees

These days employees should not criticise or complain if they don't wish to be retrenched. They should willingly accept a restructured pay package and improve their competence to contribution to the business of the employer which will make them indispensable. Those who are out of job should enhance their skills

and competence to be more useful to the business and use possible contacts and other networks without hesitation to get a suitable job.

Entrepreneurs

Small and medium business enterprises should find ways to reduce costs and increase productivity and efficiency by using technology and innovation. Negotiate and restructure salaries and wages of staff till business revives. Enterprises which have liquidity should pay their suppliers promptly and if possible, give them advance. This will help them to survive and build a strong relationship. Builders and real estate developers

with borrowed funds having unsold inventory should dispose the stocks with less margins or even at a loss to have liquidity and to prevent action by financial institutions.

Senior citizens

Senior citizens should empower themselves with digital knowledge and skills to manage their affairs from the comfort of home with their smart phones. Learn internet banking for fund transfers to pay utility bills; learn to use applications for online ordering of food, medicines, goods, taxi booking; operate email accounts; participate in webinars, conferences, meetings through internet applications.

The best way to learn is from your grandchildren.

Homemakers

Women good in knitting, embroidery, artwork, cooking, teaching, grooming, music or any other skill should market their services through online social media or self-help groups to support family income.

Remember these are very challenging times for everyone, which will not last for long. Face it proactively with a positive attitude. Explore every possible opportunity and make the best use of it.

*The writer is member of
RC Mapuca, RID 3170*

The Rotary clubs of RID 3201 have donated bicycles to 1,500 students on the first day of this Rotary year.

A brainchild of DG Jose Chacko Madhavaserry (D 3201), the *Pedal to School* initiative, aims to provide free bicycles to 3,000 underprivileged students between ages 12–18 across the district that comprises parts of Kerala and Tamil Nadu. The project cost is estimated at ₹1.42 crore.

“Some parents cannot afford public transport to send their children to school. Bicycles are a great incentive for sending children to school. In many regions lack of proper transport is a key factor contributing to the high school dropout rate especially among girls,” says District Secretary Dr Mani Raghavan.

He points out that bicycles will provide a safer means of transport for the students especially now in the present Covid scenario. “They can travel at a safe distance and avoid crowded public transport.” This year the district plans to focus on programmes related to youth,

environment and shelter. Youngsters get their daily dose of exercise as they ride on the bicycles and the clubs will be promoting an environment

friendly means of transport. This project thereby addresses the key areas of youth, environment and positive health, says Raghavan. ■



Pedal to school

Team Rotary News



Will the world get well again?

Bharat and Shalan Savur

Little Rani cried. Suddenly, she was not allowed to run into the arms of her beloved grandma and grandpa, only wave to them from a distance. Ditto with uncle and aunt; they spoke to her fondly but with a vast gulf between them and didn't play with her anymore. How would a two-year-old understand how an invisible virus was creating havoc everywhere? Yet she did. With the wisdom of simplicity and innocence, she understood that the hugs, kisses and games would return with the people she loved when the world got well again.

Will the world get well again? It already has. The oceans have regained their royal sparkle, the air is fresher as the winds whoosh through the wild grass and the mud has returned to its rich loaminess from which trees and forests spring. We cry for those who've gone and laugh with the ones with us. And meanwhile, let's be good citizens of

the post-Covid era. Maybe we'll never smoke, spit and spew smog in the air. A beautiful life begins with beautiful intentions.

High intentions. That's what I respect about Dr Atul Gawande, an American surgeon of high repute. When he said all those months back, "If we can get 60 per cent of us wearing masks that are 60 per cent effective...we can shut down the virus," there were not many takers. Then the good doctor set out to change mindsets by sowing good intentions: "I want to come to work every day never wanting to infect anybody else. I never want to cause someone else to be in the morgue." And the masks came on.

Now, if we can hold on to such high, well-meaning intentions, we can build a new world which does not merely progress in wealth, knowledge and power, but also has a humane philosophy of

life, an art of co-existing which includes mental-physical health and mutual aid. It would be a society that has a larger heart than a larger purse with mindsets that reflect "I never want to retrench anybody and deprive families of food and children of education." Jobs that will never be snatched away. That assured security would be a tremendous vaccine created not in a cold research lab but in the warm human heart itself — a vaccine of the 21st century against stress.

The new corporate mantra. When a gradual growth becomes the mantra of the corporate world, we'll also need leaders that are resilient in spirit and flexible in action. It would mean, continuing the work-from-home practice, exerting less work-pressures and higher motivation and making everyone feel like winners with enormous potential. In all governments, we'd need leaders



who, to quote Tagore, do not “push aside the inner ideal of civilisation by the love of power,” and are not carried away by the “aggressive forces of greed.” Lao-Tzu too addressed his countrymen with his famous “Not self-seeking, he gaineth life.”

It’s all about choosing the luminous above the luxurious. It’s about expanding our economic imagination and doing away with pointless luxuries. As the spiritual teacher Sogyal Rinpoche writes, “Our task is to strike a balance, to find a middle way to learn not to overstretch ourselves with extraneous activities and preoccupations, but to simplify our lives more and more. The key to finding a happy balance in modern lives is simplicity.”

Let simplicity rule. Simplicity buys inner peace, stability and harmony in a complicated world. It doesn’t allow society’s thinking patterns to rule you because you don’t live a life to impress others but are beautifully aligned in body, mind, spirit and intellect within yourself. There’s wellness and well-being in simplicity. To many minds, simplicity equals giving up what they revel in, which equals loss and deprivation. Whereas, simplicity merely means giving up excesses and opting for moderation. After all, overeating and high stress levels cause most illnesses. Some examples:

- * *Acidity:* Inability to digest rich foods. Inability to withstand work-pressure.
- * *Hypertension:* Excess salty snacks. Holding anger or resentment.
- * *Cholesterol:* Fat-laden foods. A sedentary lifestyle where everything is done for you.
- * *Asthma:* Excessive eating — quantity matters. Sad feelings of being suppressed or rejected make the lungs experience a sense of being smothered.
- * *Diabetes:* Too much intake of sugar, with no diet control.

* *Kidney stones:* Accumulation of calcium and protein. Poisonous thoughts that literally crystallise their discomfort.

* *Influenza:* Lack of vitamin C and draining of B vitamins due to continual stress. Fear derived from mass negativity.

Please get out of the excess mode. A new world calls you to put your heart into thoughts and activities that light you up and make miracles happen every day. Begin each day with gratitude at being healthy and alive, at having your loved ones healthy and alive. Generate health and spread cheer to all those you interact with. Be socially distant and emotionally close. Want nothing but mere necessities from material life, as wanting breeds discontent within. Make yourself a container of joy so that you sprinkle it all around you. Singing in the shower is a lovely way of filling yourself with happiness. Avoid complaining, fighting, passing sarcastic remarks, criticising, abusing, belittling. Why burden yourself and others with negativity? Keep the world well with loving words.

Exercise caringly, neither too much, nor too little — cycle, walk or march-on-the-spot for 20–40 minutes. The effects of exercise will be with you like blessings as you do a thousand other things. Moving the body rhythmically focuses scattered physical energies, strengthens its immunity, brings balance and a smooth orderly functioning to our system.

A body-mind spine. Just as a book needs a spine to hold its pages together in orderly chapters, we need a physical spine (a body-movement) and a mental spine (a focused mind) activity to hold us together. This has been my personal experience. Writing brings the world in my mind together. An exercise-regime — stationary cycling, terra band stretches, and abdominal exercises — brings the

teeming world in my body together. And boom... one experiences the miracle of being alive.

Exercise takes care of about 40 per cent of your fear if you suffer from acute anxiety. This is even more relevant today because a virus seems to literally get its foothold on the grid of mass fear. Experts say that the amygdala, two sets of neurons in the brain react first in fear *before* the neocortex or thinking brain can apply reason to the situation. Thus, fear overwhelms reason. A simple exercise takes care of it — switch on pleasing music and sway your head from side to side with the melody. The energy in the brain starts vibrating and circulating all around. This balances the functioning of the amygdala and the neocortex of the brain. Sway until you feel a sense of inner balance return.

While a vaccine for the coronavirus is most welcome, meanwhile, let’s continue to strengthen lifelong our immunity in body and mind through nourishment, cleansing, exercise and rest. We are a resilient, resourceful species. May our vigorous wellness itself be our vaccine against every virus in the world. And may Tagore’s immortal words resound in our being: “The ultimate truth in man is not in his intellect or in his material wealth; it is in his imagination of sympathy, in his illumination of heart, in his activities of self-sacrifice, in his capacity for extending love far and wide across all barriers of caste and colour, in his realising this world not as a storehouse of mechanical power but as a habitation of man’s soul with its eternal music of beauty and its inner light of a divine presence.” We can do it. We can weave wellness and grace into our genes. We can make the world bouncingly, buoyantly, blissfully well again. For Rani.

The writers are authors of Fitness for Life and Simply Spiritual – You Are Naturally Divine and teachers of the Fitness for Life programme.

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Rotary at a glance

Rotarians : 1,181,103

Clubs : 36,169

Districts : 525

Rotaractors : 177,330

Clubs : 10,698

Interactors : 342,953

Clubs : 14,911

RCC : 11,222

As on July 15, 2020

*Please note Interact clubs that have not reported Interact Adviser in the past two Rotary years, are placed in "Suspended" status effective Oct 1, 2019.

Membership Summary

As on July 1, 2020

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians	Rotaract Clubs	*Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	117	5,037	269	51	39	225
2982	71	3,126	194	85	96	56
3000	130	5,353	484	188	256	212
3011	89	3,773	936	57	88	30
3012	107	3,842	945	54	71	59
3020	73	4,146	238	54	155	351
3030	95	5,293	773	115	169	302
3040	92	2,184	246	37	51	147
3053	64	2,833	502	19	39	103
3054	131	6,371	1205	83	143	524
3060	100	4,471	654	59	61	143
3070	106	3,159	463	47	20	59
3080	85	3,452	325	91	141	116
3090	79	2,170	80	38	5	122
3100	100	2,300	193	13	14	146
3110	135	3,800	351	29	7	105
3120	80	3,408	469	46	18	53
3131	139	5,333	1140	110	175	117
3132	86	3,442	361	33	81	158
3141	103	5,757	1397	120	135	92
3142	94	3,476	741	81	118	66
3150	93	3,566	367	59	123	117
3160	76	2,511	186	28	3	83
3170	132	5,835	796	81	198	169
3181	82	3,440	322	63	192	118
3182	83	3,108	248	49	96	98
3190	133	5,167	776	148	144	63
3201	145	5,710	490	107	72	52
3202	138	5,494	349	95	251	46
3211	144	4,570	309	8	24	132
3212	104	4,180	320	102	187	149
3231	97	3,917	460	52	78	392
3232	127	5,800	1125	129	194	93
3240	92	3,117	417	51	390	195
3250	102	3,839	666	67	65	185
3261	75	2,769	455	20	20	43
3262	107	3,756	454	48	37	77
3291	157	3,772	786	89	88	621
India Total	3,963	153,277	20,492	2,606	4,044	5,819
3220	71	1,950	278	83	124	73
3271	106	1,625	281	67	19	22
3272	150	1,714	296	51	15	43
3281	233	6,724	1139	244	46	198
3282	167	4,324	468	178	40	45
3292	126	5,051	804	133	115	116
S Asia Total	4,816	174,665	23,758	3,362	4,403	6,316

Source: RI South Asia Office

From RI South Asia Office desk

Data privacy alert

Club and district directories may contain Rotarians' personal data. Directories should never be distributed to the general public or posted on web pages. Digital directories should be password protected or require a log in to access. When collecting personal information, inform your members how their information will be used.

PAN mandatory

From April 1, 2020, Indian donors must provide PAN for contributions made online/by cheque/draft, irrespective of value or the donor's intention to claim tax exemption under Section 80G of the IT Act, 1961. Tax exemption certificate will be issued to the remitter of the funds only subject to availability of PAN.

Download the revised communication assets on Brand Center

With the start of the new Rotary Year, access the Brand Center by signing in or registering in your My Rotary account and download the following newly revised documents that will be useful to you.

1. Rotarians can now download a new PowerPoint template, in languages, from the Rotary Brand Center for their club presentations, giving them an updated tool to promote Rotary service, share their stories, and conduct trainings. It has links to Rotary resources, such as official logos, photos, videos, and brand guidelines. Rotarians can choose colour and layout options, all in keeping with the Rotary style guidelines for brand consistency. Rotarians should use this redesigned PPT for all club presentations. To access, log-in to the Brand Center, go to Materials, Club Resources and then Presentations.
2. Download the new Voice and Visual Identity guidelines. It provides essential information to help you build Rotary's brand, understand the difference between Rotary's Masterbrand Signature and Masterbrand Signature Simplified, write in Rotary's voice and follow Rotary's colour palette while designing various new club documents and assets. It has also been updated to include references to People of Action; the new vision statement; guidelines for using the Mark of Excellence, Masterbrand Signature and Simplified Rotary Masterbrand Signature.■

Convention Countdown

Tall tale

Hank Sartin



Standing at 1,667 feet, the Taipei 101 Tower will be impossible to miss when you are in Taipei for the 2021 Rotary International Convention

from June 12 to 16. When the tower opened in 2004, it was the tallest building in the world, a title it held until it was surpassed by Dubai's Burj Khalifa in 2007.

The design of Taipei 101 is rich with cultural significance. The number of occupied floors, 101, suggests going one better than 100, a number associated with perfection. The upper part of the tower above the base has eight sections of eight floors each — eight being an auspicious number associated with prosperity and good fortune. The stacked shape evokes a stalk of bamboo, a traditional building material throughout Asia. And like a stalk of bamboo, the tower is designed to be flexible and structurally resilient in the face of typhoon winds or even an earthquake.

The big attraction, of course, is the chance to go up. There is an enclosed public observatory on the 89th floor, and the truly brave can head to an outdoor observation deck on the 91st floor. If the thought of that makes your head spin, you can still enjoy the luxury shopping mall in the atrium. From any angle, Taipei 101 is a must-see destination that deftly blends tradition and modernity, just like the city it watches over.

Learn more
and register
at
convention.
rotary.org.





RC Tiruvarur Midtown — RID 2981

The frontline warriors against Covid including policemen, conservancy workers, and ambulance crew are being given food, gloves and masks on a daily basis by club members as part of their ongoing relief work against the pandemic.

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — RID 3012

The club, in association with an NGO Dastak, is supporting the education of girl children hailing from underprivileged families for the past 10 years. The Rotarians recently distributed stationery items and masks to the students.



RC Vizag Elite — RID 3020

An electric buggy for easy movement of patients between different blocks at Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital and Research Centre was donated to the hospital authorities by the club.

RC Nagpur Fort — RID 3030

A metro train ride was organised for students of the Antarbharati School. It was a dream ride for these children hailing from underprivileged families.



Matters



RC Hoshangabad — RID 3040

The club members donated 40 PPE kits and 250 masks to the District Collector as part of their Covid relief efforts which enhanced the public image of Rotary in the city.

RC Alwar Greater — RID 3053

A physiotherapy centre was inaugurated at Bapu Bazaar, Mahavir Marg, in the city in partnership with the Mahavir Jain Aushadhalaya. The centre will serve nearly 50,000 people in the neighbourhood at a nominal amount of ₹50 per person.



RC Jaipur — RID 3054

A prosthetic hand fitment camp was held in which 78 amputees were fitted with artificial limbs. They were also trained to use the new prosthetics by a team of experts.

RC Wadhwan Metro — RID 3060

The club has installed hand-free sanitisers at three places in the city as part of its Covid-relief efforts. The hygiene facilities enhanced the public image of Rotary in the localities.



RC Kapurthala Elite — RID 3070

The Rotarians donated wheelchairs to the physically-challenged to enable them to be mobile and take care of their needs to an extent.



RC Dehradun Central — RID 3080

The club organised a brainstorming session followed by games for the students at the Rotary Deaf and Dumb Centre. Past President Atul Kumar gifted a computer to the centre.



RC Nabha Greater Nabha — RID 3090

A blood donation camp was held at the Civil Hospital to mark the first day of Rotary year, July 1, with Rotarians and public donating around 43 units of blood. The event also created goodwill for Rotary in the neighbourhood.

RC Kanpur North — RID 3110

A four-day *Rotary Khel Mahotsava* was held jointly with the Kanpur Olympic Association. Around 70 teams comprising 1,300 sportspersons took part in various games. PDG Vinay Asthana felicitated the winners and sports veterans.



Matters

RC Kushinagar — RID 3120

The club distributed food packets, masks, soaps and ration kits to needy and migrant families during the pandemic for 20 consecutive days. The ration kits comprise 5kg of rice, soyabean, mustard oil, gram, salt, potato, onion, starch and toiletries.



RC Pune Parvati — RID 3131

Face masks were distributed to families at Sutardara, a slum colony, after a resident was infected with Covid-19. More such masks were given to security men, sweepers and maid servants in a residential complex. In all, 500 masks were distributed by the club.



RC Dombivli Industrial Area — RID 3142

A guest lecture on cyber laws was held at the Holy Angels School, in association with the Mahila Bal Kalyan Samiti and municipal corporation. Around 170 students, 15 teachers and municipal officials benefitted from the seminar.

RC Belthangady — RID 3181

On the eve of World Environment Day, the club distributed 3,000 saplings to different milk societies through Taluk MLC Prathap Simha Nayak in the presence of a large number of Rotarians.



RC Cochin Beachside — RID 3201

A Smart Computer Lab was set up at the club's adopted EM Government HS School, Fort Kochi. Club President Sanal Kumar donated desktop computers worth ₹1 lakh to the school library.



RC Dharapuram — RID 3202

The satellite unit of this club provided cooking utensils to 50 families employed in construction and well-drilling work to overcome the corona pandemic and challenges during the lockdown.



RC Alleppey East — RID 3211

A high-end ICU ventilator worth ₹10.5 lakh was installed at the Alleppey Medical College Hospital with Club President Dr Binu Mathew handing over the equipment to District Collector A Alexander in an event.

RC Nagercoil Blossoms — RID 3212

A statue of Rotary Founder Paul Harris was installed at a children's park on the YMCA premises. IPDG Sheik Saleem and DGN Jacintha Dharma were the guests of honour at the event.



Matters

RC Vellore Cosmos — RID 3231

The club members have donated ₹40,000 to RISAO for taking up Covid-relief work across the country. The funds being collected from all the districts will be transferred to the PM CARES Fund by RI South Asia Office.



RC Karimganj — RID 3240

A waiting shed for visitors was constructed at the India-Bangladesh border and this facility costing over ₹5 lakh was sponsored by club members with main contribution from Project Chair Saumyabrata Dutta. BSF Inspector General Prafulla Kumar Roushan inaugurated the visitors' shed.



RC Raigad Steel City — RID 3261

Four classrooms and two toilet blocks were built for 40 deaf children of a special school. Besides, the club has provided tube lights, fans, desk-benches and blackboards for all classrooms. Footwear were given to students and swings were installed at this Happy School. The project cost ₹5 lakh.

RC Central Calcutta — RID 3291

With a surge in enrolment at the Nibaran Roy High School, the club constructed an extra classroom to accommodate students and donated furniture to a primary school in Tarkeshwar.



Compiled by V Muthukumaran
Designed by L Gunasekaran

Lockdowns have their rewards too...



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

For the last few months everyone has been complaining about the lockdowns. But I think there is a nicer aspect to them as well. This despite the fact that last month my wife and I became grandparents when my elder son's wife gave birth to a boy and our happiness has been hugely tempered by the knowledge that we will not be able to see him for several months. But all such annoying things about this terrible virus aside, I must say it has its funny and pleasant moments too.

One of these, which I cherish most, is that at long last my wife has begun to feel sorry for me. I honestly don't know why but all of a sudden, she has become solicitous and kind. She even cooks things I like these days. That's been a real bonus because she is a top class cook. I keep telling her she missed her vocation. Instead of being a professor, she should have been a chef. Back before the virus this would have led to a fight but not anymore. She just smiles and makes another dish.

Then there's the courier, aah, the courier. There was a time when we both hated the fellows because they had a habit of ringing the doorbell between 3.30 and 4.30 pm, smack in the middle of the siesta. Not anymore. The packages are delivered at the

entrance gate of our complex and are sent across to everyone in the evening or morning. So now we look forward to whatever is coming, from mundane things like brinjals and various gourds to books and even sweets — which I am not allowed even to look at. Still, the courier today is like the postman of yore. The pleasure is in the waiting for the letter or the package.

The other nice thing is the discovery of Indian language films on Netflix and other platforms. Until this lockdown thing happened, I wouldn't even have thought of watching anything that wasn't in Hindi or English. But now I watch films even in Korean and Japanese, as also Assamese, Oriya, Tamil, Malayalam and Bengali. Ninety per cent of these films are rubbish but I don't mind: if I don't like

At long last my wife has begun to feel sorry for me. I honestly don't know why but all of a sudden, she has become more kind. She even cooks things I like these days.

it, I just switch to something else. This was impossible to do in theatres where one sat through terrible films because one had paid so much for the ticket, not to mention the popcorn. In fact, if I happened to doze off while watching a film in a cinema hall, my wife would get quite irritated. But no longer. She even wakes me up with a cup of coffee saying "drink this, you old fool". But this sort of considerate behaviour can be a shade excessive when you wake up to find she has paused the film and is now insisting that you watch the whole thing.

Most of all, though, what I really like about this lockdown is the absence of people. I go for an hour-long walk every morning between 4.30–5, just as the birds are waking up. The first half hour was always wonderful because there was no one walking. But as dawn broke others would come out and I hated talking to them at that hour. I am very antisocial without good filter coffee inside me. But it's great now because of both the mask and social distancing. I stay 15 feet away.

All in all, I think I am reacting exactly as a grandfather should: meanly, selfishly and focused entirely on the baby. I know it will be sometime before he is able to come calling. But if I can look forward to a courier, surely I am entitled to look forward to my first grandchild. ■

In Brief



Parotta masks

A restaurant chain in Madurai is using people's love for parottas to spread awareness on the importance of wearing

face masks to protect against the coronavirus. The restaurant is dishing out parottas shaped like face masks at a cost of ₹50 for a set of two. When the restaurant had opened briefly after the lockdown was relaxed in early June, these parottas were given free to people who walked in without a mask. Since then it has become a huge hit, especially among children. Madurai has the second highest number of Covid infections in the State after Chennai.



Mobile wedding halls

With wedding halls across the State remaining closed due to Covid scare, A Abdul Hakkim, an art designer in Udumalpet, a semi-urban town in Tamil Nadu, has designed a 'mobile wedding hall' to provide the wedding celebration experience. He has transformed a truck into a wedding dais and this mobile wedding hall is driven to the location preferred by the clients. He, along with his team, provides seating arrangement for 50 guests as mandated by the government. Masks and sanitisers are also provided for the guests.



Treasures from the Alpine glaciers

As the Mont Blanc glacier in the Alps mountains melts, it throws up various collectibles. Recently

it threw up copies of Indian newspapers *The Hindu*, *National Herald* and *The Statesman*, that were probably aboard an Air India Boeing 707 from Bombay to New York that crashed near the summit on Jan 24, 1966. Timothy Mottin who runs a café restaurant near the Bossons glacier on the Alps chanced upon these papers after the ice in which they were encased for nearly six decades had just melted. The papers will join a growing collection of found items from the crash that he has put on display at the café. The most stunning find was a box of precious stones thought to have come from the plane crash.

A camera-obsessed photographer

Photographer Ravi Hongal's newly built home in Belgaum, Karnataka, is an expression of his passion for his profession. The three-storeyed building shaped like a DSLR camera and named 'Click' has a glass window similar to a viewfinder; another window is shaped like a camera lens. The building also sports a wide film strip and even a memory card.

The walls and the interiors are decorated with graphics related to photography. Hongal's three sons are named Canon, Nikon and Epson after the iconic camera brands!



Samosas for PM Modi from Australia

Australian PM Scott Morrison shared a drool-worthy image of samosas with chutney on his Twitter account with a caption: "Sunday ScoMosas with mango chutney, all made from scratch - including the chutney! A pity my meeting with @narendramodi this week is by a videolink. They're vegetarian, I would have liked to share them with him." To which PM Modi tweeted: "Connected by the Indian Ocean, united by the Indian Samosa! Looks delicious, PM @ScottMorrisonMP! Once we achieve a decisive victory against COVID-19, we will enjoy the Samosas together. Looking forward to our video meet on the 4th."

Not receiving your copy of Rotary News?

We at Rotary News Trust are trying our best at these challenging times to bring out *Rotary News* in time.

There is a huge disruption in postal services due to India locking down first in March, and several States continuing to lock down every now and then. Train movement has also been badly impacted. The result is a huge delay in many Rotarians across the country getting the magazine. That is why from the April 2020 issue onwards, we are sending complimentary e-version of the magazine to **ALL Rotarians**. But your print copies are also being sent.

As many of your club members are influential members of your communities, we request you to take the time and effort to lodge a strong complaint with your post office if you don't receive the magazine. At the same time, do write to us at rotarynews@rosaonline.org and tell us if you have not received the magazine.

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