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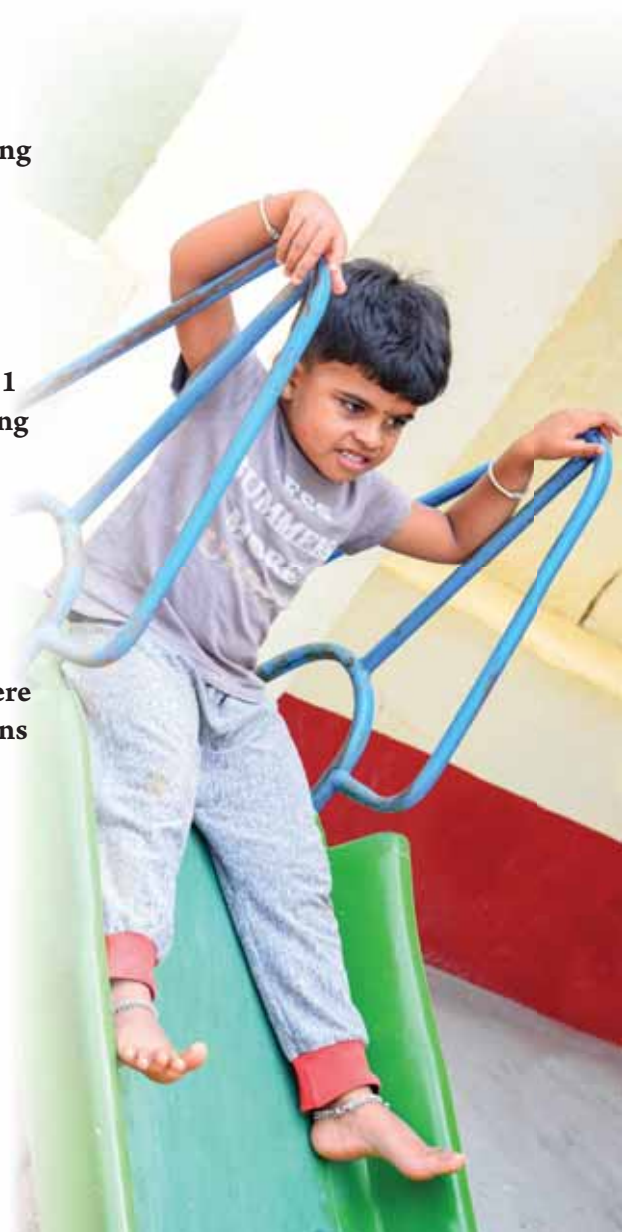
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## A touching cover story

Lalita Anant might have been inspired by the gurukulam concept to impart knowledge to students with the concept of 'Sky above and the mud below'. She has sought to help the younger generation indulging in worthless activities, and left a well-paying job to educate poor children, supported by her spouse Hatim. Congratulations to them. With all humility she says 'We are nobody, we are only instruments of a higher power.' Thank you Rasheeda for the excellent coverage of this extraordinary school.

*VRT Dorairaja*  
*RC Tiruchirapalli — D 3000*

An exemplary Rotary club president, Lalita Anant's open sky school gives many helpless children hope of a bright future. The children and youth who were



wasting their life in gambling and smoking were brought under her care. There are amazing success stories of youngsters now in well-paying jobs. Surely this is more than a university! Lalita is the epitome of our motto, *Service Above Self*. The coverage is refulgent and deserving.

*Tomi Eapen*  
*RC Alleppey — D 3211*

The cover photo in the October issue of a child studying in the

open sky school run by the president of RC Indore Adarsh is touching, and the story is inspiring. All the photos are colourful. The Editor's Note explains well how a single individual's passion and persistence paved the way to progress for many youngsters. RI President Gordon McNally explains how Rotary clubs can do wonders to preserve mental health in people around the world.

RID Raju Subramanian focused on economic and community development which creates hope in the world. Trustee chair Barry Rassin recalls the tireless work of Pakistani health worker Bibi Marjana. All other articles are worth reading and reflect the good work of Rotarians. On the whole, the October magazine is another excellent issue.

*Philip Mulappone M T, RC*  
*Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211*

## A model Rotary project

With unwavering commitment and service projects worth ₹51 lakh, RC Nilgiris has made an indelible mark on the Bettati village community in the Nilgiris. The impact they have had on the students and society as a whole is awe-inspiring. The Panchayat Union Middle School has been transformed into a beacon of hope for the young minds of this rural community. The transformation they've ignited within the students and the society at large serves as an example of how Rotary clubs can usher in lasting change. Headmistress Radha Krishnaraj and her team deserve high praise.

*Bipan Sethi*  
*RC Ahmedgarh — D 3090*

I was moved by the September editorial titled *I have a dream*. It is amazing how changing the environment of a school has helped children to have ambitions and nurture dreams. I am a fan of your writing Rasheeda, whenever I read something you have written, I really find it very interesting. In fact, the whole of *Rotary News* makes a great reading, and I keep recommending it to non-Rotarian friends as well.

*Neena Sondhi*  
*RC Jalandhar South — D 3070*

## Education is the key

RID Anirudha Roychowdhury's views on basic education and literacy are appealing and impressive (Sept issue). When he says that 75

million people, that is 17 per cent of the global population are illiterate, we are able to understand the dire need for organisations like Rotary to help. Rotary clubs must design an appropriate plan of action to provide education and build a developed society.

*R Srinivasan, RC Bangalore*  
*J P Nagar — D 3191*

RI President Gordon McNally has rightly said that as people of action, Rotarians must create hope in the world to avoid war. He gives the example of Rotarians from Pakistan and India meeting at the Kartarpur Sahib Gurudwara. Hope both governments draw inspiration from his words and work towards



In her article, *Where magic happens with open sky education*, Rasheeda Bhagat explains how Lalita Sharma's excellent open-to-sky school has helped underprivileged children. In rural areas children still have to sit and study under the open sky, as there is a constant fear of falling roof at dilapidated school buildings. This project shows that dedicated teachers can work wonders even under the open sky.

RI President McNally talks about the Pakistani government taking an important step, creating hope for peace, by admitting Indian pilgrims to the Kartarpur Gurudwara.

*KMK Murthy  
RC Secunderabad —  
D 3150*

peace and prosperity among people of South Asia.

*S Muniandi  
RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000*

It was with a great sense of pride that I read the story about the women prisoners and the work done by RC Bilaspur. I congratulate Hamida Siddiqui for successfully conducting this project. What joy and hope the project would have created for the prisoners, especially the children. This is certainly one-of-a-kind project.

My heart bled when I read about the plight of the women prisoners. Thank you for writing this article.

*Sajan Suresh  
RC Kalpetta — D 3204*

### An excellent article on Laxmikant-Pyarelal

The feature on Laxmikant-Pyarelal is lovely with interesting nuggets of information on their personal lives and musical journey. It is amazing to see a certain degree of freshness in every piece written by SR Madhu. It is more than mere writing; he has 'composed' the article with his pen. This quote from Shakespeare, 'Age does not wither nor custom stale her infinite variety' aptly describes his writing.

*Sampath Kumar, former editor  
The Hindu Businessline*

I express my gratitude on behalf of our DG Ghanshyam Kansal and all the 2,500 Rotarians of RID 3090 for a good coverage of our Interact clubs in the October issue, and thank Kiran Zehra for the write-up. I really appreciate your policy of giving a balanced coverage based on merit for Rotary events across India.

*Manik Raj Singla  
Interact chair, RID 3090*

Congrats to IPP Jayashree from RC Rajgurunagar, RID 3131, for distributing 170 sewing machines and masala mixers to women who had lost their husbands during the Covid pandemic at a cost of ₹20 lakh, as mentioned in the article *Helping women*

and tribals. The club also provided solar lamps to tribals in a valley which did not have roads and lights.

*N Jagatheesan, RC Eluru — D 3020*

RC Delhi North's installing a Deep Transcranial Magnetic Stimulator at the Cosmos Institute of Mental and Behavioural Sciences (Sept issue) is a great venture. Club president Raj Gopal Rangwala deserves laurels.

*Ashok Jindal  
RC Nabha Greater — D 3090*

Whenever I receive *Rotary News*, I start reading from the last page. That's because of the LBW column by TCA Srinivasa Raghavan. His articles are funny and relevant and give immense pleasure. Then I go to the beginning of the magazine... to read the very relevant and interesting Editor's note by Rasheeda Bhagat.

*Guru Dutt NK  
RC Dombivli East — D 3142*

The cover story, *RC Nilgiris creates a model government school*, in the September issue is well-written detailing the various aspects of the initiatives taken by the club in giving a new face to the dilapidated school in Bettati. Going through the article gave me profound joy.

*S N Shanmugam  
RC Panruti — D 2981*

**On the cover:** Agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan who helped conquer famine in India. He passed away on September 28, 2023.

*We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor: [rotarynews@rosaonline.org](mailto:rotarynews@rosaonline.org); [rushbhagat@gmail.com](mailto:rushbhagat@gmail.com). Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos, to [rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com](mailto:rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com).*

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## The road to peace

**T**his month, Rotary takes a step toward supporting peacebuilding in the Middle East and North Africa region.

In November, Rotary and District 2420 are hosting a signing ceremony for our newest peace centre in partnership with Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul.

The ceremony is the first in a series of events recognising the new centre at BAU and Rotary's work to promote peace. The 2024 Rotary International Convention in May will mark 25 years since the first Rotary Peace Centers were announced — coincidentally at the Rotary Convention in Singapore in 1999. Recruitment for the first cohort of Rotary Peace Fellows at BAU also starts in 2024, and selected candidates will begin their programme in early 2025.

Since its beginning, the peace centres programme has prepared more than 1,700 peace fellows working in more than 140 countries to create a more peaceful world. That is certainly worth celebrating, but Rotary Peace Fellows are more than statistics on a page. Their actions have helped *Create Hope* in the World and will continue to do so.

For example, Jennifer Montgomery and Goret Komurembe — peace fellows from the programme at Makerere University in Uganda — are co-founders of Magenta Girls Initiative. The international non-governmental organisation equips Ugandan girls and young women with the support and tools to overcome harmful gender norms, generational poverty, gender-based violence, trafficking and trauma.

Ndzi Divine Njamsi, another peace fellow who studied at Makerere, has taken lessons, learned about

Positive Peace and is sharing them with students of his own in Cameroon. He became interested in the Rotary Positive Peace Activator training programme after witnessing extremism, online hate speech, and violence in Cameroon. Since completing the programme, he has brought his lessons on peace to students at the Yaoundé International Business School and other organisations in the Central Africa country.

The world needs more people like the graduates of the programme at Makerere and our other peace fellows. To that end, we can all advance peace by encouraging our local peacebuilders to learn more about Rotary and apply for this impactful fellowship. Rotary members can also mentor candidates for the fellowship. Or you can work with peace fellows who have already graduated. They probably have an initiative or two that would benefit from your help.

Our peace centres in North America, Europe, Africa, Australia and Asia depend on financial support as well. The programme at BAU was made possible thanks to a generous gift of \$15.5 million to The Rotary Foundation from the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation.

This new Rotary Peace Center will offer a one-year professional development certificate in peace and development studies for fellows focusing on peacebuilding within the Middle East and North Africa region.

Peace must be waged persistently; it is the soil where hope takes root. But as with any journey, we take one step at a time. Let's take those steps together.

**Gordon McNally**

President, Rotary International





## MS Swaminathan will be missed...

**I**t was with great sadness that I read about the passing away of Prof MS Swaminathan, father of the Green Revolution. Only those who have suffered the pangs of hunger, and have gone to bed hungry, or worse, experienced the torture of coaxing their little children to go to sleep on a hungry stomach, will truly understand what food security means. Not those who overload their refrigerators with food items, only to throw out some whose expiry date has been triggered.

In my 45 years as a journalist, I became extremely fond of two Indian scientists. For their brilliance, knowledge and expertise of course, but also for their humility, simplicity, kindness and courtesy they always extended to me. The first was leather scientist Y Nayudumma, who was so cruelly killed when his Air India flight was bombed by Sikh extremists in 1985. He was only 63. Born in an agricultural family near Guntur in Andhra Pradesh, he had held prestigious positions such as director general of CSIR and vice-chancellor of JNU, Delhi. Interestingly, a meeting of RC Madras in the early '80s where he was honoured and I reported on it, brought us close! The next morning, I was thrilled to get a handwritten note from the great scientist, praising the "remarkably accurate report of my speech" in the *Indian Express*! After that I met him several times at his CLRI office — the first time he said with a soft smile: "Do you know the chair on which you are seated and the flooring in this office is of leather that we have made?"

We became friends, and he was my sole encyclopaedia when it came to writing anything on leather. Once, over a cup of coffee, when I remarked at the simplicity and humility of such a great scientist, he said with a twinkle in his eye: "I am still a villager at heart; you can take the boy out of the village, but not the village out of the boy." That was the first time I had heard this quaint and famous line. His untimely and tragic death came as a huge blow.

Similarly, MS Swaminathan was an equally brilliant, affable and approachable scientist, minus any airs or a chip on his shoulder. My homage to him in this issue talks about the way he treated and interacted with journalists. I'll just add one more point here. He was so caring that after every luncheon seminar or conference that the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation in Chennai hosted, he would personally come across to each of us and ensure that we left only after having the simple but delicious lunch on offer. He knew very well my penchant for scooting as soon as the conference was over and would warn me at the very beginning: 'Don't leave without having your lunch; you should always eat on time!'

Such courtesy and caring, affability, gentleness, simplicity and humility are hard to come by. Admittedly, this country has seen many such brilliant scientists, who wore their greatness lightly. I knew two of them at a personal level... and will miss them both... always.

**Rasheeda Bhagat**

# Find your convention moment



**S**ome members say their most memorable moments of the Rotary International Convention come from the excitement they feel surrounded by the global grandeur of it all. The country flags are paraded in (by ice skaters at the 1996 convention in Calgary!), thousands of fellow people of action fill an arena around you, and you might hear a dozen languages while walking the House of Friendship.

Three-time attendee Jerry Coughter, a member of the Rotary Club of Charlotte in North Carolina, says he keeps going for the uplifting feeling from being with thousands of others striving to live up to *Service Above Self*. “It just makes you feel good to be a part of it,” he says.

Other people experience a “convention moment” — an instant when you sense Rotary’s breadth and your spot in a worldwide

movement — when they hear a speaker who is so inspiring that the stories and ideas stick with them and spread through their years of Rotary service. That spirit underpins the theme for the convention 25–29 May in Singapore: *Sharing Hope With the World*.

Perhaps your convention moment in Singapore will happen when you reconnect with friends made at past conventions or, if it’s your first convention, when you realise that thousands of people are potential friends with the same conviction for service. At the 2023 convention in Melbourne, Amal El-Sisi, of the Rotary Club of El Tahrir in Egypt, says she greeted people she had only emailed like they were siblings. “That’s the feeling: a family of Rotarians,” she says.

**Learn more and register at**  
**[convention.rotary.org](https://convention.rotary.org)**

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Magazine

## Director speak



**A**s we step into November, a month dedicated to The Rotary Foundation and its profound global impact, we find ourselves at the threshold of hope.

The Rotary Foundation shines as a guiding light for hope, embodying the values and dreams we all share. It's here that every contribution, idea and action fuels our ability to drive positive change.

Trustee Chair Barry Rassin set an exemplary precedent by gracing us with his presence just two months into the new Rotary year. His visit was not merely symbolic; it underlined the paramount importance we place on our goals and targets.

The Annual Fund, often referred to as the lifeblood of TRF, is the engine that propels us. It empowers us to expand our reach, respond swiftly to emerging needs and maintain financial stability.

While India consistently ranks second in total donations, there's room to increase the percentage of Annual Fund donors contributing within the range of \$25 to \$1,000. This will not only elevate our ranking but also provide more resources for our projects.

Every single member, without exception, should make contributions

## Let's work for TRF with shared purpose

to the Foundation's mission. Currently, 30 per cent of our clubs are not contributing, and this is where our collective focus should be.

In just two and a half months of this Rotary year, several districts have already achieved the remarkable feat of 100 per cent club contribution to the Foundation. This showcases what we can achieve when we work together with a shared purpose.

The trustees of TRF have set an audacious target of \$500 million this year, with a significant portion allocated to the Endowment Fund, which is the cornerstone of the Foundation's future. It's time for us to unlock the potential hidden within the folds of the Endowment Fund, with a goal of reaching \$2.025 billion by 2025.

Partnerships are integral to our success. While we've made strides with corporate partnerships through CSR initiatives in India, let's expand our horizons globally and explore partnerships with charitable trusts and foundations on a global scale, as exemplified by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Allocating a portion of Major Gifts to the Annual Fund will significantly enhance our ability to make a more substantial impact and pave the way for a future filled with meaningful service.

Friends, let's seize this month with renewed commitment. We can be the changemakers and trailblazers, illuminating the path of hope and making a lasting impact on countless lives and communities worldwide.

**Anirudha Roychowdhury**

RI Director, 2023–25

## The magnitude of our impact



**T**his month, as we celebrate The Rotary Foundation, let's recognise it for what it is: one of the world's best humanitarian organisations.

Many charities, relief organisations and nonprofits do the same type of work, and the public associates them with the causes they work on. But I wonder how many people know that Rotary supports those same causes — seven of them in fact — which we call our areas of focus.

If they want clean water, good health and a sustainable future for our planet, they support what our Foundation does. If they envision a world where peace, full literacy and economic opportunities for communities to support themselves exist, they also believe in Rotary's mission. And if they want to see mothers and their babies thrive, their vision aligns with the work we do.

And we have a lot of work in progress through the Foundation. Polio eradication is changing the world, one drop of vaccine at a time. Rotary Peace Centers are training peacebuilders to reduce violence and resolve conflict. And through Foundation global and district grants, we are improving lives in a real way.

The way we work also sets us apart. We have global reach, with more than 48,000 field offices in the form of Rotary and Rotaract clubs. We emphasise good stewardship of your funds and efficient implementation of your projects. And we always aim for sustainable solutions.

During the 2022–23 Rotary year, the Foundation awarded 1,098 global grants. If you think of what a single grant can do, you begin to grasp the scale of our work and the magnitude of our impact — an impact people can see and feel in their daily lives. Our district supported a global grant project that focused on basic education and literacy in Malawi, where we helped train 38 teachers who are responsible for 4,000 students. We also built two toilets and installed a pump, so they had water for drinking and hand washing.

I will never forget that when Esther and I visited the school, a young boy pointed to my Rotary pin, recognising it from other volunteers who wore their pins during the project. He said, "I know you helped me. I won't be able to travel to thank the others who helped me, so please thank them for me." So thank you, Rotary, on behalf of a child in Malawi whose future you made a little brighter, and on behalf of thousands of others you have helped by supporting TRF.

**Barry Rassin**  
TRF Trustee Chair

## Let's work harder to remain at the top



**I**n the midst of conflict, wars and disasters — natural and others — The Rotary Foundation stands as a beacon of hope. Hope for mitigating suffering, healing wounds and bringing peace and goodwill in our world. From a small beginning in 1917, today TRF is a leading agency for doing humanitarian good. It is well respected, nimble, efficient and transparent, and for the 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row, has got a 4-star rating from Charity Navigator. That's good news. And it is a reflection of my belief that giving to TRF is truly 'effective giving'.

Whether it is life-saving paediatric cardiac surgeries in Mumbai, or setting up an ICU and operation theatre in Dhule, running blood banks in Bengaluru and Delhi, WASH projects across India or VTTs and medical missions in Africa, through its various projects, TRF is improving lives and transforming communities across the world.

The impact of global grants transfers across the world and district grants allow us to meet local needs. And we are closer than ever to a polio-free world. All this depends on our support to TRF. We must support all the three funds. Our support to the Annual Fund today helps us to do global grants tomorrow; Endowment Fund support ensures a bright future for TRF. And Polio Fund is vital for a polio-free world.

It is a reflection of our belief and commitment to TRF that in Rotary year 2022–23, Indian districts contributed over \$31 million to TRF. That's truly remarkable. I salute the sacrifice, dedication, generosity and service of Rotarians and Rotary families of our zones for this achievement. Compliments to the 22–23 DGs and their TRF teams, and to the Zonal leadership teams, for this outstanding achievement which enabled India to be the second highest contributor in the world. Thank you one and all.

But when you are at the top we have to work harder to remain there. So let the 23–24 teams put in their best efforts as we aim for bigger, better and bolder projects and support to TRF. Best wishes to the DGs and the regional teams.

As we *Create Hope in the World*, as new opportunities open up before us, let us continue to support TRF. Together we can and we will change the world.

**Bharat Pandya**  
TRF Trustee Vice Chair



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## Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 37,057

Rotaract clubs : 11,265

Interact clubs : 14,594

RCCs : 13,141

Rotary members : 1,185,749

Rotaract members: 168,305

Interact members : 335,662

*As on October 16, 2023*

## Membership Summary

As on October 1, 2023

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	138	6,087	6.28	73	493	34	254
2982	85	3,814	6.45	35	841	89	164
3000	137	6,012	12.08	111	1,740	211	215
3011	137	5,069	29.14	85	2,388	132	37
3012	154	3,834	22.82	76	820	94	61
3020	86	5,068	7.60	48	1,042	117	351
3030	101	5,714	15.91	126	1,946	480	384
3040	112	2,471	14.73	53	831	77	213
3053	74	2,980	16.11	36	593	42	131
3055	80	2,932	11.90	67	1,095	70	376
3056	89	3,889	25.76	51	585	103	201
3060	105	5,054	15.93	68	2,221	58	143
3070	125	3,346	16.17	49	542	51	63
3080	109	4,226	12.38	125	1,707	158	122
3090	114	2,512	6.53	49	617	191	166
3100	114	2,280	11.93	15	138	36	151
3110	146	3,888	11.03	17	110	41	106
3120	88	3,653	16.01	42	531	27	55
3131	143	5,788	26.55	145	2,671	231	146
3132	88	3,648	13.68	40	579	111	186
3141	115	6,133	27.21	154	5,220	163	223
3142	107	3,990	21.53	95	2,172	100	92
3150	110	4,372	12.83	155	1,849	104	130
3160	84	2,744	8.86	32	228	95	82
3170	148	6,642	15.40	120	1,789	176	179
3181	87	3,644	10.62	39	469	81	118
3182	87	3,663	10.26	46	238	106	103
3191	92	3,535	18.27	108	2,780	131	35
3192	82	3,553	20.97	121	2,522	104	40
3201	173	6,738	9.80	136	2,183	96	93
3203	95	5,024	7.60	90	1,221	154	39
3204	75	2,474	7.28	24	226	17	13
3211	159	5,125	8.12	11	178	19	134
3212	127	4,718	11.15	93	3,644	155	153
3231	96	3,477	7.33	39	437	39	417
3232	187	6,595	19.77	128	7,298	148	100
3240	105	3,596	16.80	72	1,135	66	227
3250	109	4,173	21.40	68	952	65	191
3261	105	3,504	22.69	23	242	23	45
3262	113	3,843	15.85	76	735	642	285
3291	143	3,866	25.69			69	734
<b>India Total</b>	<b>4,624</b>	<b>173,674</b>		<b>2,941</b>	<b>57,008</b>	<b>4,906</b>	<b>6,958</b>
3220	70	2,007	16.34	98	4,604	84	77
3271	177	3,030	17.95	192	3,309	332	28
3272	161	2,273	14.78	91	1,272	25	49
3281	337	8,272	17.92	281	1,986	144	213
3282	182	3,633	9.74	203	1,374	30	47
3292	154	5,615	18.49	182	5,348	117	134
<b>S Asia Total</b>	<b>5,705</b>	<b>198,504</b>	<b>15.49</b>	<b>3,988</b>	<b>74,901</b>	<b>5,638</b>	<b>7,506</b>

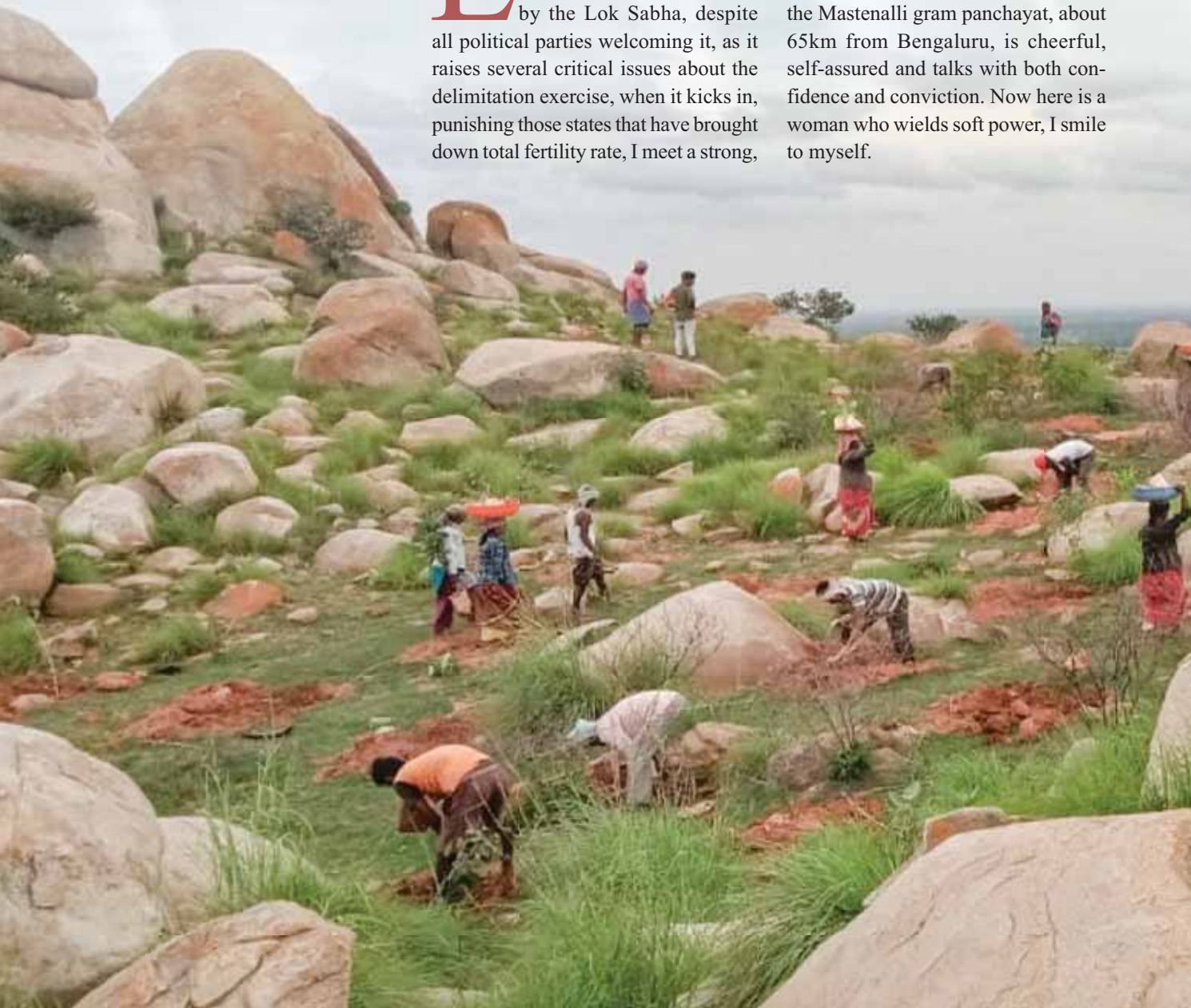
Source: RI South Asia Office

# RC Bangalore rejuvenates Palar river, transforms villages

Rasheeda Bhagat

**E**ven as there is a lot of political turmoil over the passage of the women's quota Bill by the Lok Sabha, despite all political parties welcoming it, as it raises several critical issues about the delimitation exercise, when it kicks in, punishing those states that have brought down total fertility rate, I meet a strong,

dynamic and vibrant woman panchayat leader in Karnataka. Dressed in a dark pink saree, Rojamma, president of the Mastenalli gram panchayat, about 65km from Bengaluru, is cheerful, self-assured and talks with both confidence and conviction. Now here is a woman who wields soft power, I smile to myself.





We are quite a group — past president of RC Bangalore VS Ranga Rao, a Rotarian of 23 years and a trailblazer; club member Ravishankar Dakoju, who had committed ₹100 crore to TRF and is busy spearheading some mega environmental projects; Ramakant, a director from the Art of Living (AOL) Foundation; and Sreenivasa Rao, a former deputy conservator of Forests. But she holds her own in this group, speaking in Kannada interspersed with enough English to ensure that I understand what she says.

“I am full happy with Rotary; thanks to Rotary we are getting filtered water, small babies and young children are benefitting in the anganwadis, getting good nutrition and healthcare from the Rotary club’s anganwadi development project. The villagers are really happy,” she smiles.

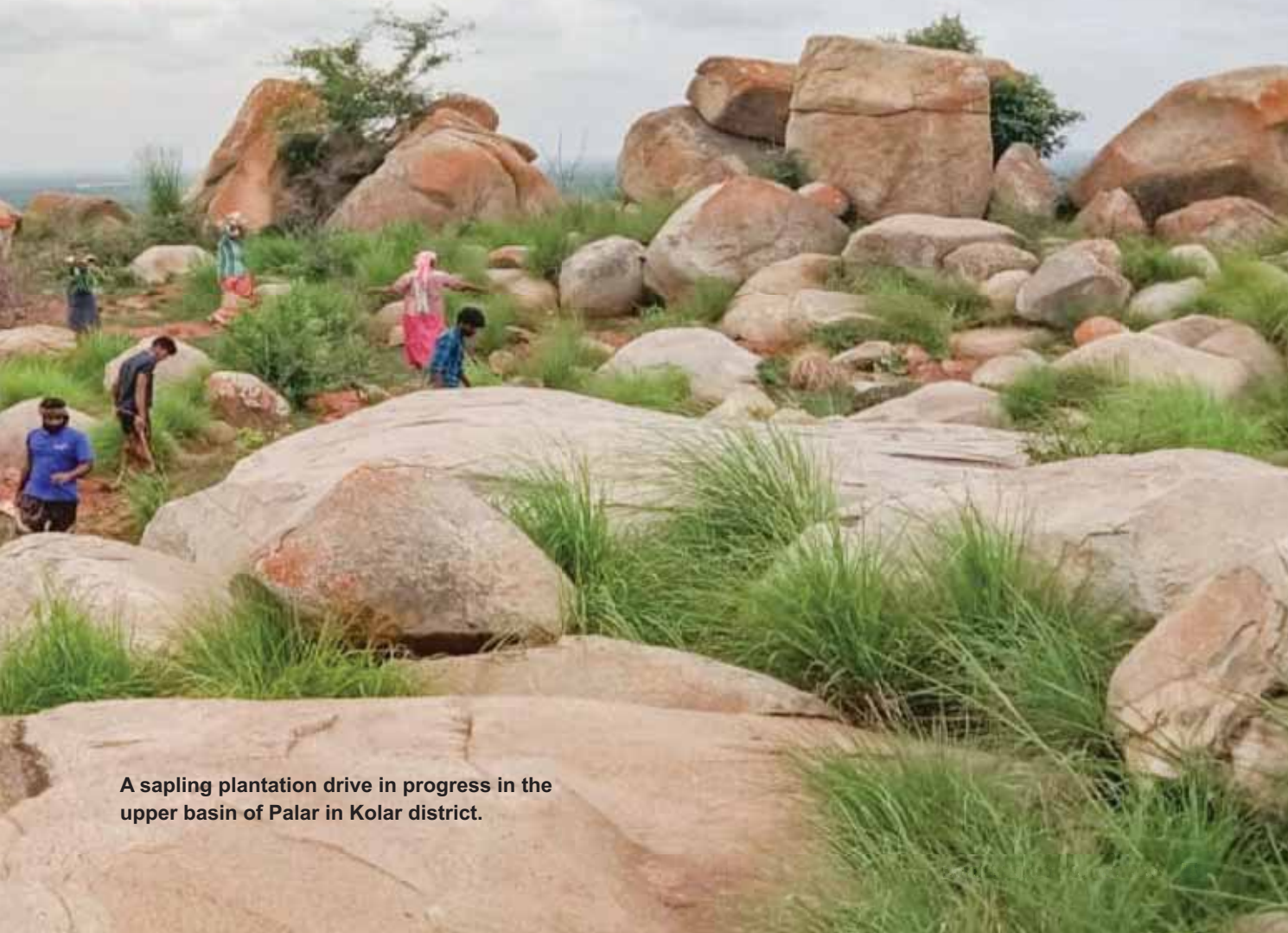
She explains that the six villages under this panchayat have a total population of over 6,000 people. “Their club has reconstructed three anganwadis, of which two were fully constructed as they were actually falling apart. For many years, the primary schools in these villages were in a dilapidated condition... Rotary has reconstructed all these schools.”

As she reels off the names of the places where the schools have been converted into ‘smart’ schools, Ranga Rao, the architect of the mega project to support and restore the riverine ecosystem bang at the origin of River Palar, smiles and explains the objective of the project and how it has striven to focus on the “holistic development of this area and its people”.

Tracing its genesis, he says for a long time RC Bangalore had wanted

to do a sustainable and big ecological project, and finally zeroed in on the Palar, an interstate river which originates in Karnataka and flows through Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The project was finalised by then club president Vincent Raj and his board in 2021–22.

The core team, or the Palar Action Group working on this project (including past president of RC Bangalore Orchards and now a member RC Bangalore Ravishankar Dakoju, who is passionate about environmental conservation projects), which had been researching and brainstorming on this project for quite some time, identified AOL as a partner. AOL has been deeply engaged in reviving and rejuvenating lakes, “and we were planning a massive afforestation drive in the upper basin of Palar in Kolar district,” says Ranga Rao.



**A sapling plantation drive in progress in the upper basin of Palar in Kolar district.**



# Winning over villagers... Rotary style

**T**he most formidable challenge in getting support from the locals in the six villages in RCB's lofty objective of afforestation and water conservation and augmentation in the driest parts of the Palar river basin "was convincing the villagers that we were their friends. For instance, when we started our afforestation drive, we realised that the villagers were confused. ...they said first of all there is no rain, no business, hence no income, but at least we have land to graze our cattle. Now they are putting plants and trees, so even that will go."

So we realised that there will be a problem, because the trees we plant will take 3–5 years to

grow," recalls RC Bangalore member and a core team member of this project Ravishankar Dakoju.

The villagers were also concerned about the grazing land for their cattle (which was later given at another location). So they had to be taken along; "and we brought them on board and started to involve them by doing what we do best... which is schools, toilet blocks, anganwadis, PHCs, street lamps, etc," says VS Ranga Rao, the main architect of the project.

As the schools and anganwadis were repaired or rebuilt, two schools from scratch and one more will be done soon, not only the villagers, but also the panchayat and other local leaders were happy and realised that along with the promised long-term benefits, they were

getting better schools for their children, good anganwadis and a much improved health and hygiene infrastructure in the six villages. "They are now much more willing to wait for the long-term restoration to happen; they know that ultimately, thanks to the tree planting and water table improvement efforts, the rain will come, and their water needs will be met. We knew that only where the basic needs of the villagers were met, it would be possible for the residents to respond positively and help in the growth of the thousands of plants that were to be planted."

An RO water filter with a capacity of 500 litres has been put up by Rotary in Marapanalli village and three villages benefit from this. The farmers in the area grow mulberry,









I gaze at the hillock from the top of which the mighty Palar river is said to have its origin. I know it's an unfair comparison, but having visited Gaumukh and Gangotri to witness the origin of the roaring Ganga river, and having enjoyed the gushing, magical waters of the Bhagirathi and the Mandakini rivers in the Garhwal Himalayas, I was disappointed to see the dry, rocky area where little water is visible, and where I am shown a 'kalyani' (a little temple pond) which has been covered by a netted fencing and where not much water is visible.

Sensing my confusion coupled with disappointment, Ramakant, director of River Rejuvenation from AOL explains, "The Palar was a much larger river once upon a time, say 30 years back, and it was flowing freely... something like what you see

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**Once upon a time Palar was a flourishing, large river, but over time, it dwindled and died. We humans destroyed it, as we destroy everything, by blocking the nullahs and the routes through which rivers flow, by our haphazard and misplaced 'development'.**

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**Ravishankar Dakoju**  
member, RCB

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in Vellore today. But of course, at the top of this hillock, it originates only as a small stream and many streams — several of them flowing under the ground — come together to become the river." The kalyani was constructed at the bottom of the hill from where the river begins in the form of a spring, near the existing Kolaramma Temple to trap the water, which continues to flow beyond the temple pond.

**D**akoju explains that this is essentially an afforestation and water conservation and rejuvenation project but on a massive scale, taking up a mammoth area of 150–175 acres. "When we were brainstorming about doing a massive and transformational ecological conservation project,

**From L: RC Bangalore member Ravishankar Dakoju; Sreenivasa Reddy from Art of Living; panchayat president Rojamma; Ramakant, director, River Rejuvenation, AOL (5<sup>th</sup> from L); V S Ranga Rao, past president, RC Bangalore (6<sup>th</sup> from L) and former deputy conservator of Forests Sreenivasa Rao (2<sup>nd</sup> from R) in front of the kalyani from where the Palar River begins.**





**Boulder check****Recharge well****Recharge borewell****Pond**

## About Palar River

**T**he Palar is a rainfed river and runs through three states — Karnataka — Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu — and has a length of 348km. Beginning as a small spring at an elevation of 800m above mean sea level in eastern Karnataka, the Palar flows through Kolar and Bangarupet taluks, eventually forming the

massive Bethamangal tank, which serves as the primary source of water for the Kolar Gold Field region. It ends in the Bay of Bengal in Tamil Nadu.

The total area of the Palar basin is 17,633.19 sqkm — of which 3,123 sqkm are in Karnataka, 4,267 sqkm in Andhra Pradesh and 10,273.19 sqkm in Tamil Nadu.

we thought now that Rotary is 117 years old, we have to think big. And RCB is the fourth largest club in India with over 335 members, and is an 89-year-old-club. We want to take on large and long-term projects. Once upon a time this was one of the most flourishing, large rivers, but over time, it has dwindled and died. Actually, we humans only destroyed it, as we

destroy everything, by blocking the *nullahs* and the routes through which rivers have to flow, by our haphazard and misplaced ‘development’.”

He adds, angrily, “We indulge in chopping of trees, deforestation and abuse of nature in so many different ways. As you were told, the same river goes to Vellore where it is flourishing but it has died here, leaving the region





dry and barren and the villages struggling for clean, potable water.”

The afforestation drive has already started and in the last two years the Rotarians “have planted over 175 acres, some 30,000 plants which were identified by the forest department, panchayat and the villagers. And we have also constructed this kalyani,” says Ranga Rao.

Water shortage has been the main problem in this region but if this AOL-Rotary partnership keeps going and slowly achieves its lofty objectives, the water deprivation story can change. And it is indeed changing. I ask Rojamma if the people in the region are happy with this initiative. “Yes, they are a little happy now... slowly they are getting benefits,” she says.

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**We next want to give cows, sheep and chicken to the people in the six villages; train them to plant millets in drought conditions to enhance their income, and provide some skills to the youth in order to retain them in their villages.**

**VS Ranga Rao**  
past president, RCB

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Ultimately, results matter. Sreenivasa Reddy from AOL relates a success story: “Before we entered the scene, in the Kaiwara (temple) village, every day 50 tankers were coming to bring water to the local people. After the rainy season, following the work we have done to recharge the groundwater, all the borewells were filled and no water tankers were required.”

On the work done by AOL, the retired forest officer Rao explains that as this is a hilly region and the rainwater tends to run off quickly without adequate percolation, “we have also done gully checks which are check dam like structures using locally available boulders to lower or block the flow of water. This is soil and moisture conservation work so that the water doesn’t run down from the hilltop speedily but percolates into the soil. Hence there is a lot of moisture conservation.”

**B**ut when you are dealing with villages in India not exactly known for their economic prosperity, so many







Children with their caretaker at a Rotary anganwadi in a village.

challenges and dynamics come into play while doing a project of such a magnitude and where benefits will accrue only after a few years. For instance this dry barren land — all of 400 acres — in this region is classified

as *Gomaala* land. Rao, who is now an AOL adviser, responds to my puzzled look and says that earlier when the villages were surveyed and the cattle survey was done, this particular bit of land was kept for grazing.

“The decision is based on the then cattle population; each village, or a bunch of 2–3 villages, have their own *Gomaala* where cattle can graze. In agricultural classification, it is known as C&D land or arid land that is not conducive for agriculture.”

But nothing is constant, and here too the dynamics have changed. The cattle population has come down and “people have now resorted to stall feeding...so most of them don’t take their cattle to the hillocks...only few sheep and goats go to the top of the hillock for grazing. Hence we thought we would rejuvenate this particular bit of land for two reasons. One, it is the origin of the Palar river, and we found three live streams down below, so by some moisturisation and conservation, we wanted to slow down the flow of the water, which we did by putting gully checks, and constructing a kalyani at the ground level.”

## Holistic development

The holistic development planned and being done by RCB in the six villages of the Palar basin includes easy access to basic health facilities, total immunisation, improved nutritional status for all, with special focus on children, adolescents, girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers, conversion of schools into smart schools, with IT-enabled

classrooms, e-libraries and web-based teaching.

Also being planned are adult literacy, village libraries, sports and folk arts festivals, organic farming, seed banks, livestock development, dairy development and processing, social forestry, rainwater harvesting, and piped water supply with household taps. Village markets and health insurance are also on the cards.



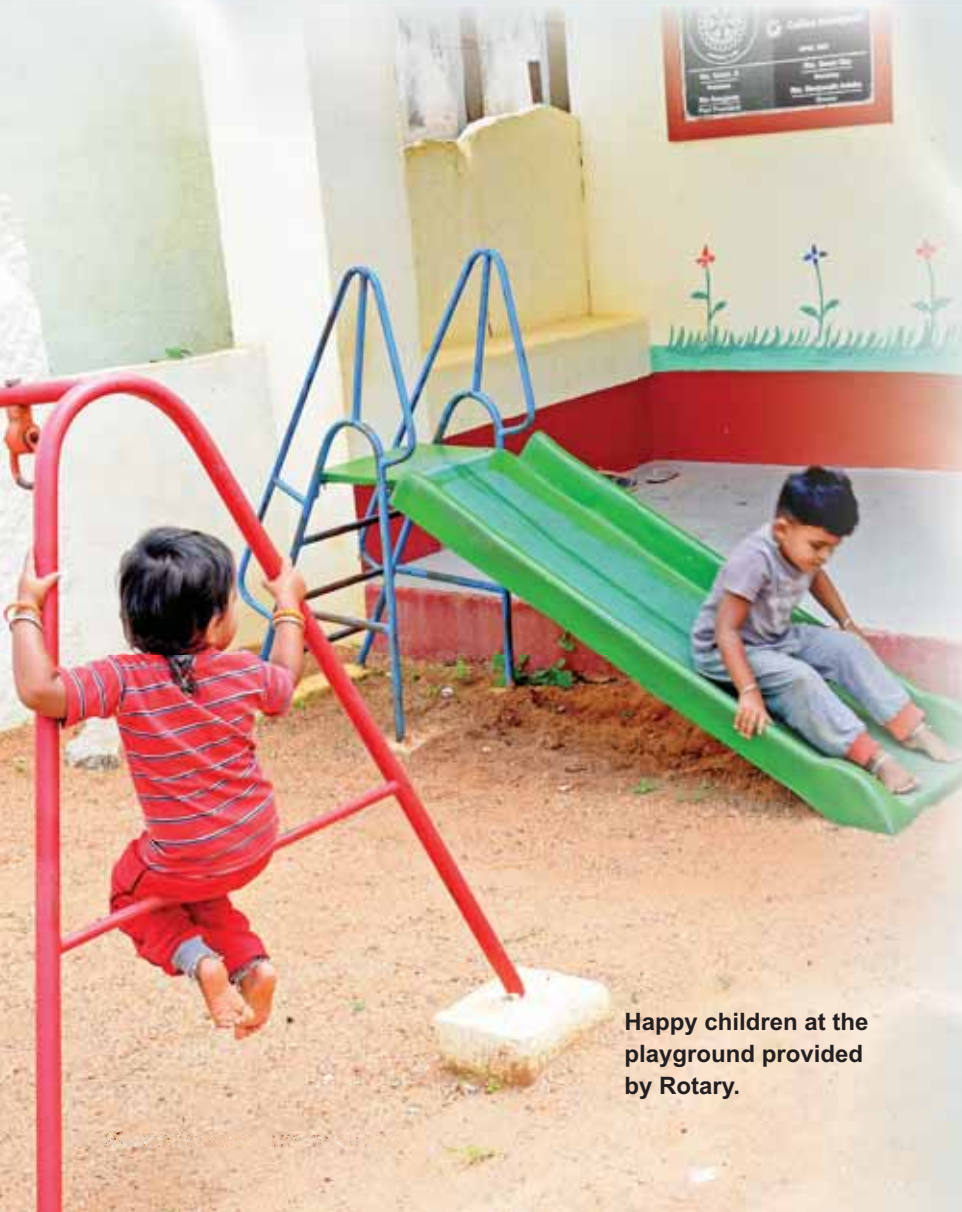


The kalyani in the Kolaramma temple.



Ramakant adds that AOL got involved here a few years ago, “as river rejuvenation is one of our major activities and we are percolating the water through recharging injection wells (see picture, page no 17); we have put about 600 of these and the work is continuing; we are putting these in different villages along the stream or the path of the river. Thanks to the gully checks and these recharge wells which are put under the gully checks, more water percolates and the groundwater level has slowly gone up.”

He explains the technical reason for putting in these injection wells; “we tested the geology of the area and found that if you can penetrate and go deeper beneath the hard rock for 15 to 20ft, then the water goes through that



Happy children at the playground provided by Rotary.





well and forms a wet zone. Earlier, in this area you had to go down almost 1,000ft to strike water for a borewell; now in 4–5 years, the water level has come up to 500ft.”

**O**n financing, Rao says that on afforestation, maintenance, water recharge solutions, etc, ₹95 lakh were spent and ₹1.1 crore on refurbishing primary schools, anganwadis, PHCs and public toilets. Next, for giving livelihood opportunities such as sheep, cattle, chicken, social forestry, etc, ₹1.8 crore has been set apart. While the CSR contribution is ₹2.5 crore, club members have donated around ₹35 lakh. Collins Aerospace has given ₹110 lakh as CSR funds. Club member

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**Thanks to Rotary we are getting filtered water, small babies and young children are benefitting in the anganwadis, getting good nutrition and healthcare. The villagers are really happy.**

**Rojamma**  
Panchayat president

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Monica Mathias worked hard on CSR sourcing, Deepak Nakra and Dileep Pillai contributed liberally.

Dakoju’s contribution to this project comes from his TRF funds, and amounts to \$15,000 (₹12.4 lakh) each year for three years.

On the kind of trees being planted, Dakoju says, “we have gone in mainly for the native trees, as research has shown that planting native species helps rejuvenate the hydrological cycle and activate the natural springs that feed the river. And of course, we all know that such trees are good for the ecosystem and will attract all kinds of microbes, insects, birds, reptiles etc. They will also attract butterflies and bees, apart from yielding fruits.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



# A gala in Scotland

## Team Rotary News

**R**ecently, the Royal Edinburgh Million Dollar Weekend was hosted by RI President Gordon McNally and his spouse Heather in their hometown, the event coinciding with the Edinburgh

International Festival — ‘The Fringe’.

Four AKS members from India — PDG KP Nagesh and Uma from RID 3191, PDG Deepak Gupta and his spouse Reena (RID 3012) took part in this “remarkable experience”.

Ravishankar Dakoju from RC Bangalore (RID 3191) and his spouse Paola too were all set to attend this gala, but could not do so due to a tragedy in the family.

On the evening of August 17, the Waldorf Astoria Caledonian set the stage for a warm welcome

The Military Band Show at the Palace of Holyroodhouse, Edinburgh.







RI President Gordon McNally with (from L) PDG Deepak Gupta, Reena, Uma and PDG KP Nagesh.

reception and dinner for AKS members from around the Rotary world. “The night began with the soul-stirring melodies of traditional Scottish bagpipes, setting the tone for a memorable gathering. The local Rotary Club of Braids, led by PDG Alasdair Seale of RID 1020, extended their warm welcome. As we entered a beautifully adorned dining hall, the irresistible aroma of a delectable feast filled the air,” said PDG Nagesh.

During the dinner, President McNally shared insight into TRF’s tireless efforts and the positive impact it continues to make year after year. He expressed heartfelt gratitude to the major givers, whose continued support has played a pivotal role in Rotary’s mission of doing good in the world. Trustee Chair Barry Rassin echoed these sentiments and underlined the need to expand the community of regular givers, as only collective action

RI President Gordon McNally expressed heartfelt gratitude to the major givers, whose continued support has played a pivotal role in Rotary’s mission of doing good in the world.



AKS members with TRF Trustee Chair Barry Rassin and Esther (L) and RI President McNally (third from R) at the Royal Yacht Britannia.





RI President McInally, Heather, TRF Trustee Chair Rassin and Esther with Reena Gupta, Uma, PDG Nagesh and AKS members from across the globe.

and dedication could help the organisation to help more people.

A sumptuous breakfast set the stage for the group's journey to the iconic Royal Yacht Britannia. This floating palace has hosted royalty, world leaders and dignitaries, making it a truly unique and historic landmark. "Our luxurious bus tour of the city treated us to breathtaking views of Edinburgh's beauty. At the Palace of Holyroodhouse, we immersed ourselves in its splendour, exploring its gallery, palace gardens, and the regal dining hall. Later in the day, we were treated to a VIP seating arrangement at a mesmerising military band show, a spectacle of grandeur and national pride. As an air force officer, connecting with esteemed defence leaders during this event filled

It was a moment that underscored the shared values and commitment to service that transcend borders, making the memory all the more meaningful.

**KP Nagesh**

AKS member and PDG, RID 3191

me with a deep sense of pride and camaraderie. It was a moment that underscored the shared values and commitment to service that transcend borders, making the memory all the more meaningful," said Nagesh, who is a retired flight lieutenant.

At the grand dinner at the Edinburgh Castle, the generous

donors were treated to the various flavours of Scotland and celebrated the camaraderie that Rotary embodies. The next day they had a leisurely Sunday breakfast with the RI president and trustee chair. "Their genuine warmth and approachability were evident as they visited each table, taking time to connect with every participant. It was a reflection of Rotary's core values of service and fellowship, leaving a lasting impression on all of us," he added.

The four Indians returned home carrying with them beautiful memories of the special time spent with Rotary's top leaders, and "the generosity, unity and graciousness that defines Rotary International. The event was a testament to Rotary's enduring spirit and the power of philanthropy." ■



**samarpan**  
BACK TO LIFE



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# India will miss this gentle, caring farm scientist

Rasheeda Bhagat

I will always remember MS Swaminathan as an extremely kind, gentle, courteous and affable gentleman. As a journalist working for the *Indian Express* first, and then the *Hindu Business Line*, I started reporting on his work, vision and mission, several years before he founded the MS Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) in Chennai in 1988. It was

set up from the proceeds of the first World Food Prize that he was given. To be honest, he was the first one to kindle interest in me about all things related to farming and agriculture.

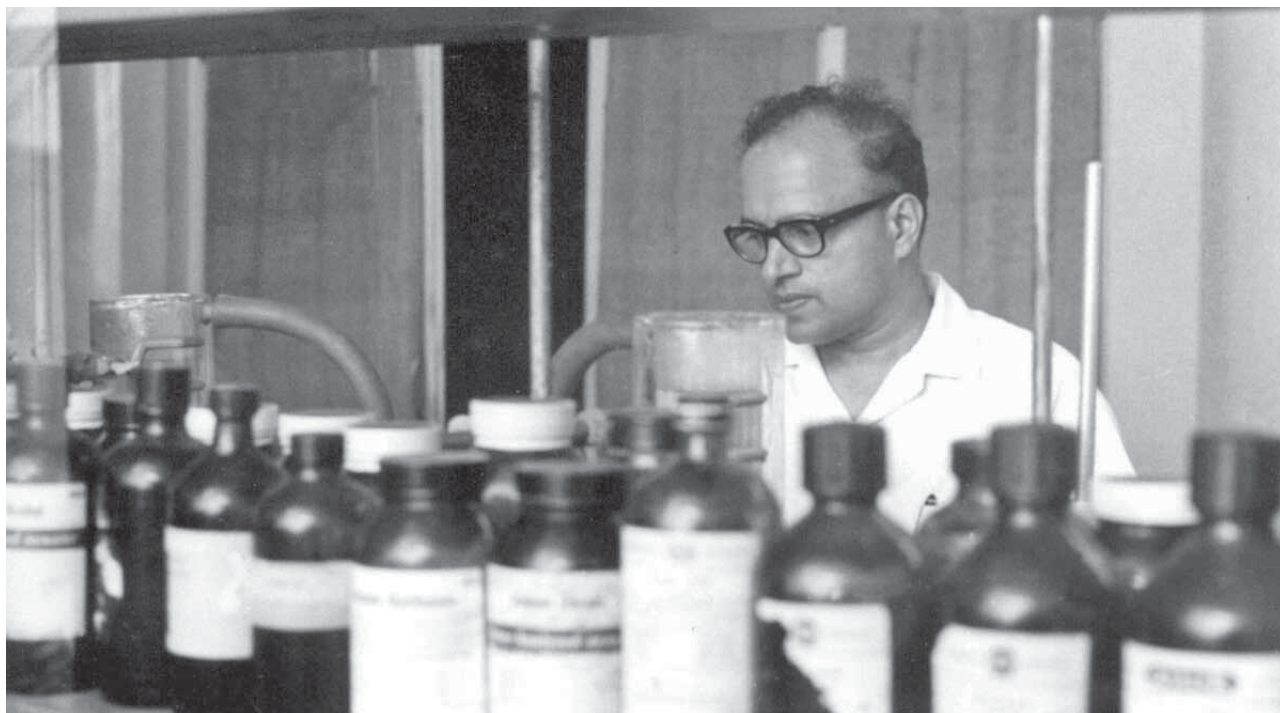
In the 1980s, 90s and the following decade, a bunch of half-a-dozen journalists would always turn up at the meetings, events and press conferences organised by this ingenious agricultural scientist who had the unique

ability and the remarkable gift of connecting with people, be they politicians, government officials, his own community of researchers and scientists from across the world, and most of all, farmers in the field. He was no ivory tower scientist. If the 100-odd kg of the dwarf variety of wheat seeds from Mexico, given to India by the Nobel Laureate Norman Borlaug, could be converted, over the next few



Renowned agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan.





decades into over a hundred million tonnes of wheat, ending India's food shortage, it was thanks to the magical connect the man, who passed away in September, at the age of 98, had with different sets of people.

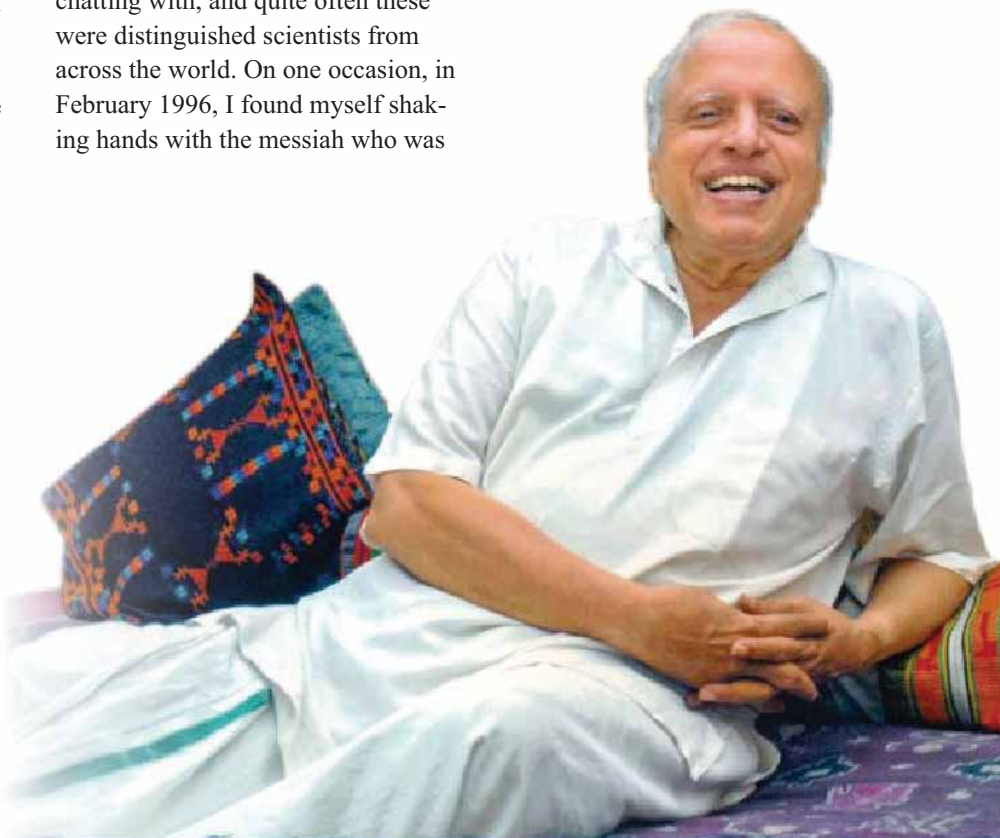
That connect extended to us journalists; every time I reached the Foundation's campus at Taramani

in Chennai, and entered the meeting hall, he would come forward with a warm smile, hold my hand and introduce me to whoever he was chatting with, and quite often these were distinguished scientists from across the world. On one occasion, in February 1996, I found myself shaking hands with the messiah who was

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**If the 100-odd kg of the dwarf variety of wheat seeds from Mexico, given to India by the Nobel Laureate Norman Borlaug, could be converted, over the next few decades into over a hundred million tonnes of wheat, ending India's food shortage, it was thanks to MS Swaminathan.**

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known all over the world as the main enemy of global hunger... Norman Borlaug himself. The occasion was the inauguration of the Borlaug Hall at the MSSRF campus. He extended the same courtesy and warmth to all the journalists he was regularly in touch with.

**I**t was his humility and easy accessibility that endeared Swaminathan to tens of thousands of farmers, including women farmers across the country. Hence it was no surprise to read his daughter and former WHO chief scientist Soumya Swaminathan's tribute to her father where she recalls how only recently, she was told by a group of women farmers in a village in Tamil Nadu that "your *appa* changed our lives". In that village 90 per cent of the farmers are women. "Empowering women in agriculture was one of his biggest passions and he ensured that gender was included as a chapter in the Sixth Planning Commission along with environment. He believed that when women were empowered with knowledge, they would care for

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**M S Swaminathan believed that when women were empowered with knowledge, they would care for crops without harming the environment.**

**As written by his daughter Soumya Swaminathan in a tribute to her father.**

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**Clockwise from top left:** With Pope John Paul II in 1983; Dr MS Swaminathan (right) with Chinese agronomist Yuan Longping in a rice field at the International Rice Research Institute in the Philippines; With his wife Mina and daughters Sowmya, Madhura and Nitya; World Food Prize recipient Dr Swaminathan (L) at the 2013 Laureate Award Ceremony held at the Iowa State Capitol in Des Moines; Dr Swaminathan surrounded by students attending the 2014 World Food Prize Global Youth Institute.

crops without harming the environment,” she wrote.

“The first rice cultivators were women,” the agricultural scientist had once said, noting that there was a portrait of a woman in a temple at Along, a town in Arunachal Pradesh, whom the local people considered to be the one who introduced rice into their cultivation.

**S**o what set Swaminathan apart and made him such a special human being? Let’s begin at the beginning.

The son of a surgeon, he was educated in India and later Cambridge, where he did his doctorate in 1952. During the next two decades he held a number of research and administrative positions. While working in those positions, he helped introduce Mexican semidwarf wheat plants to Indian fields and helped to bring about greater acceptance of modern farming methods.

Interestingly, the degree holder in agriscience and postgraduate in cytogenetics wrote the civil services exam but chose not to join the Indian Police Service (had he done so, he would have certainly made one of the gentlest and most humane cops ever!) and instead chose a UNESCO fellowship in genetics in the Netherlands. After a doctorate in philosophy at Cambridge, he moved to the US for postdoctoral research at the University of Wisconsin where he providentially met in 1953 the legendary Norman Borlaug, when the latter gave a speech in controlling some disease in wheat. It was the beginning of an association and friendship that changed India’s history in ensuring food security.

One of the most fascinating stories in Indian agriculture is how he used plant genetics to boost farm production. Till 1965, when our population was more than 500 million, wheat output in India was barely 12 million tonnes. We were infamous for living ‘ship to mouth’, as was snobbishly referred to in the western world, referring to our heavy dependence on wheat imported from the US. India was known for being a begging bowl and it was said derisively that “if we don’t put foodgrains in this begging bowl, millions will die.”

We have certainly come a long way thanks to the genius and eagle

eye of Swaminathan, and of course the support he got from the government of India, which was then led by Prime Minister Lal Bahadur Shastri, with C Subramaniam being the agriculture minister.

In the decades following the late 1970s, our annual wheat production has multiplied nearly 10 times to 112.18 million tonnes a year (2022–23), 4.4 million tonnes above the previous year.

By 1959 Borlaug had got impressive results in growing high-yielding varieties of wheat in Mexico, using a dwarfing gene from Japan. This

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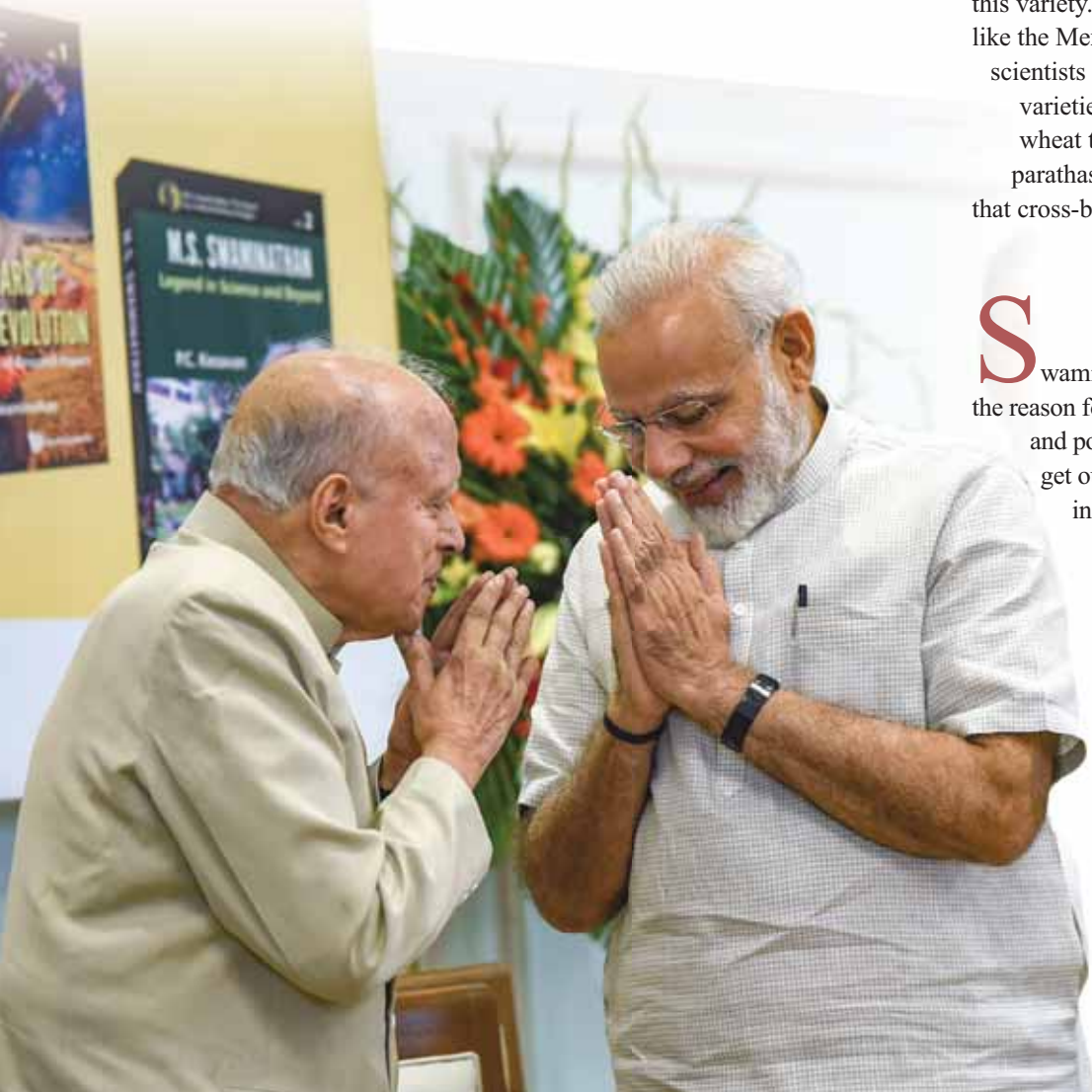
**Swaminathan's unique gift was that he could get out of the armchair research in genetic science, into the rice and wheat fields of India, and convince farmers to try out new techniques.**

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variety allowed the plant to hold more grains and hence increase the output significantly. Only one eagle-eyed scientist in Asia, Swaminathan, noticed this admirable phenomenon, and wrote to his superiors in the Indian Agricultural Research Institute where he was then working, suggesting they invite Borlaug to India.

Those days, the Indian government was constantly looking at ways to combat food shortage. Borlaug visited India in March '63 and later sent 100kg of seeds of the dwarf and semidwarf varieties and the farmers in Punjab were persuaded to try out this variety. But the wheat was red like the Mexican wheat, so Indian scientists crossbred it with local varieties and today's golden wheat that goes into our rotis, parathas and puris is the result of that cross-breeding!

**S**waminathan's unique gift, and the reason for his immense success and popularity was that he could get out of the armchair research in genetic science, into the rice and wheat fields of India and convince farmers to try out new techniques. With farmers, he spoke their language, and not scientific jargon. Not only were Borlaug's seeds given to the farmers, they were also supported with supplies of chemical fertilisers and pesticides, agricultural credit and help with marketing. In all this he was helped by Union agriculture minister Subramaniam.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Dr Swaminathan's book release event.



The Green Revolution really took off by 1966, and by 1968 the dwarf variety had brought bountiful harvests of wheat and in the coming decades, India became self-sufficient in food production. Grain production increased exponentially at a time when India was facing widespread starvation and turned Punjab and Haryana into bread baskets for wheat and rice, particularly helping low-income farmers. It rescued the country from an impending mass famine and over-dependence on foreign aid. His major achievements included developing high-yielding basmati varieties, using technology of mutation for various crops and application of genetics for boosting food production. For his work, Swaminathan was named one of the 20 most influential Asians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by *Time* magazine.

Over the years he held many important administrative positions in various agricultural research



Dr Swaminathan (second from R) with American agronomist and Nobel Laureate Norman Borlaug (third from L) and former Union agriculture minister C Subramaniam (L).



Dr Swaminathan inspecting the new, high-yielding variety of wheat.

institutions including that of director general at the Indian Council for Agricultural Research. He received the Padma Vibhushan in 1989 and also became a Rajya Sabha MP.

**B**ut Prof Swaminathan did more than just usher in the Green Revolution. The governments of any era — be it at the Centre or the state, depended heavily on his sagacity, wisdom, genial and inclusive nature and his sharp as well as humane mind, to provide both solutions and succour during periods of deep distress, such as the 2005 tsunami which devastated coastal regions of India.



Dr Swaminathan in discussion with Norman Borlaug in a wheat field in India.

A major contributor of inputs for evolving a national coastal rehabilitation policy, the MSSRF has over the past few decades done extensive research and extension work on strengthening coastal

systems management from the scientific, technological, economic and social perspectives. He provided holistic approach for looking at any natural disaster; for eg, after the tsunami devastation, he advised the

government to look first of all at the psychological rehabilitation of those living along the coastal belt, whose homes and livelihoods were destroyed by the tsunami. Then came immediate livelihood implements, such as fishermen being given boats, catamarans and so on.

In his passing India has lost a globally respected agricultural scientist, the farmers have lost a genial and caring friend, the government a sane, balanced and sagacious advisor. But the biggest loss is to the poor and marginal farmers, and of course, the small women farmers to whom this gentle, and always smiling man, gave the hope and confidence to grow their own crops... and graduate from being mere field workers to being the boss of their own farm, however small it might be!

Images courtesy: MS Swaminathan Research Foundation



At a science exhibition.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



# Sewing machines to empower women

## Team Rotary News

In a major boost to RID 2982's annual slogan *Each One Lift One*, DG S Raghavan has taken up an ambitious project of distributing 1,000 sewing machines to empower women across the district.

During his installation in Hosur in July, 100 sewing machines were given to members of an all-women RCC (Rotary Community Corps). PDG M Muruganandam, RID 3000, was the chief guest at the investiture. At the district seminar on club administration held in Namakkal in August, another set of 200 machines were distributed to 20 all-women RCCs supported by various zones at this revenue district. PDG Sam Babu, RID 3000, handed over the sewing machines to the beneficiaries.

The remaining 700 units will be distributed in Salem (400), Kallakurichi (200) and the balance 100 machines will be given to women in Hosur again. Explaining his objective, Raghavan said,



**From L:** DG S Raghavan, PDGs C Sivagnanaselvam, M Muruganandam and K Sundharalingam at the distribution of sewing machines during the installation in Hosur.

“through this mega project, 1,000 women will be empowered and in total, an average of 4,000 people, that is four members in a family, will

be lifted out of economic distress.” With roughly 4,000 members in RID 2982, each Rotarian would indirectly help one person in a group of 4,000 family members. “Each Rotarian will lift a person in a less privileged family, thus achieving our target of *Each One Lift One*, our slogan for the year,” he said.

DG Raghavan's vision is to set up 100 all-women RCCs and distribute 1,000 sewing machines to deserving women in the district to make them self-reliant through self-employment. “For DG Raghavan, the sewing machine project is a gift to underprivileged women that would encourage, elevate and empower them to become self-reliant members in the society,” said Rtn B Navaladi Karthikeyan, GML editor, RID 2982. ■



Beneficiaries with sewing machines.

# Rotary Foundation bags Mahatma Award

## Team Rotary News



Bhawna Verma, senior coordinator for CSR, RISAO, and RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury receive the Mahatma Award from the Award organiser Amit Sachdeva and Anuradha Bhavnani, former regional director, Shell Foundation; and TRF head Sanjay Parmar (third from R) receives the memento from Uttam Parmar, former trustee, Gujarat Vidyapith, in the presence of Sandeep Kumar from Indocount Industries and Adil Feroz, Engineers India Ltd.

Rotary Foundation (India), RFI, led by PRID C Basker (till Sept 30) has won the prestigious Mahatma Award instituted by Gandhian, philanthropist and social entrepreneur Amit Sachdeva as a tribute to Mahatma Gandhi.

The Aditya Birla group is one of its sponsors. The awards event is organised by Liveweek, a company involved in devising social impact strategies, to bestow honour on individuals

and organisations that leverage their resources, expertise and talent to work towards making this world a better place.

The awards are given annually in India, the UK and the US, and RFI had applied for the award for 'Social good and impact' in the non-profit category. During the interview, the jury members quizzed about the CSR initiatives of Rotary in India. RFI bagged the award for its significant social impact in India

through its CSR programmes, its work on disease prevention and treatment, maternal and child health, education, economic development, environment, polio eradication, and water, sanitation and hygiene.

The award was received by RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury, along with Sanjay Parmar, TRF head at RISAO and RFI secretary, and Bhawna Verma, senior coordinator for CSR programmes. ■

## Rotary provides art materials to Canadian schools



Rotary E-Club of Metro Dynamix, RID 3201, in partnership with a Canadian NGO, Art for Aid, donated art supplies to two indigenous schools located in remote parts of Canada, through *Project DIAS* (Dynamix Indigenous Art Support Initiative).

"We raised funds through the Amazon registry and procured art materials such as oil pastels, boxes of crayons, brushes and papers, worth \$1,000," said project chairman Vidya Thathamangalam. The packages were shipped to two schools — Mistawasis Nehiyawak High School in Leask, Saskatchewan, and Miskoosepi School in Bloodvein, Manitoba. With a high risk of isolation and suicides among the youth in these Canadian prairie provinces, art becomes an important avenue to provide a healthy diversion and for them to express themselves, she added. ■





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Baby Diyasri and mother Geetha.

# RC Madras South completes 500 heart surgeries for children

S R Madhu

**O**n August 26, 2023, the Rotary Club of Madras South, RID 3232, celebrated a rare landmark — the completion of 500 heart surgeries over the past six years for children under 18 — at a special event. “Most of the children were under 13,” says K Saravanan, past president and the brain behind the project.

Several institutions partnered in the project, which cost ₹3.4 crore so far. They include the Tamil Nadu government,

through its Chief Minister’s Insurance Scheme; The Rotary Foundation; RC Pasadena, California, USA; RI districts 3232 and 5300; corporates Ford Motor Company, CAMS and Tagros International (all from Chennai), and Have a Heart Foundation, Bengaluru. The surgeries were conducted at the Soorya Hospital, Chennai.

The project was supported by three global grants from TRF. Around 130 more surgeries will be carried out over next year with available funds. DG Ravi Raman has promised assistance and co-operation if the club seeks to extend the project.

At the meeting, a few mothers recalled their heart-wrenching

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**In March 2014, Saravanan sustained a severe heart attack. Two stents were fixed, and he gradually recovered, but he wondered how the less privileged could cope with such a crisis.**

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K Saravanan, past president, RC Madras South, with Dr Prashant Shah at the Soorya Hospital where a child is being treated for heart ailment.





Saravanan with PDGs Natarajan Nagoji and late Raja Ramakrishnan interacting with a mother at the hospital ward.

experience of bringing up babies with defective hearts, leaving many in the audience moist-eyed. The project had meant a new life for the entire family, the mothers said.

\*Baby Diyasri is three years old. She had a heart defect at birth.

Her father is a coolie. Her mother Geetha said her child had breathing problems and would go blue in the face. They were turned away from many hospitals — any surgery would be both complex and expensive. They heard about Soorya hospital, where they were treated kindly and assured of help. A complex surgery was performed on July 27. Geetha said at the Rotary event, a month after the surgery, that her kid was normal and fit.

\*Baby Ruthasri, now 15 months old, daughter of a driver, was diagnosed at birth with a small hole that kept enlarging. The family lives in Coimbatore. Mother Mahalakshmi's visits to various hospitals were an ordeal and no hope was held out for the baby. But she heard about Soorya and RC Madras South, and her world changed. The baby is now fit after a corrective surgery in April 2023.

When Mahalakshmi spoke at the Rotary event, the baby kept playing with the mike as any normal mischievous 15-month-old does.

Saravanan played a video of members of RC Pasadena applauding with gusto when they heard that RC Madras South had completed 500 surgeries under the project. The Pasadena club prizes its association with RC Madras South.

Great projects often have rare origins; so did this project. In March 2014, Saravanan, then secretary of RCMS, sustained a severe heart attack. Two stents were fixed, and he gradually recovered, but he wondered how other people, less privileged in society, could cope with such a crisis. He learned about the Chief Minister's insurance scheme for children with defective hearts. One thing led to another, donors were identified, a global grant materialised ("after Herculean effort"),

and the *Caring for Little Hearts* project became a reality.

The project ran into the Covid hurdle a couple of years ago and a few personnel problems as well. These were surmounted.

"Challenges are inevitable, defeats are optional," it is said. The Little Hearts project exemplifies this truth.

*The writer is a member of RC Madras South, RID 3232*

**Mahalakshmi with Baby Ruthasri.**





# Two Mysuru clubs take up the challenge of eye donation

Rasheeda Bhagat

**I**t was a walk by about 300 people to raise awareness on the plight of the visually-challenged and to stress the importance of organ donation, especially pledging of one's eyes, but it was done with a difference. The walk, organised by RC Panchsheel Mysore and RC Mysore, RI District 3181, in association with the Rotary Avoidable Blindness Foundation, had the visually-challenged leading the march, and was held during the National Eye Donation Fortnight.

Rotarians, Rotaractors, college students, and other sighted people, including RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, walked behind, but with blindfolding. They were following the lead given by the visually-challenged carrying white canes. The idea was to make the sighted people understand the difficulties faced by the blind.

President of RC Panchsheel Mysore, Kiran Robert, said that the two clubs' members wanted to organise a walk during the National Eye Donation Fortnight (Aug 25–Sep 8) “not only to raise awareness about the importance of eye donation and how easy it is to pledge one's eyes, but also to debunk many myths that surround eye donation.”



**College students participating in the march with their eyes blindfolded.**









RC Panchsheel Mysore members (from L) Rajaram, Somesh and Rajendra Prasad participating in the blind walk.

Giving an example of the huge extent of the problem in India and the demand for corneas being much greater than the supply, he said there are over 20,000 new cases of blindness every year in India due to eye injuries, Vitamin A deficiency, infections, malnutrition, and many other medical problems. These people can regain their sight by corneal transplantation and the “most significant thing about eye donation is that a single pair of eyes can often help four people regain their vision.” (There is established medical finding that optimum and efficient use will ensure that a single corneal tissue can be successfully used for two patients as a routine practice and restore their vision.)

But sadly, added Robert, despite the central and state governments launching many campaigns for eye donation, this practice of pledging one’s eyes had not really caught on in India. “For instance, over 10 million deaths happen every year in India but we are collecting only around 50,000 pairs of eyes every

year through eye donation. So our club leaders thought it fit to focus attention on this dilemma and use our vast Rotary network to increase public awareness on the greater good

we can do after we pass on. After all, aren’t we Rotarians connected by a strong sense of community, belonging and service?”

He added that their second objective is to create sight ambassadors, because unlike blood donation where one is in control while donating blood for somebody in need, in the case of the eye, the donor can only pledge his/her eyes, which can be harvested only after their death.

Most often there are several years between the eyes being pledged and actually donated so that they can be used to benefit those in desperate need of vision. “In their moment of grief, and the trauma that follows the death of a loved one, families tend to forget about the pledge. At that moment someone, such as an ‘eye ambassador’ among the dead person’s friends or family, needs to ensure that an eye bank is contacted and the eyes are harvested in time.”

(According to literature available with the Eye Banks Association of



**Visually-challenged people leading the march with the help of their white canes.**



India, the eyes must be removed within six hours of death, so the alert has to be given to the nearest eye bank soon after death. A team from the bank will visit the house and ‘the simple bloodless procedure will be over in less than 15–20 min.’ There is no disfigurement of the face of the deceased. After removal, the eyes are analysed, processed at the eye bank and the cornea has to be transplanted within 96 hours.)

Those willing to donate their eyes must get registered at an eye bank, and the bank must be informed after the person’s death. Both the donor and recipient are kept anonymous.

Giving an example of what passion for any cause can achieve, Robert said that Dr J Ganesh of Sivakasi, who is a Lion’s club member, “has an unbeatable record of retrieving over 4,400 pairs of eyes, which have enabled over 16,000 blind people to get back their sight.”

Becoming a sight ambassador is simple; one needs to just send the SMS/text message ‘Eye’ to 70396 70396.



RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury addressing the gathering after the blind-fold walk. RID 3181 DG H R Keshav (fifth from R) and Latha Narayan (second from R) are also seen.

**R**eturning to the 1km walk, which took about 45 minutes, Professor and HOD of the department of political science from Mysore University Krishna Hombal, who is visually-challenged, inaugurated the walk in which both the blind as well as the sighted, including some 15–20 policemen participated. A special group of 25 bikers, from the International Fellowship of Motorcycle Riders, led the blind walk.

Robert added that the Rotarians will not stop with just this walk to raise awareness on eye donation. “Now we want to develop eye retrieving centres; we’ve spoken to the deputy commissioner of Chamarajnagar, Shilpa Nag, an IAS officer, who is interested in this project to promote eye donation, and she said she would support this cause.” The first eye retrieval unit, costing around ₹20,000, will be set up at the public health centre in that area. “We will train volunteers for this

task which is simple; we’ve tied up with the Usha Kiran Eye Hospital in Mysuru, from where doctors will train our volunteers on how to retrieve the eyes from a corpse.”

Once this is done successfully, they plan next to put up more — at least 10 — eye retrieval units in rural areas.

This group of Rotarians, he added, has long-term plans; and their ambition is to put up an eye bank. “Our objective is to have a Rotary eye bank in Chamarajnagar through a global grant project and Shilpa Nag, who is an honorary member of our club, has promised to help us.”

Apart from RID Roychowdhury and Kiran Robert, Praveen, president-elect, RC Mysore, DGs HR Keshav (RID 3181), Nasir Borsadwala (RID 3170), Dr Sunder Rajan (RID 3203), Udaykumar Bhaskara (RID 3191) and V Srinivas Murthy (RID 3192), Lion member Dr Ganesh from Sivakasi, Latha Narayan, a Rotarian from Tumkur, who has retrieved 2,400 eyes, participated in the walk. ■

# Water divining Rotarians of RC Bangalore South Parade

Anand Ramachandra

Finding drinking water is always a challenge. India has 18 percent of the world's population, but only 4 percent of its water resources, making it among the most water-starved countries in the world. Our erratic monsoon spells pushes up the

challenge of meeting our drinking water needs. Climate change is another factor which is likely to exacerbate the pressure on our water resources.

Around Bengaluru, the lakes have always played a major role in fulfilling drinking water needs. The chain of cascading lakes was so well

planned that the natural geography of the terrain was used to fill one lake and the overflow became the source for the next lake and so on. This used to keep the water table of the area pretty high and the local wells too got water this way. This sub soil water is another major source of water along with the lakes and shallow wells. Sadly, the over flogging of the sub soil water has stressed this supply, followed by the unhindered and in some cases unplanned urbanisation has seen to it that the *rajkaluve* (main connecting channel between lakes) got choked, making the lakes and wells defunct, and taking away another major source of drinking water.

The town of Devanahalli, about 50km from Bengaluru and on the





Bengaluru- Hyderabad expressway, was one such town dependent on a lake and some open wells for its drinking water needs. We, the Rotarians of Rotary Bangalore South Parade, RID 3191, during our activities during the pandemic, saw that Devanahalli with 38,000 residents had its lake dry, its open well system defunct and choked, and was struggling for drinking water. The town was now dependent on water being pumped from deep tube wells. The tubes go down to a depth of 800– 1000ft, and water coming out of these borewells, though clean, was turbid and saline due to dissolved solids which made it brackish and unsuitable to drink. It was this water that a town of 38,000 residents were getting in their taps every day. For their drinking and cooking water needs the town people had to stand in a queue in front of the public RO plants set up by the local municipal council. A problem which was crying for a solution.

Many different solutions were thought about and discarded. We understood after a lot of consultation and research that the only way to remove the turbidity and dissolved

solids was through reverse osmosis. This method gives out only 50 per cent of the water that is put inside, leaving behind the other half as waste and with an even higher concentration of dissolved solids. The only way to dispose of this water is to let it go into the subsoil or a recharge well. Eventually, this would make the existing tube well churn out even more unusable water.

The solution to the problem came from the information that the Bruhat Bengaluru Maha Nagara Palike (BBMP) was treating 2.1 million litres of waste water generated from Bengaluru households and pumping it into lakes, including the Devanahalli lake called Sihineer Kere (sweet water lake). To further the joy, the Devanahalli town municipal council was cleaning the lake. Right next



Layout of the lake and the wells.

**Sihineer Kere, the lake in Devanahalli.**





**Old defunct open well next to the Sihineer Kere lake.  
(Right) The well brimming with water after the rejuvenation process.**

to the lake we found an old defunct open well which was choked and had become useless and a public nuisance.

It was decided to clean and rejuvenate the open well. Once this was done and the stone lining redone, the well started filling up. To our joy, in a couple of days the water was to the brim. When we got the well water tested it was found that it was sweet water, good for drinking, but with some coliform, a little odour and colour with some suspended solids. A chat with our engineers revealed that with some tertiary treatment this can be a great source of drinking water.

Keeping the sensitivity of the fact that the lake is getting treated waste water from Bengaluru we decided to rope in the services of the professors of Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to devise a filtration plant and a standard operation protocol. During their design it was found that the well is capable of giving 1,50,000 litres per day (LPD) of water when half full and a lot more when full. The

professor also suggested that we dig two shallow aquifer filter tube wells that will augment the capacity of the open well. Based on their suggestion two shallow aquifer filter bore wells were dug which went down only about 85ft and between the two bore wells we got another 50,000 LPD of water. The water which was tested from these bore wells too turned up a very similar report, which meant that this water can be tapped too. These sources proved to be clean, sweet to drink and met most of the drinking water parameters laid out for drinking water. Those parameters which this water source does not meet are being addressed by installing an Azud filtration mechanism designed by IISc professors which is going to remove suspended solids, insects, bacteria, etc and makes it totally compliant with the drinking water needs. Now we had a clear plan to give 2 lakh LPD clean drinking water to the town of Devanahalli! (The total requirement of this town is 14 lakh LPD.)

That's a significant amount of water to augment the available resources. When this proposal was taken to the Devanahalli town municipal council it was immediately accepted and an MoU was signed, where Rotary Bangalore







South Parade will put up the newly designed water filtration plant by IISc and run it for two years, and along the way train the DTMC technician on the operating parameters. IISc will continuously monitor the water quality coming out of the lake,

wells and the filter, and ensure that the water is fit for drinking and, at the end of two years, transfer the ownership of the fully functional treatment plant to the town municipal council. We've spent ₹60 lakh on this project through CSR funding.

We are told this is India's first IPR (indirect potable reuse) filtration mechanism. The treated sewage water is allowed to get into the well through natural filtration and then the new filtration plant that is an online filter. The design of the filtration plant makes it sleek and sturdy, and it encompasses carbon filtration, chlorine dousing, UV disinfection and is capable of removing particles of upto 130 microns thin (1 micron is equivalent of 1/1000 of a millimetre). This makes it very efficient and takes very little space to house. The maintenance of this unit is also very easy and the interval is about once in two years, the cost of the filtration comes down to ₹1.15 per kilo litre of water.

The filtration unit was built, necessary pumps and plumbing lines

Today the lake is brimming  
with water, the well is  
brimming with water, the  
treatment plant is churning  
out 2 lakh LPD of clean and  
pure drinking water.

were laid to sync the water into the DTMC distribution system.

The joy of seeing this work after we overcame a lot of sceptism and nay sayers tells a lot about the resilience and confidence of our Rotarians. This was a *Deja vu* moment. Today the lake is brimming with water, the well is brimming with water, the treatment plant is churning out 2 lakh LPD of clean and pure drinking water.

Evidently this shows that lake rejuvenation along with traditional open wells can bring in large quantities of drinking water. The home-grown technology can be replicated in every town and village with little chance of failure and less cost. This endeavour of ours will test this concept and the results and methodology will form a template to be replicated in other areas to solve water problems.

On June 5, World Environment Day, the water treatment plant was inaugurated by IPDG Jeetendra Aneja and Karnataka Minister for food and civil supplies K H Muniyappa. The local authorities thanked Rotary Bangalore South Parade, for their efforts and offered their continuing support for such positive interventions in the future.

We are now working to augment the water supply by an additional 4 lakh LPD in Phase 2, and hope to complete the work by December end.

Club members in front of the water treatment plant.



*The writer is IPP of RC Bangalore South Parade, RID 3191*

# Rotary ki Pathshala for new members

## Team Rotary News

**R**C Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080, held a new member orientation programme called *Rotary ki Pathshala* (Rotary classroom) at the Rotary House in Panchkula, Chandigarh. The event witnessed over 100 registrations from 15 clubs. Past president BL Ramsisaria and president Jeeten Bhambari provided guidance for the event.

PRIP Rajendra Saboo spoke on the importance of values and ethics for Rotary members and unveiled

the 2023 Classification Roster. The book *Know About Rotary*, authored by Ramsisaria and sponsored by DG Arun Mongia, was distributed to all participants.

Dr Rita Kalra was the event chair. Twelve faculty members mentored the new members on a range of topics, including the history of the organisation, TRF-giving, grant programmes, membership induction procedure, involving members' families, meeting attendance, fellowship, the 4-Way Test, Rotary Code of Conduct,

Rotary themes, branding and public image, as well as Rotarians' privileges and obligations, insight on *My Rotary* and *Rotary India* portals, along with social media strategies. The event also covered



PRIP Rajendra Saboo being greeted by event chair Rita Kalra in the presence of (from left) BL Ramsisaria, Balram Gupta, DG Arun Mongia and club president Jeeten Bhambari (R).





Members of RC Chandigarh Midtown at the Singhpura School after inaugurating the toilet block.

the five avenues of service, seven focus areas, structured youth and international programmes and fellowship such as RFE and RAG.

The club inaugurated a new toilet block at Singhpura

School, located on the outskirts of Chandigarh. Despite limited facilities and inadequate sanitation, this school caters to 250 students. The club has also renovated the classrooms and provided furniture

and educational equipment to the school.

Following a request from RC Sundernagar, RID 3070, the club provided 50 tarpaulins and 400 woollen blankets to the flood victims in Mandi district. In collaboration with the National Organ and Tissue Transplant Organisation, the club organised an organ donation awareness rally from Delhi to Chandigarh and back. Around 200 participants, including Rotarians and Rotaractors from RIDs 3080, 3011, 3012, and 3100 participated in the rally.■

## A farmers' market at Nashik

**R**C Nasik, RID 3030, inaugurated a farmers' market at the Udoji Education Museum, Nashik.

The organic market concept was begun five years ago with an aim to help local farmers sell their produce at a fair price while providing the general public with affordable, high-quality

organic vegetables. The market has been functional since then and it works from 8 30am to 10pm every Sunday throughout the year.

"The prices of vegetables and fruits here are much lower than the market price. Even when the prices of some vegetables are skyrocketing, these farmers offer vegetables



at a fair price. When the price of tomato in the market was ₹150 per kg a couple of months ago, the farmers sold it for only at ₹30 a kg in the

market," says Vinayak Deodhar, the club's director, Public Image.

Several Rotarians and the general public benefit from this market every week.■

# Stitching their way to success

Jaishree

**M**aking ends meet was a daily challenge for Aatmaja (35) since her marriage at 19. Her husband was an alcoholic and she worked as a domestic help to bring food to the table which, on most days, was just not sufficient. “Today, thanks to the *selai* (tailoring) training, I am earning at least ₹600 a day. I can send my daughter to the local school now,” she says. Aatmaja has transformed into a skilled tailor after attending a tailoring course provided by RC Calcutta, RID 3291,

two years ago. Now she does picco for sarees, and stitches blouses, children’s dresses, and salwar sets.

In 2021, the club embarked on *Project Gati* – a long-term sustainable project to help underprivileged women earn a livelihood. “Our goal was to set up five centres every year in areas extending from the Sundarbans to Purulia. In the first two years, 10 centres were installed with the support of our RCCs,” says Arindham Roychowdhury, the club’s Special Projects Chairman.

The centres are equipped with sewing machines to train women in tailoring; and desktop computers to give them computer education. The tailoring classes were begun in collaboration with Singer which provided sewing machines at a concessional rate to the club. The computer classes follow a curriculum of the West Bengal State Board of Secondary Education and is certified by the George Telegraph Institute. Around 300 women have completed the tailoring course and 165 students have



RI President Gordon McNally and Heather at one of the vocational training centres set up by RC Calcutta. RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and his wife Shipra are also in the picture.



received their computer education certificates, says Arindham. The women are now getting regular job work from the state government to stitch uniforms for the government schools. “They get a steady income now through this assignment,” he adds.

For a century now, it has been a tradition for the club to distribute dresses to both men and women during Durga Puja. “This year we procured the material for shirts, pants and blouses and have engaged the women to stitch the garments at the centre,” he says.

This Rotary year the project’s name was changed to *Atmanirbhar*, to reflect its focus on self-sustainability. The club plans to expand it by installing 10 such centres, through a franchisee concept. “We are involving other Rotary clubs to partner with us through their RCCs to reach a larger community,” says Roychowdhury. Adult literacy classes are also run at these centres. Basic and financial literacy is being given to 50 adults over a six-month period in each centre.

PRIP Shekhar Mehta and RID Anirudha Roychowdhury inaugurated this year’s first centre at Metiabruz, near Khidirpore Dockyard. “This is one of the largest garment manufacturing areas in Eastern India, so the women



RC Calcutta president Kanak Dutt and club member Mitra at the computer training centre set up at the Niharika School in Garia.

getting trained here will get regular job works from the local industries,” smiles the project director.

The second centre opened at the Niharika School for the Handicapped in Garia will be a boon for the mothers of differently-abled children studying in the school. “They get to learn a vocation while they wait to pick up their children from school,” he says. Basic computer education is being provided to the school students too at this centre. The centre at the RCC Ranihati

Netaji Samaj Sathi in Domjur village, Howrah, set up two years ago with five sewing machines and three computers, was upgraded with 30 machines and 11 computers. Around 40 women stitch and sell the garments in the nearby markets from this centre.

Thirty women are enrolled for each batch for tailoring classes and 15 students for computer classes; the centre works two shifts daily and the course is for six months. “Our aim is to set up 65 centres by the next five years,” he says. The cost of setting up each centre is ₹1.8 lakh and ₹250 is collected as course fee by the RCCs. “This amount is utilised to meet the administrative expenses at each centre.”

From January, the club will be introducing soap/shampoo making classes for women in all its centres. “The raw materials will be given by the sponsoring Rotary clubs and we will help the women market the products,” he says. The club’s plans for the next year include immunising 1,000 adolescent girls against cervical cancer, and setting up a mega Rotary blood bank and a cornea bank with CSR support, at a cost of ₹1 crore each. ■



RID Anirudha Roychowdhury presents a desktop computer to a student in the presence of (from L) project chairman Arindham Roychowdhury, PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Kanak Dutt.

# From RI South Asia

## 2022–23 Foundation banners

Foundation banners for the last Rotary year 2022–23 and “End Polio Now” certificates will soon be dispatched to 2023–24 DGs for distribution to eligible clubs, along with the list of winning clubs.

## Transfer of PHF recognition points

Foundation recognition points are awarded to donors who contribute to the Annual Fund, PolioPlus or an approved global grant. Donors receive one recognition point for every dollar contributed to these funds. Contributions to the Endowment Fund and Directed Gifts are not eligible.

Donors can transfer Foundation recognition points to others to help them qualify as a Paul Harris Fellow or Multiple PHF.

- A minimum of 100 Foundation recognition points must be transferred at a

time, and the donor must complete and sign the PHF Recognition Transfer Request Form.

- The points may not be transferred from individuals to a club or district.
- Only individual donors are authorised to transfer recognition points from their individual account.
- Only club presidents are authorised to transfer recognition points from a club account.
- DGs are authorised to transfer recognition points from a district account.

Scan the completed request form in PDF format and email it to Manju Joshi at [Manju.Joshi@rotary.org](mailto:Manju.Joshi@rotary.org) for processing. In general, it takes 5–10 business days to update and reflect online.




**2023-24**

## ANNUAL FUND CHALLENGE

**• FROM 1 JULY 2023 TILL 31 JANUARY 2024 •**

Eligibility Criteria

	PLATINUM	GOLD	SILVER
<b>For District</b>	75% of district membership contributing minimum of \$25 each	100% Club Giving with minimum \$100 contribution by each club	100% Club Giving with minimum \$50 contribution by each club
<b>Award</b>	Crystal for District	Plaque for District	Smaller Plaque for District
<b>For Club</b>	Minimum \$25 contribution by each member and Annual Fund Per Capita of \$200	Minimum \$25 contribution by each member and Annual Fund Per Capita of \$100	Minimum \$25 contribution by each member
<b>Award</b>	Crystal for Club	Plaque for Club	Certificate for Club

### PAUL HARRIS SOCIETY CHAMPIONSHIP AWARD (FOR DISTRICTS ONLY)

**Criteria:** At least 50% of the total registered PHS members contributing to Annual Fund (members fulfilling their yearly commitment of \$1,000) by 31 January 2024 provided the district has minimum total of 30 registered PHS members by 31 January 2024.

**Note:** Contribution towards Annual Fund ONLY will be considered for this challenge.

## 2023-24 Annual Fund Challenge

In light of the continued success over the past three years, RRFCs in zones 4, 5, 6 and 7 have once again announced the Annual Fund Challenge for Rotary year 2023–24. The aim is to encourage

support for the Annual Fund from both clubs and individual Rotarians. As part of this challenge, districts can also additionally earn the esteemed ‘Paul Harris Championship Award’ by demonstrating its dedication to the Paul Harris Society. ■

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## ADMISSIONS

# Open

### 2023-24



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Laxmi Tatiwala  
Chartered Accountant



Shweta Sirohi Gupta  
Careflight, Sydney, Australia



Beenu Dewal  
8th Rank, RAS 2018



Manvi Soni  
International Shooter



Navodita Mathur  
Standard Chartered Bank



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RPS



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Indian Air Force



Vasundhara Singh  
Dietician, AIIMS, New Delhi



Fg. Off. Shivanshi Pathak  
Indian Air Force



Bhawana Garg  
RAS



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# Sri Vanam, a green oasis in Chennai

## Team Rotary News

Stepping into its third year, Sri Vanam, an urban trail forest spread over one acre and created with the aim to nurture a huge nursery with 32,320 saplings to symbolically represent RID 3232 at the Chennai Tidel Park, got a facelift in July this year. Chennai Corporation commissioner J Radhakrishnan unveiled the name board of Sri Vanam Rotary in the presence of Apollo Hospitals vice-president Preetha Reddy, DG-elect Mahaveer Bothra and the Go Green chairperson Sivabala Rajendran from RC Chennai Meraki. The urban forest that has blossomed on a vast barren



College students lend a hand in the greening drive.



Chennai Corporation commissioner J Radhakrishnan (third from L) fills a coconut shell with soil, in the presence of project chair Sivabala Rajendran (second from L), Apollo Hospitals vice-president Preetha Reddy and DGE Mahaveer Bothra (R).



ground is providing oxygen detox to regular walkers and residents of the neighbourhood.

It was during the tenure of PDG J Sridhar that *Project Sri Vanam* was inaugurated in July 2021 in partnership with the Chennai Corporation and Communi-Tree, a local NGO. “Our noble vision to protect the environment, prevent soil erosion, and curb pollution through planting of trees have attracted many partners in *Project Sri Vanam*. So far, we have planted 7,000 saplings with a three-year agreement to nurture these plants till they become self-sustainable,” said project chair Sivabala. From being an eyesore littered with garbage

dumps, this barren land owned by the Chennai Corporation at the Tidel Park was converted to a lush green, urban forest bustling with biodiversity attracting small animals, colourful butterflies, insects and birds from far-off lands, a pleasure to the sight, she explained.

As the guests and officials were taken around the forest trail, “it was a moment of pride and bliss for us all to witness how the saplings planted three years ago had grown to eight to ten feet tall, creating a lush green canopy.” The success story of *Sri Vanam* was celebrated with Radhakrishnan inaugurating the plant nursery in the presence of Rotarians and civic

officials. “A feature of Sri Vanam nursery is that saplings were grown on coconut shells, which are environment-friendly, instead of polythene or plastic sachets,” she added.

Students from Dhanalakshmi Srinivasan College of Arts and Science, Annai Veilankanni Group of Institutions and Patrician College of Arts and Science were the unsung heroes of the event with their volunteer work ahead of the nursery launch. Presidents from RCs Chennai Meraki, Madras Connemara, Adyar, Madras T Nagar, Madras Nungambakkam, Meraki’s Annets and Rotaractors were present at the venue to celebrate the event. ■

## From a cancer patient to **happy woman**

**W**ith anxiety and fear writ large on her face, 60-year-old Gnanambal travelled 30km to a breast cancer screening camp hosted jointly by RC Rasipuram, RID 2982, and the local Inner Wheel club. She wanted to know the status of a small, but perceivable lesion on her breast and on examination with the help of diagnostic equipment, it was found to be malignant.

Both the clubs helped her financially to undergo further tests for better understanding of the disease and to decide on the course of treatment. “We advised her to have chemotherapy to reduce the size of her lesion followed by surgery. She was also prescribed radiation therapy,” recalled NP Ramaswamy, past president, RC Rasipuram.

After consultations, the clubs approached the medical superintendent of the Government Mohan Kumaramangalam Hospital, Salem. The doctor after perusing her medical records, assured Gnanambal and the clubs that she could be treated at the



Gnanambal (R) at the breast cancer screening camp.

hospital and all the expenses would be covered under the Prime Minister’s Insurance Scheme. Following a period of treatment at the hospital, she is now fully cured of cancer without spending a paisa from her pocket, thanks to *Project Malar* which is a flagship initiative of RID 2981 that screens women for breast cancer.

Last year, the project was launched by the then RI President Jennifer Jones in the presence of then RIDs

AS Venkatesh and Mahesh Kotbagi and IPDG P Saravanan. Following this, around 20 breast screening camps were organised in partnership with Genworks, which produces the screening machines, with project chairman Babu Kandasamy leading the initiative. “He is taking efforts to hold similar camps in other states and is planning to have screening machines through CSR funds,” said Ramaswamy. *Project Malar* has given a new lease of life to Gnanambal. ■

# Greening the hills and lighting up lives

Jaishree

**R**otary Club of Pune Sports City, a 28-year-old club with 65 Rotarians in RID 3131, has been implementing environment protection projects for over five years.

The club's effort is making the Baner Hills, a hillock popular among trekkers, verdant and clean. It is an ongoing project and this year, along with the Vasundhara Abhiyan, an NGO that is focused on biodiversity conservation, and Finastra, an IT firm, 100 saplings were planted on the slopes of the hill-ock. "With the Vasundhara team guiding us, we planted the saplings in a scientific manner," said club member Sandesh Savant. The process involved digging pits and enriching them with manure.

To ensure the saplings' survival and growth into towering trees, a network of tree pits was strategically connected through continuous contour trenching, enabling efficient percolation and sharing of water.

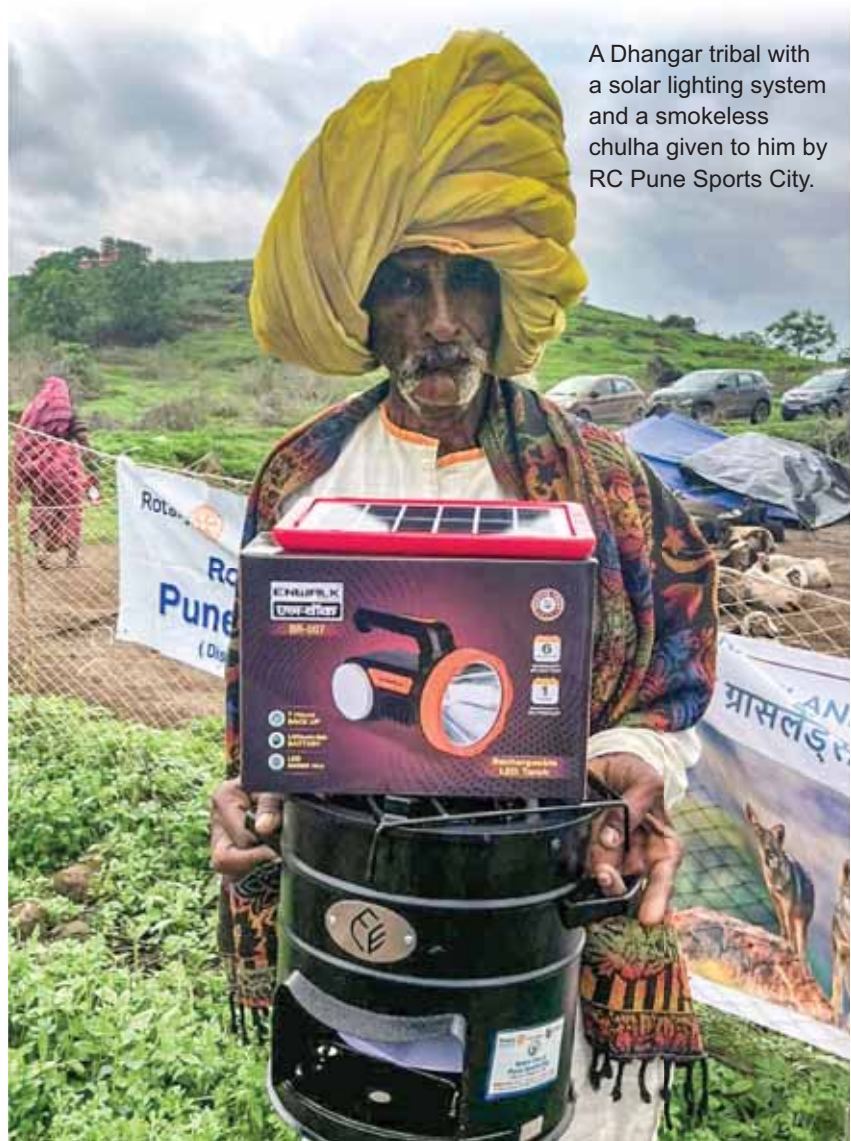
Students from the NCL School in Pashan, a neighbouring locality, and Finastra employees volunteered for the

greening drive along with the Rotarians and the Vasundhara team. The corporate, Finastra, sponsored the project cost of ₹63,000.

In another environment care initiative, the club gifted 30 smokeless *chulhas*, solar

panels and torches to the Dhangar population residing in the hilly hamlets of Jadhavwadi and Morgaon, nestled amidst the grasslands of Saswad and Jejuri in the Purandar taluk in Pune. The Dhangars, a nomadic tribe, depend on these

grasslands in their quest for fodder for their cattle. As they travel through these lands, they often pitch tents in the wilderness. With no access to electricity, the solar lamps provided by the club ward off darkness, ensuring their safety



A Dhangar tribal with a solar lighting system and a smokeless chulha given to him by RC Pune Sports City.



from attacks by wildlife. “Moreover, the smokeless *chulhas* have helped them replace the rugged hearth cooking model. It has brought comfort and safety to their daily cooking routines,” said Savant.

The Grasslands Trust, a Pune-based NGO, helped identify the beneficiaries and the club met the project cost of ₹95,000 from the interest accrued by the Pune Sports City Rotary Trust which was initiated by the late IPP Kennedy Samuel. ■

Club members planting saplings on the slopes of the Baner Hills.



## An app to prepare students for exams

### Team Rotary News

DG Milind Kulkarni of RID 3142 has conceptualised an app called *Ideal Study* to help Class 10 students prepare for their state board examination. The app, developed by software solution

provider Prism Solutions, is being distributed by Rotary clubs to students and teachers across Maharashtra. The custom-made study tool comprises exhaustive worksheets and MCQs

for all subjects, and provides study techniques and answers. The app is licensed by the Maharashtra State Textbook Production and Curriculum Research Board, Pune Balbharati. It can be downloaded from Google Play Store and installed in any digital medium such as a computer, mobile phone or a tab.



Students after receiving the *Ideal Study* app given to them by RC Navi Mumbai. The app's developer Rtn Amol Kamat is seen second from left.

The app costing ₹1,111 is given at a discounted price of ₹65 to Rotary clubs for distribution to students studying in government schools. RC Navi Mumbai has purchased around 530 coupons of the app, and RC Kalyan, in a joint project with RID 3141, has distributed it to 700 students in Wada taluk. ■

# Team RID 3211 at a Paris cycling event

Tina Antony

Paris–Brest–Paris (PBP) is a gruelling 1,200km self-supported ride from Paris to Brest in Brittany, and back, and is the most famous and oldest amateur cycling event in the world. It began in 1891 and is held every four years. The most recent edition of PBP was held in August 2023. The Audax Club of Paris is the organiser of the event,

and the challenge is to complete 1,219km, with an elevation of 12,000m, in 90 hours. Cyclists from affiliated clubs of Audax, who have completed 200, 300, 400 and 600km are qualified to participate in this event.

Around 6,800 cyclists from 71 countries participated this year including four Rotarians from RID 3211 — Jittu Sebastian and Mebin Abraham from RC

Kottayam Southern, Dr Jose Kuruvilla, president, RC Pala, and Kiran C Kurian from RC Kottayam North.

Here is an excerpt from a conversation with Jittu Sebastian.

## How did you take up cycling as a sport?

Our team of friends started cycling as an aerobic exercise to improve our fitness and health. Soon we were

motivated to do long-distance endurance cycling rides and took part in many amateur rides organised in southern India.

## Tell us about your experience at this premier event.

In one sentence, it was the ride of my life. I have never faced such challenges in any of my previous rides. The unaccustomed climate, the rough terrain, the high elevations which we had to negotiate and the unfamiliar food, tested us beyond measure. Roads were rolling from one hill to another. We had to wait in long queues for food at reporting points; and very hot days followed by extremely cold nights, and turbulent headwind while cycling, were exhausting and slowed our progress.

After about a day and a half, I realised I was lagging by around 90 minutes from reporting time, so I decided to forgo both food and sleep. I survived on soft

**From L:** Jose Kuruvilla, Jittu Sebastian, Kiran Kurian and Mebin Abraham in front of the Eiffel Tower, Paris.



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It was the ride of my life. The climate, the rough terrain, the high elevations and the unfamiliar food, tested us beyond measure.

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Jittu Sebastian with his medal after completing the race.

drinks and fruits provided by thoughtful villagers along the way. But sleepless nights and gnawing hunger made me weak both in body and spirit. I felt disturbed and avoided phone calls and messages, but in hindsight this actually saved my time. It was the inner voice that goaded me to go on, it gave me the power to fight back and overcome the tiredness deep in my bones. In the final 10 hours, by the grace of god, I was able to recover my normal pace and with almost half-an-hour to spare I finished

the race. Sadly, my fellow rider, Kiran Kurian who too should have completed the race met with an accident a few hundred kilometres prior to the finish and was unable to continue.

### How were you able to showcase Rotary at the event?

It was mandatory to wear the affiliation t-shirt for the race but prior to the race we got the opportunity to wear our Rotary t-shirts with the PBP Race logo. Many cyclists were intrigued and we explained that we were Rotarians from South India.

*The author is the  
DGN of RID 3211*

## Soil health seminar in a Chikmagalur village

Team Rotary News



DG BC Geetha (fourth from L) inaugurating the seminar by watering a plant.

**R**C Chikmagalur Coffeeland, RID 3182, organised a seminar for farmers and coffee planters in Mugulavalli Village, Chikmagalur, to emphasise soil health conservation which is the district project this Rotary year. DG BC Geetha, participating in the event, stressed on the significance of soil fertility and healthy farming practices.

Club President Tanoj Kumar highlighted the urgent need to stop unscientific use of agro-inputs such as insecticides and weedicides. Club members Jagadeesh MH and Anand M, hailing from the village, helped in bringing together farmers and organisations, including the Agriculture and Horticulture departments and the

Kissan Sangha. The event drew 400 agriculturists and 50 Rotarians.

Narayan S Mavarkar, Dean, College of Horticulture, Mudigere, enlightened the audience about organic farming, composting methods, vermicomposting, summer ploughing, farm yard manures, mulching of soil, green manure crops and biofertilisers. ■

# Meet your



**Manjoo Phadke**  
*Corporate consultant*  
*RC Pune Deccan Gymkhana*  
*RID 3131*

## Rebranding Rotary in urban areas

**I**n the corporate world, where I come from you give orders and wait for them to be executed. But in Rotary, I've learned it's about teamwork, empathy and empowering others," says Manjoo Phadke. She is thoroughly impressed by Rotary's seamless annual transition, creating 540 new DGs and 46,000 club presidents with remarkable precision and efficacy.

While boosting club membership she urges club presidents to "showcase the pride of being a Rotarian. I highlight how my district has completed \$850 million worth of projects in every event I address." For organic club growth, Manjoo encourages club presidents to prioritise club quality over number of members.

Manjoo has set a goal of raising \$3 million for TRF. She plans to complete 1,000 paediatric surgeries, establish 'Happy anganwadis', and recharge borewells. While Rotary has a strong presence in rural areas "there is a need for rebranding in urban landscapes. *Rotary Green Society* initiative aims to address urban problems such as pollution, waste management and environmental wellness," says Manjoo.

To ensure Rotary knowledge reaches every member of her district, Manjoo has introduced fun games and entertainment, making learning enjoyable.



**V Srinivas Murthy**  
*Power and solar*  
*RC Bangalore Peenya, RID 3192*

## Opening doors to LGBTQIA

**S**rinivas Murthy had a major concern on the lack of transgender-friendly facilities in public places. As district governor, he has now initiated a project to build exclusive toilets for transgender individuals. He believes in Rotary's power to drive change and is actively welcoming LGBTQIA members "who can commit to Rotary's ideals, ethical standards and willingness to contribute to service projects."

Murthy encourages CSR partners to contribute through TRF, citing its hassle-free procedure and high stewardship. His district has already collected ₹3 crore through CSR funding. He plans to establish a ₹10 crore yoga and rehabilitation facility at the Indian Institute of Science Bangalore through a CSR partnership.

He promotes Rotary as a supportive family focused on personal and professional growth, and "this has to be highlighted to potential members," he says. This DG aims to collect \$1.5 million for TRF. His district has partnered with the Karnataka Milk Federation to support 500 underprivileged women with milch cows. He intends to continue the legacy of RID 3190 (11,000 surgeries until 2023) by completing 200 heart surgeries this year.



# Governors

Kiran Zehra



**BC Geetha**

*Education management  
RC Balehonnur, RID 3182*

## Prioritising local needs

Address local community needs to promote Rotary's public image and make it a household name," says BC Geetha. Her district encompasses extensive rural areas, "and our primary focus will be on enhancing the lives of rural people, especially struggling farmers." Collaborating with agricultural colleges, clubs across RID 3182 are assisting farmers in soil testing and balancing its nutrients "to help farmers produce healthier and abundant crops," she says.

She is calling on every club to recruit at least three women as members to improve the DEI representation in her district. To keep members engaged and involved, she urges club presidents to respect existing members and make their families feel appreciated. For membership growth, she extends invitations to potential Rotary members to attend club and district meetings/events.

She plans to collect \$300,000 for TRF. During her tenure, her primary focus will be on executing projects related to value-based education and road safety. The district has partnered with Vans Chemistry to effectively manage e-waste. While Rotary clubs collect e-waste, the consultancy firm ensures its safe disposal.



**Nirmal Jain Kunawat**

*CA (taxation)  
RC Udaipur, RID 3056*

## Focus on students

If we can save even a single child from committing suicide through our mental health and suicide prevention projects, I would consider this as my biggest achievement," says Nirmal Jain Kunawat. His district is vigorously carrying out mental health initiatives and RYLAs for students after the tragic incident of 25 student suicides in Kota, Rajasthan. To encourage clubs to work on mental health, they've introduced cash awards for innovative initiatives that boost students' morale.

The district has also launched the Cinema on Wheels project, where a 52-seater, luxurious bus screens UNICEF-approved movies on topics like 'good touch/bad touch' to students in both villages and cities. Other projects initiated this year are Pink Autos, school adoptions and providing e-learning software to schools with underprivileged children. The district's strong social media presence has significantly boosted Rotary's brand in the region.

He is working on strengthening clubs by "resolving internal issues and working on members' insecurities," aiming for 10 per cent growth by inviting individuals engaged in Rotary projects, such as school principals and CSR partners. His TRF goal is \$150,000.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

# Finland & Iceland... where happiness reigns

Manoj Desai

**F**inland has topped the list of the happiest countries in the world for the last three years.

Located in northern Europe, Finland is one of the world's most northern and geographically remote countries and is subject to severe climatic conditions. Nearly two-thirds of Finland is blanketed by thick

woodlands, making it the most densely forested country in Europe.

Having been compressed under the enormous weight of glaciers, the terrain in Finland is rising due to the post-glacial rebound. The effect is strongest around the Gulf of Bothnia, where the land steadily rises about 1cm (0.4in) a year. As a result, the old sea bottom turns little by little into dry

land: the surface area of the country is expanding by about 7sq km annually. Relatively speaking, Finland is rising from the sea.

The landscape is covered mostly by coniferous taiga forests and fens, and there is little cultivated land. Of the total area of the country, 10 per cent is water... ponds, lakes, rivers, and 78 per cent is forest. The forest consists of





pine, spruce, birch and other species. Finland is the largest producer of wood in Europe and the paper on which this magazine — *Rotary News* — is printed, is imported from this Nordic country. The most common type of rock here is granite.

**H**elsinki, which hosted the 1952 summer Olympics, was the World Design Capital for 2012. It has one of the world’s highest standards of urban living. In 2011, the British magazine *Monocle* ranked Helsinki the world’s most liveable city.

We were extremely fortunate to have past RI director Virpi Honkala, who lives in Finland, to show us around the place. She left no stone unturned to show us Espoo, Porvoo

and Helsinki with an open invite to her home at Raahe in Northern Finland. We are grateful to her and her brother Kari for great hospitality and some great Finnish food too.

**T**he Sibelius Monument is a sculpture done by the Finnish artist

Eila Hiltunen titled *Passio Musicae*. It was unveiled in September, 1967. The sculpture won a competition organised by the Sibelius Society following the composer’s death in 1957. Originally it sparked a lively debate about the merits and flaws of abstract art and although the design looked like stylised organ pipes, it was known that the composer had created little music with organs. Hiltunen addressed her critics by adding the face of Sibelius, which sits beside the main sculpture.

The sculpture, done with the aim to capture the music of Sibelius, consists of a series of more than 600 hollow steel pipes welded together in a wave-like pattern. The large monument weighs 24 tonnes and measures 28ft×34ft×21ft.

We next visited the Helsinki Cathedral, a distinctive landmark in the city, with its tall, green dome

Life expectancy	
Iceland	
Woman:	84.5 years
Man:	81.8 years
India	
Woman:	68.9 years
Man:	65.8 years

**A lake at the Landmannalaugar hiking trails, Iceland.**



surrounded by four smaller domes. The majestic building, done in the neoclassical style, was designed by Carl Ludvig Engel as the climax of his Senate Square layout. It is surrounded by smaller buildings also designed by him. The church's plan is a Greek cross (a square centre and four equilateral arms), symmetrical in each of the four cardinal directions, with the façade of each arm featuring a colonnade (walkway) and pediment.

**W**e decided to plan a trip also to Iceland, which ranks the third happiest country in the world, wondering how can the people of a nation who are troubled by earthquakes, volcanoes and the vagaries of glaciers, and

facing so many difficulties due to these natural disasters be so happy.

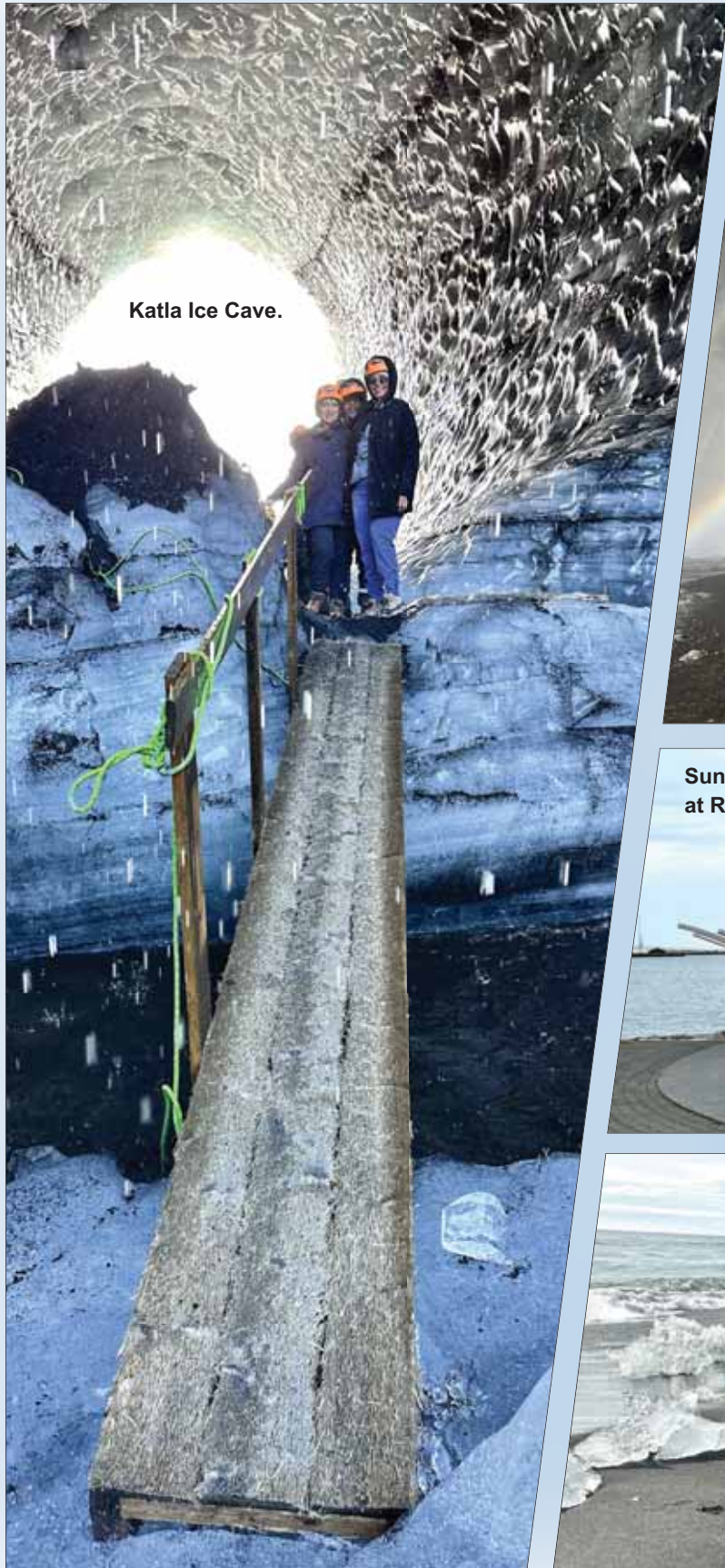
We were truly amazed by their lifestyle! The healthy lifestyle they practise, in spite of so many odds, gives them an edge over other people and raises their average life expectancy... believe it or not... to the fourth highest in the world! Here the average life expectancy of a woman is 84.5 years and a man 81.8 years. We in India are far behind with the female life expectancy being 68.9 years, and male 65.8 years.

What fascinated us the most was the presence of the midnight sun in Iceland, and its famous geothermal wonders. The country is a powerhouse of geothermal activity, and the electricity produced from it results in wonderfully warm homes and numerous heated outdoor swimming pools. We visited the Katla Ice Caves and glacial wonders which

**Hallgrímskirkja  
Church, Reykjavik,  
Iceland**







**Katla Ice Cave.**



**Sun Voyager  
at Reykjavik.**



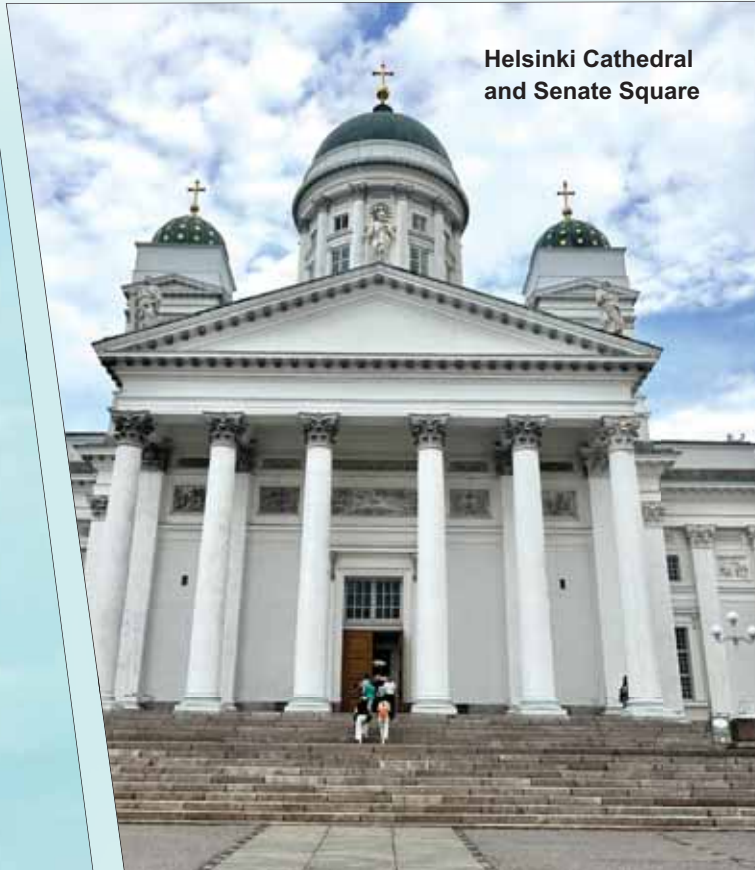
**Diamond beach with  
black volcanic sand.**



**National Museum  
of Helsinki, Finland.**



**Helsinki Cathedral  
and Senate Square**



**Sibelius Monument,  
Helsinki**







Tempeliaukio Church (Rock Church), Helsinki

unveiled for us the awesome power of nature. This was the most memorable experience of our trip.

The country has unique wildlife — reindeer, horses, lambs, sea birds, puffins. It is so pleasing to the eye to see so many healthy and robust horses wherever you go!

But nothing compares to the majestic waterfalls that this country has; every time we visited one, we all exclaimed ‘oh my god,’ almost in unison. Iceland has over 10,000 waterfalls which vary in size and are truly awe-inspiring, reflecting the raw power, energy and force of nature.

**R**eykjavik, the capital of Iceland, is famous for its thriving nightlife and hosting some of the best

Fridheimar Farm  
produces over **700**  
tons of tomatoes a year,  
nearly **40** per cent of  
Iceland's tomatoes.

music festivals in Northern Europe such as the Iceland Airwaves. It is equally well-known for its unique architecture and the fascinating earthen colours of its buildings. Its three important landmarks are the Harpa Symphony Hall, Hallgrímskirkja Church and the Solfar Sun Voyager. The last is a sculpture which represents a dream boat and is an ode to the sun. It also represents the promise of undiscovered territory

and a dream of hope, progress and freedom. This is the result of a competition funded by the district in 1986 to celebrate Reykjavik's 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

The Harpa Symphony Hall is a landmark building of Reykjavik for all visitors, being a concert hall and a conference centre in the city. The opening concert was held here in May, 2011. The building features a distinctive coloured glass facade inspired by the basalt landscape of Iceland. Harpa was designed by the Danish firm Henning Larsen Architects in cooperation with Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson. The structure consists of a steel framework covered by geometric shaped glass panels of different colours.

Coming to the food, you will get here delicious lamb, seafood,

Arctic char and fish stew. Its famous dark rye bread baked in hot springs is a unique experience altogether. It tells you all about how powerful is man's survival instincts and the unique opportunities offered by Mother Nature!

**T**he Fridheimar Farm is a greenhouse haven for the most delicious tomatoes you'll ever taste. Visiting this is an experience not to be missed. As you step into this thriving oasis, you'll be greeted by row after row of vibrant tomato plants, basking in the warmth of Iceland's abundant geothermal energy. The greenhouse is heated with geothermal water from a nearby borehole and the lights are powered by electricity, also from geothermal energy.

This tomato farm is owned by the passionate horticulturist Helena Hermundardóttir and the knowledgeable agronomist Knútur Rafn Ármann. They've been perfecting their business since 1995.

It is operated as a family business and the owners are still involved, as are their children. And it is a massive empire. The farm pumps out over 700 tons of tomatoes a year, which is nearly 40 per cent of the country's entire crop of tomatoes!

The Fridheimar greenhouse complex comprises nine specialised greenhouse buildings and over 27,000 tomato plants (and also some cucumber and basil plants). We won't be able to forget our lunch there for a long time to come. It proved the proverb that where there is a will, there is a way.

We visited two of the geothermal springs at Sky Lagoon and Hvammsvik; the experience was pure ecstasy.

You can spend hours in hot springs, enjoying drinks while appreciating the wonders of nature. It certainly teaches you to be one with nature and hopefully increase your lifespan.

The moment you land at the Keflavik airport and drive down to Reykjavik, the dramatic volcanic landscapes stretch on for miles and miles. But when you go into the details you enjoy the thrills of nature as they produce black sand beaches and amazing places like Rangárþing ytra (a municipality in southern Iceland) with its great hiking trails and vibrantly coloured mountains.

Our eight-day visit to Iceland was a great learning experience on the power of nature, the amazing coexistence between fire and ice and the human endeavour not only to survive but also flourish! It also taught us the importance of changes in lifestyle and respect for Mother Nature.

*The author is a past RI director*

Pictures by Manoj Desai

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

10 per cent of  
Finland is water...  
ponds, lakes, rivers.  
Forest area: 78 per cent

**The Presidential Palace  
of Helsinki.**





# Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

## 40 new Interact clubs in RID 3020



RID Raju Subramanian (third from R), along with DG Subbarao Ravuri (L) and Interactors, at the installation event.

RID Raju Subramanian installed 40 new Interact clubs in RID 3020. RC Visakhapatnam hosted an event to install the District Interact Representative and presidents of the 140 Interact clubs. The RI director addressed the Interactors and stressed the importance of Interact and its activities. ■

## Lessons on membership development



PRID AS Venkatesh being honoured at the seminar in the presence of DG BC Geetha (L).

PRID AS Venkatesh inaugurated a seminar on 'Membership development and public image' organised by RID 3182 in Hassan, near Bengaluru. Over 178 new Rotarians have been inducted during July to September this Rotary year, said past assistant governor Sesappa Rai. ■

## Eye donation awareness rally in Chennai



Actor Jayaram Subramaniam with Dr Sujatha and Dr Mohan Rajan, founders of RREB, Dr Nirmal Fredrick, president TNOA, and PDG J Sridhar.

Rotary Rajan Eye Bank (RREB) organised its annual eye donation awareness rally at the Elliots Beach, Besant Nagar, with 1,500 student participants. South Indian actor Jayaram Subramaniam pledged to donate his eyes at the rally. ■

## Chaat stall by Rotary



Rotarian Manju Ranjan and her team from RC Patna City Samrat, RID 3250, taught an underprivileged person to make *batata puri* and *bhulpuri*. The club then gifted him a trolley costing ₹30,000 to make and sell these snacks. ■

**P**ets have become part and parcel of urban living. Many animal-loving families keep dogs and cats at home. Not only do these loving animals enhance the quality of family life, but they also make children more sensitive towards other species. Pets provide warmth, companionship, happiness, fun and frolic and their presence is therapeutic for the entire family.

Since you otherwise embrace a sustainable lifestyle, you could also reduce your carbon footprint, or should we say pawprint? Let's start with the food you provide your pets. Typically, in the West, cats and dogs are fed food from the supermarket produced by pet food companies. Unfortunately, in India too this trend is catching on and instead of cooking for our pets, we too, lured by advertising and hype, are buying instant meals and mixes that come packed in large bags.

I was talking to a friend who is an animal activist in Mumbai.



# Reduce the carbon pawprints of your pets

**Preeti Mehra**

*Sustainability and your furry friend can go hand-in-hand.*





She keeps several cats at home and feeds many strays. I asked her what she thinks is the best and sustainable food for pets. She minced no words: “If we do not fill our stomachs all the time with packaged food that has preservatives, why do we subject our pets to it.” According to her, packaged food is best for a snack or a treat for pets, but boiled home-cooked food is best for them on an everyday basis just as it is for us. For the environment too there is nothing better than organic, home food.

For dogs too home-cooked food is a better option and comes free of packaging and artificial flavouring. My neighbour prepares it once in four days for her beautiful Labrador. She dunks in rice, two-three different lentils, several cut vegetables including carrots and gourds, soya chunks, chicken legs and water and gives it a few whistles in the pressure cooker. She keeps this in the fridge, bringing it out and serving it with curd, milk, sometimes bread or chappatis twice a day. Her dog loves her for it, while she loves the fact that he has a healthy and wholesome diet. This also helps the pets’ carbon print as revealed by research that I came across.

A pre-pandemic international study estimated that pet food consumption contributes 64 million tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions each year.

Apart from food, there are many other areas where you can raise the green flag in the upbringing of your pet, toys being one of them. Instead of relying on synthetic or plastic toys in the market that take several hundred years to decompose when you throw them away, try to make toys from left-over material at home. Here are one or two do-it-yourself ideas — stuff lots of waste cloth into your old cotton sock and tie a neat knot on top. Puppies just love chewing on it or running after it when you throw it around. While teething, these become natural soothers for them. You can also make balls out of wastepaper, encasing them in safe cloth bags or bamboo covering, so that they are harmless and plastic-free.

In the same way pet owners can make beds for their pets out of material lying unused at home. With children at home, this may be an educative and enjoyable endeavour. It teaches children that there are alternatives to buying environment unfriendly products from the marketplace.

Cleaning after the dog too is an important activity that can reduce your pet’s carbon footprint. Try to keep ready poop bags made of paper or biodegradable material that can be flushed when you come back home after a walk. In some countries they have even been composting animal waste just like we do with cow dung in our villages.

But overall, all said and done, keeping

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**If we do not fill our stomachs all the time with packaged food that has preservatives, why do we subject our pets to it.**

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pets is an activity that is a sign of one having embraced the concept of a better and kinder world. A world where there is respect for other species as well as a recognition that humans need to coexist with other beings they share this planet with.

There are animals other than cats and dogs which make great pets too if you have the space in your home and heart — you can keep ducks, guinea pigs, turtles, rabbits, even hens. But do keep in mind that when you choose a pet, it is not an endangered species and that you are not plucking it off its natural habitat to make it your pet. That would be an unsustainable practice. And, never, ever keep animals or birds in cages. That is unforgivable.

My friends who live on their farm in Dahanu, Maharashtra, live off the produce of the land. They have an entire family of ducks, and a coop full of hens. Theirs is a lively household with the farm animals coexisting happily with their three cats and a dog. Now that is truly going green and rustic. Packaged pet food is miles and miles away in the nearest town. But living like them is a luxury that is admittedly impossible in our cities. But a little effort can go a long way to make our homes sustainable and pet friendly.

*The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues*



Wordsworld

## Knock on the head



Sandhya Rao

When a book literally demands to be read, how can anyone resist?

I was at my desk the other day, doing my usual thing, reading a bit, dreaming a bit, watching my favourite shows a bit when out jumped a book from the bookshelf in front and landed plonk on my head. Startled, I managed to avoid damage to both book and self, and looked to see what had caused the sudden activity. There had been no knocking sound on the other side, no tremor. Bemused, I gazed at the front cover: it displayed *Half a Man*, sort of setting into the sea with tall flames rising from the surface of the water. Written by Michael Morpurgo, a well-known writer and poet whose books are gobbled up like samosas and illustrated by Gemma O'Callaghan, it has the most vivid endpaper in a gorgeous orange that

sets off brilliantly black and white silhouettes of birds in flight.

I opened the book and flipped through its pages — just about 60 or so — profusely punctuated with pictures in colour. I started reading: 'When I was very little, more than half a century ago now, I used to have nightmares. You don't forget nightmares. This one was always the same. It began with a face, a twisted, tortured face that screamed silently, a face without hair or eyebrows, a skull more than a face, a skull which was covered in puckered, scarred skin stretched over the cheekbones.' I read on till the end of the book; its simple, lucid prose was both profound and moving, and resonated with layers of meaning.

The narrator of the story is a boy called Michael — and no, this is not about Michael Morpurgo, although it is inspired by true events. Michael shares with the reader observations, comments and feelings about his grandfather whose impending visit always made his parents feel extremely tense. Grandfather was injured badly during the second world war; his burn injuries left him with literally only half a face and barely any fingers. He received arduous and lengthy treatment and was eventually rehabilitated, but coming home to his family found them unable to come to terms with him, or rather, how he looked. They were, to put it mildly, shocked by his physical transformation. They took care

The simple, lucid prose of *Half a Man* is both profound and moving, and resonates with layers of meaning. The cadence of its prose and the power of storytelling is compelling.

of him, of course, but they avoided looking at him, his face, they didn't talk to him. Over the years, therefore, Michael's grandfather retreated further and further into his shell.

Only Michael was different. '...I'd sneak a crafty look. And very soon that look became a stare,' he says. 'I was never at all revolted by what I saw. If I had been, I could have looked away easily. I think I was more fascinated than anything else, and horrified too, because I'd been told something of what happened to him in the war. I saw the suffering he had gone through in his deep blue eyes — eyes that hardly ever blinked,

I noticed. Then I'd feel my mother's eyes boring into me, willing me to stop staring, or my father would kick me under the table.'

The child's natural curiosity and spontaneous empathy gradually unravel grandfather's story and eventually enable him to help the

family understand. For instance, why he doesn't smile — he can't because the skin around his mouth and on his





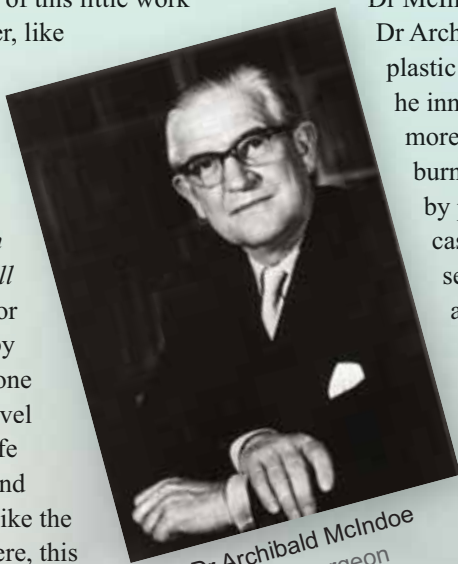
face is tight; why he is so silent — because he feels alone and rejected. In the end, thanks to Michael, his family members reclaim the warmth of their relationship. Gannets, among the largest seabirds in the North Atlantic, also feature in the story, and not just on the endpapers! Grandfather says gannets bring good luck.

This is the gist of this little work of fiction. However, like other ‘little’ books such as *The Little Prince* by Antoine de St Exupery, *Jonathan Livingston Seagull* by Richard Bach, or *The Snow Goose* by Paul Gallico, this one too works at the level of metaphor, for life and experiences, and specifically war. Like the titles mentioned here, this book too is as much for the soul as for the cadence of its prose and the power of storytelling.

At the simplest level, *Half a Man* is about war and the physical and mental scars it leaves behind; however, it also resonates with other ideas such as the consequences of enmity; the corner into which the differently-abled are pushed owing to fear, lack of awareness. It’s the kind of book in which the reader will find new insight upon every reading. It is a work of fiction, yes, but the world it creates is palpable, tangible, real. And the doctor who attends to Michael’s grandfather is an actual person: ‘It was him that did it, put us back together, and I’m not talking about the operations. He was a magician in the operating room, all right. But it’s what he did afterwards for us,’ grandfather tells Michael. ‘He made us feel right again inside, like we

mattered, like we weren’t monster men.’ Whereas his own daughter ‘didn’t look at me the same, didn’t speak to me like I was normal.... She still loved me, I think, but all she saw was a monster man.’

An article of May 2016 in the blog site *LibrisNotes* remarks that the doctor mentioned in the book as



Dr Archibald McIndoe  
plastic surgeon

Dr McIndoe, was, in fact, Dr Archibald McIndoe, a plastic surgeon. It says he innovated ways to more effectively treat burn injuries suffered by pilots who were casualties of the second world war, and helped them reintegrate into the community.

In fact, Dr McIndoe placed great emphasis on the need for such people

to find their rightful place in society. During the war, he also founded the Guinea Pig Club for exactly such a purpose, to help patients recover not just physically but also mentally and socially. If you check out the copyright page, you will find that it is dedicated to Eric Pearce, “one of the very last of McIndoe’s ‘Guinea Pigs’”.

During World War II,  
Dr Archibald McIndoe, a  
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into the community.

This piece of information reminded me of S Ramakrishnan, the founder of Amar Seva Sangam. As a fourth-year engineering student, he wanted to join the services; he signed up for the admission process. During the last round of the naval officers’ selection test, he suffered an injury that left him paralysed neck down. He was immediately taken to the defence hospital for treatment where he did not just have to deal with physical pain, but also with the knowledge that he had become a quadriplegic. After months of treatment and recuperation, he returned home to Ayikudy in Tirunelveli district. There he founded the Amar Seva Sangam in order to treat and rehabilitate children with physical disabilities. Ramakrishnan named his institution after Air Marshal Dr Amarjit Singh Chahal, who had not only treated him at the defence hospital, but also given him moral support and encouragement all through that trying time. Established in 1981, the Amar Seva Sangam works to empower and enable the physically and mentally-challenged live, as their vision statement says, ‘in a proactive society where equality prevails irrespective of physical, mental or other challenges with the rest of society.’

Do you remember Dashrath Manjhi? He was a villager who lived near Gaya. For 22 years he chipped away at a mountain until he managed to create a passage that drastically cut down travel time to the nearest hospital. Truth is more amazing than fiction; *Half a Man* proves that in its own way.

*The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist*

# Beware of this Big O

Bharat & Shalan Savur

**T**his is your alarm clock. Wake up. A joint study by WHO and ICRIER (the Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations) warns India of The Big O — an ‘obesity epidemic’ — after a decade-long study in the sales of ultra-processed foods in our country.

While sales plummeted during the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown, there has been a sharp V-shaped recovery since. Evidently, sugared and salted processed foods come with attached concerns of diabetes and hypertension.

Chocolates and other sugar confectionaries are expected to lead and dominate the demand. At their heels will be salty snacks and ready-made convenience foods.

The fact is: even if consumption is pretty low compared to home-cooked meals, we’ve got to ensure that the upward trend is curtailed both by policy interventions and even more important, through self-control. Apparently, there is already an alarming increase in patients suffering from fatty liver and intestinal diseases.

The WHO-ICRIER study is further underscored by on-the-ground findings of the Tata Memorial Hospital in Mumbai. This centre has witnessed a 300 per cent rise in admissions of people with gastrointestinal cancer in the same period — 2010 to 2022. ‘It’s due to the rise in urbanisation and lifestyle changes,’ says Dr Shailesh Shrikhande, its deputy director and head of cancer surgery.

## Hot potato

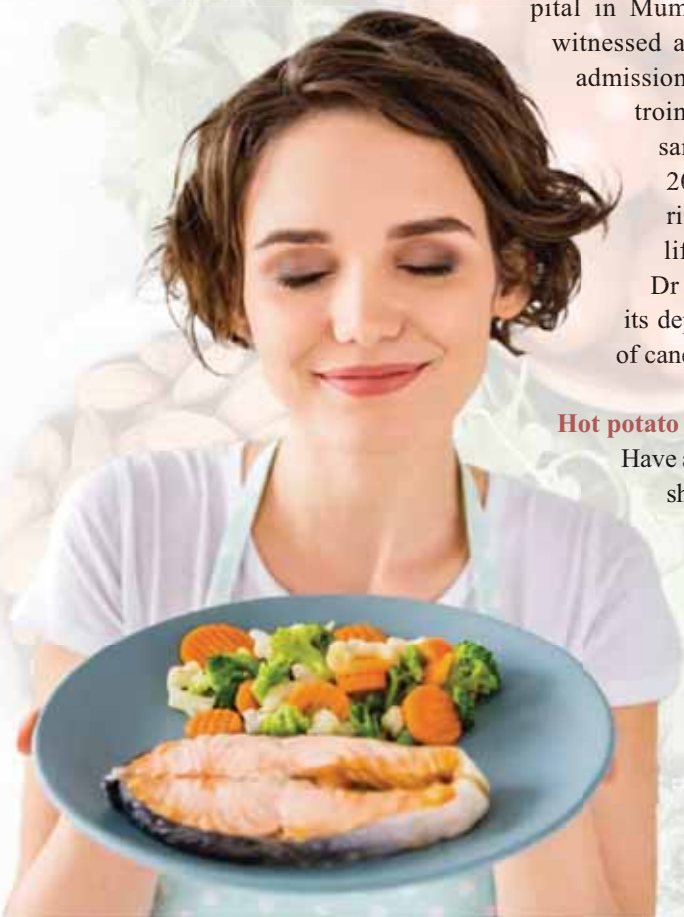
Have a long hard look at your shopping list, please, dear readers. Chips take the cake as a more dangerous snack for diabetics. Fried foods beat sweet stuff in their potential for diabetes. A health fact that is not so widely known. ‘*Tumhaare moonh may ghee-shakkar*’ is fine as a metaphor

but a bad combo for good health. Ahmedabad is recognised as the world capital of diabetes — Gujaratis top the list in the sweet-fry duo. Likewise, Lahore is the world capital for hypertension and heart-related issues — the flip side of its famous red-meat delicacies. Both sweets and red meat are, perhaps, themes for future columns. In this one, we serve them as starters. A great way to ward off diabetes or ensure your sugar level does not rise, is to have a thin vegetable soup every night as dinner. It nourishes, satiates and is easy on the metabolism. In England, doctors recommend it to people who’ve tested their blood-sugar and are pre-diabetic.

## Just two minutes

The splitting of the joint family, the husband and wife both working (likewise a single parent) are among the many factors that have changed our society. Under these new circumstances where both livelihood and lifestyle link, eating out, ordering in or eating/cooking canned and packaged food has been the immediate outcome from increased incomes and reduced cooking time and space. The two-minute noodles come with enhanced risks. Order home-cooked meals from an enterprising individual in the neighborhood. Trim the fat bill — it trims the fat in our tissues.

‘But processed foods are so easy’ you might protest. Sure, but they come laden with unhealthy baggage such as excess salt, sugar, fats, oil, preservatives, taste-enhancing additives, artificial colours, flavours and sweeteners. It’s stuff your body can’t handle. It’s also revealing that the old Indian





propensity stays intact. We still hear admiring remarks about how prosperous somebody is because they've put on a lot of weight! Under these circumstances, something has got to give. Good health is literally the biggest loser and the first casualty. Moral: Money makes the world go round. And most often, the human body too.

### Francine the fantastic

There's another kind of 'just two minutes' that's healthier. To get there, here's an inspiring story about Francine who came from a family that had multiple neurological degenerative diseases like Parkinson's. She herself was diagnosed with muscular dystrophy. It meant she could just about lift her arms over head three times — no more. And her legs gave way when she'd barely walked 50 feet. Mentally and emotionally, she swung between optimism and lethargic resignation.

Francine's life changed when she met Dr Rudolph Ballentine, psychiatrist and holistic healer, and signed up for his residential treatment programme. Message No. 1: When the optimistic feeling surges, get started on something healing instantly to get out of inertia. Use these two minutes of optimism to contact a fitness instructor or physiotherapist according to your needs, and consult your doctor for a sensible diet. Create a personalised routine. In doing so, you choose fitness over illness.

Back to Francine; she found that the programme necessitated sitting through several lectures daily. The idea was to help patients get a handle on nutrition, cleansing, exercise to lay a firm foundation for good health. But, frankly, Francine found it tedious. She complained to Dr Ballentine, 'I just can't stay still that long. I feel like I have to jump up and run out of the



room.' She felt stifled. She wanted to get up and go. Message No.2: Don't ever stifle your be-active impulses. Because impulses connect our brain to muscle. It sparks the vibration between thought and action. When we give in to this impulse every time, we stave off helplessness and depression.

Dr Ballentine was bemused. Here was a woman who could barely walk a few steps and she wanted to run! He sums up, 'I was intrigued with the possibility of connecting this energy for movement with the weakened limbs.' He told her to go ahead and do it. His instant diagnosis and its application were bang on. When he next met her, she told him, she had run out of the class and 'I climbed half a mile to the top of the hill! And I was hardly tired!'

### Move, move, move!

Exercise is all important because it helps us regain our natural capacity and skill for free and spontaneous self-expression. It's a huge blessing to have a body that responds smoothly and instantly to one's intention. When

your mind says, 'Let's get out of here,' get up, get out and take your body and spirited self for a brisk walk or run or a biking expedition around the block. If you need a walking stick, pick it up and move. At the office, have walking slip-on shoes handy. At home, wear a tracksuit or comfortable outdoor clothes so that you don't have to spend even a minute to change for the outdoors.

### Beginning a new inning

You could gently move into a more active life, suggests an experiment conducted by the Johns Hopkins University. A mere 2,300 steps a day are good for heart and blood vessels; just 4,000 steps reduce the risk of premature death. As in cricket, so in life. A single step or run (pun intended) can be the beginning of a long successful inning.

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

# Get me rewrite!

Colin McMahon

*A journalist steps away from his job but steps up as a dad.*

I quit my job in the summer of 2021. There were lots of factors, but one had absolutely nothing to do with my career as a journalist or the hollowing out of the newspaper industry. I just wanted to help my youngest child, Mateo, through his junior year at a Chicago public high school and his 16<sup>th</sup> year of life.

I soon realised that I had been a better journalist than a parent. And why not? I had worked harder at journalism

than at parenting. I enjoyed it more, and I had made the decision, perhaps not consciously, that I would be a journalist first and a parent second. There's no getting around that now.

In today's journalism, if we make a mistake in a printed story, we edit the online version and drop in an editor's note explaining how we corrected the error. Sometimes, we add a word of apology. But life is more like a printed newspaper than a digital website. There is no version of our lives where

we can go in and unobtrusively fix the mistakes we have made.

But that's not to say we can't mend those mistakes. That just takes a lot more work — and yes, the occasional apology. That's the thought that often visited me as I spent a year side-by-side with Mateo as he faced the rigors of adolescence and his own personal challenges.

Mateo struggles with acute learning disabilities that make academics extremely challenging. He can talk a mile a minute but freezes up over the most basic arithmetic. Other developmental issues make the social part of high school an impossible riddle.

Among the challenges is Tourette syndrome, a nervous system disorder that can cause physical and verbal tics. Adults and kids with Tourette's might display anything from odd facial expressions to sudden and involuntary whole body movements. The vocal tics might sound like grunts or groans, squeaks, or incredibly loud hiccups.

For Mateo, Tourette's comes and goes in waves. He enjoys days marked only by a handful of hardly noticeable events, and though peace is never quite at hand, the relative calm that descends on those days of little ticcing is like a walk in a quiet wood.

Any parent who cares for a child with chronic challenges knows that those good days bring a mix of emotions: relief, of course, and a hope, almost always false, that the worst is over. Mostly, you wonder what you've



Illustrations by Taylor Gallery



done right — and how long the good stretch will last.

On bad days, Mateo's Tourette's is a constant presence, like a taut movie score that lodges in your brain and raises your blood pressure. In the worst cases — and the most frustrating and exhausting for our beloved Mateo — he blurts out profanities, sexual terms, and even racial and ethnic epithets. It breaks your heart.

Yet for all of Mateo's foibles, everyone roots for him. People routinely tell me that Mateo is one of the most endearing and likeable kids they have met. I tell friends that I can remember maybe two or three times that Mateo has ever woken up in a bad mood or without saying, "Good morning." (And he's a teenager!) Mateo simply does not have a wrong side of the bed. He is enthusiastic and curious and caring — and, so far, indomitable.

One night, after a long, hard day of dealing with being a high schooler and trying to combat his Tourette syndrome, Mateo sat alone in his room, looking at the record collection he inherited (well, gangstered) from me. He was ticcing up a storm, and his loud grunts could be heard across our split-level condominium. Asked whether he was employing the breathing techniques designed to control his Tourette's, Mateo replied, "At least I'm not swearing."

That's right, kid. Let's score this latest bout a victory.

### **Do bad stars align? They can, right?**

Because as my job as a journalist was ending, Mateo was sinking deeper into crisis.

As it was for many kids during the pandemic, especially kids reliant on specially trained educators and mental health support, remote learning for Mateo was a bust. He was disengaged from the academics, but even beyond that, he was more restive and needy

than usual. Therapy got interrupted, and his Tourette's flew into overdrive. Parenting shrunk down to one simple goal: Try to keep the lid on things.

Something needed to be done. I resolved that, at the very least, I would spend the first quarter of the 2021–22 school year working with Mateo daily and directly to get him back on track. We got him into a terrific vocational training programme called *Chicago Builds*, which he loved. But given Mateo's needs and vulnerabilities, he required transportation to the programme every day.

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For Mateo, this was an opportunity to have his father all to himself, to indulge his harebrained hypotheticals, to reassure him in his fears.

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I welcomed the role of chauffeur, and those drives with Mateo turned out to be a gift. Unlike earlier efforts to combine work and parenting — fraught conference calls over car speakers, distracted peeks at instant messages at stoplights, furious emailing from clinic lobbies, parking lots, and noisy cafes — this new routine was more focused. The daily shuttle imposed a structure on our relationship; expectations became clear for both of us. Opportunities emerged to go over homework, discuss troubling issues, plan our cockamamie weekend projects. For Mateo, this was an opportunity to have his father all to himself, to indulge his harebrained hypotheticals, to reassure him in his fears. Or we could just point out cars that we would

love to buy and — Mateo's favorite pastime — talk about whatever flew into our heads. We were each other's captive audience.

A good friend of mine told me recently about a rough patch he'd had with his adolescent son. "We almost lost him," my friend told me. "He almost left home." Then my friend and his wife hit on a way to break through. They started taking long drives. And it was only cooped up in the car, lulled (perhaps) by the roll of the tires and the drone of the road, that the boy opened up about what was troubling him.

I thought about that story a lot as I drove Mateo back and forth. Our breakthroughs were nothing like the movies: no fervent bear hugs, no convulsive tears of joy. But my reward was greater: intermittent insights into Mateo's heart and mind, insights that have helped me become a better father.

I'm convinced those insights would have eluded me had I not been fully present in the car. Like so many of us, I have learned to multitask more over the last few years. But I cannot "multithink" — and, I realise now, I never could. This time with Mateo taught me about the importance of truly thinking about what I am thinking about.

There were other insights. Among them, I learned that parenting is a test of patience. You must be patient with your children, of course, but patient also with the co-parents and the grandparents; patient with the caregivers and the teachers; and, particularly for those parents whose kids have special physical, mental, or emotional needs, patient with the healthcare professionals.

Oh, and patient with yourself.

After I left my job, I realised that I had been spending almost all my patience at work. I was giving my colleagues and my staff, as well as the institution and mission of journalism, the energy and patience with which I was too sparing at home. None of us

has a limitless supply of patience. And I was misspending mine.

I realised as I spent more time with Mateo that so many of those lessons on how to parent that I had previously read about or studied or even trained in, those approaches that by and large did not work for me, were full of solid counsel. I had just failed to muster the patience to give them a real chance.

Again, despite all those insights, I can report no miracles here, no heart-warming movie endings. But I have been finding value in trying some of those parenting approaches that had never stuck with me before. My relationship with Mateo is much healthier, much more positive, much more supportive, in both directions. A gift.

**Mateo and I have also enjoyed** a more concrete benefit to this detour in my career. He and I had always done various projects together. What I lack in handyman ability (a lot), I make up for with stubbornness. My time off from work, coupled with the skills Mateo is learning through *Chicago Builds*, allowed us to fix up our 2000 Honda and do some major work around our condo building: rebuilding, repainting, renewing. Combine my diligence with Mateo's enthusiasm, and we get through most projects with only slight signs of DIY.

My frame of mind, meanwhile, has allowed me to look at these projects as



journeys, with the outcome being only part of the point. Mateo has learned to slow down and be more methodical. He is getting better about not breaking things, a common struggle for kids with severe ADHD. He's able to own whole parts of projects, start to finish.

Looking at these projects now as learning opportunities and not just items to check off a to-do list has made me reassess my results-oriented leadership style in the workplace. I realise that driving hard on efficiency, on getting things done, has been something of a weakness of mine, not the unalloyed strength I had considered it. In prioritising results, I now realise, I had closed off paths for myself and others to learning, creativity and professional development.

None of this should imply that I think everyone should (or could) quit their jobs so they can be better parents. What's more, I did not need to quit

my job to become a better parent. I'm embarrassed it took something so drastic for me to get a clue. (Insert apology here.) As I said previously, people were sharing these lessons with me before. I just wasn't listening.

But now that I'm back to work full time, I'm determined to have these lessons inform how I operate both at home and on the job. Maybe there is a sappy Hollywood walk-off line in here after all: I took a year off work to help my son with his life. Only it was he who helped me with mine.

Or something like that. I'm still working on it — and I've made time for revisions now.

*The former editor-in-chief of the Chicago Tribune and chief content officer of Tribune Publishing, Colin McMahon is chief operating officer at StartupNation Media Group.*

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I took a year off work to  
help my son with his life.  
Only it was he who helped  
me with mine.

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**Arch Klumph Society  
2022–23 honourees**

The Arch Klumph Society includes supporters from over 50 countries. The members listed here from India were recognised last Rotary year through a formal induction ceremony.

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RC Deonar

## District Wise TRF Contribution as on September 2023

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
<b>India</b>					
2981	12,204	405	1,000	0	13,609
2982	18,204	0	7,085	4,488	29,778
3000	42,686	100	0	1,918	44,704
3011	71,216	5,745	25,989	113,773	216,724
3012	7,105	0	0	1,720	8,824
3020	37,974	2,801	0	20,500	61,275
3030	16,763	98	0	138,163	155,024
3040	1,065	73	0	0	1,137
3053	8,495	0	0	12,439	20,934
3055	14,491	33	30	0	14,554
3056	13,302	100	0	0	13,402
3060	43,511	9,300	100	79,077	131,988
3070	135	0	0	0	135
3080	19,770	6,563	0	1,500	27,833
3090	27,186	713	0	5,121	33,020
3100	33,918	0	0	0	33,918
3110	24	0	0	4,000	4,024
3120	4,729	34	0	0	4,763
3131	154,390	559	12,098	20,387	187,433
3132	46,580	2,383	0	8,168	57,131
3141	164,645	3,444	34,012	281,968	484,068
3142	214,589	4,433	6,500	0	225,521
3150	14,646	30,416	40,170	72,365	157,598
3160	6,389	0	0	0	6,389
3170	24,440	19,691	1,000	49,217	94,349
3181	16,535	270	0	24	16,829
3182	2,345	12	0	0	2,357
3191	22,894	3,816	60,976	73,464	161,149
3192	19,894	1,478	0	2,100	23,472
3201	31,085	23,498	3,940	879,225	937,748
3203	6,135	605	1,220	8,725	16,685
3204	5,215	1,486	0	2,962	9,663
3211	2,211	1,000	0	40,648	43,859
3212	27,784	4,938	0	12,703	45,425
3231	1,417	675	0	0	2,092
3232	19,713	2,444	8,300	495,484	525,942
3240	24,341	4,531	0	1,771	30,643
3250	9,407	1,148	26	2,992	13,573
3261	9,037	0	0	0	9,037
3262	4,118	525	0	0	4,642
3291	41,380	0	24,390	1,050	66,820
<b>India Total</b>	<b>1,241,968</b>	<b>133,315</b>	<b>226,836</b>	<b>2,335,952</b>	<b>3,938,072</b>
3220	<b>Sri Lanka</b> 22,679	1,135	0	573	24,388
3271	<b>Pakistan</b> 4,688	31,000	0	7,245	42,933
3272	<b>Pakistan</b> 1,342	385	0	25	1,752
3281	<b>Bangladesh</b> 5,600	1,728	2,000	21,588	30,916
3282	<b>Bangladesh</b> 15,313	100	0	25	15,438
3292	<b>Nepal</b> 21,658	2,230	0	35,858	59,746

Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, AoF and World Fund.

PolioPlus excludes Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. **Source:** RISAO

## RC Kattumannarkoil — RID 2981



A kitchen to prepare midday meals was built at the Kunjamedu Middle School and a microforest project (1.5 acre) was kicked off at Muttam village.

## RC Jaipur Gurukul — RID 3056



The club is sponsoring healthy meals at the various branches of Apna Ghar Ashram, a home for the destitute and orphans, in Jaipur. Each centre has around 50 inmates.

## RC Pudukkottai City — RID 3000



Over 100 students and teachers attended a personality development event at the Raniyar Government Girls HS School. Bharathidasan University.

## RC Surat East — RID 3060



A mammography bus screened 100 women for breast and cervical cancer at a cancer awareness programme organised for those above 35 years.

## RC Delhi Ananta — RID 3012



Over 120 e-learning tablets were distributed to schoolchildren at the Rotary Ananta Charitable Hospital and Ahlcon International School.

## RI District 3090

DG Ghanshyam Kansal and DGE Sandeep Chauhan kicked off an organ donation drive with the help of RID 3011 team. Street rallies/seminars were held at Patran, Samana, Patiala and Rajpura.





## RC Meerut Umang — RID 3100



During the third phase of vaccination against cervical cancer, 75 girls were given first doses and the aim is to inoculate 1,000 girls in the next three years.

## RC Patalganga — RID 3131



Artificial limbs and LN-4 hands (₹7 lakh) were given to 70 beneficiaries at a prosthetic camp held jointly with RC New Kalyan, thanks to CSR funds from Atos.

## RC Agra Neo — RID 3110



Over 700 patients were examined at medical camps held at the Ramtila Park, Singhal Hospital and New Milton Public School. RCs Agra Greater, Vishal, Sapphire and Northeast were co-partners.

## RC Mira Road — RID 3141



A special wheelchair (₹3 lakh) was gifted to para athlete Geeta Chauhan, a basketball player, in the presence of PDG Sandip Agarwalla at the Otto Bock Healthcare India, Chembur.

## RC Kushinagar — D 3120



More than 980 patients were screened at a mega health camp held jointly with the Medanta Hospital, Gurugram, on the premises of Heritage International Public School.

## RC Khammam — RID 3150



Around 140 saplings were planted on the premises of club hall in the presence of Khammam mayor Pudukollu Neeraja, PDGs Malladi Vasudev and Sambasiva Rao.

## RC Hampi Pearls — RID 3160



School bags were distributed to 250 students at the Government Girls High School, Hospet.

## RC Mudigere — RID 3182



A mental health counselling camp was organised at the MGM Hospital, for students of the Government High School. The club plans to organise similar camps in other schools in the city during this year.

## RC Bardez Coastal — RID 3170



An interschool drawing competition saw 650 students from over 20 schools displaying their skills at the Sant Gadgebaba Hall, Porvorim.

## RC Ramanagara — RID 3191



A 30-year-old Rotary bus shelter in front of Ghousia College of Engineering was renovated with the help of Rotaractors at a cost of ₹25,000.

## RC Puttur — RID 3181



Following a request, a cheque for ₹1.5 lakh was presented to the DKGP Higher Primary School, Ojala, for the annual salaries of teachers.

## RC Coimbatore Vadavalli — RID 3201



A tree plantation drive was held, along with the Lions club and Interactors, at the MSSDHS School to mark Rotary Community Week.



## RC Manjeri — RID 3204



DG Sethu Shiva Shankar donated a dialysis machine (₹8 lakh) to Korambayil Hospital, the first big project of the year.

## RC Chennai Metrozone — RID 3232



Over 130 community helpers like maids and drivers were screened at an eye camp. Uma Eye Clinic will do cataract surgery for six patients.

## RC Kazhakuttom — RID 3211



Tricycles worth ₹1 lakh were distributed to five physically-challenged persons in the presence of local MLA Kadakampally Surendran.

## RC Karala Valley Jalpaiguri — RID 3240



A hearing aid distribution camp benefited elders from less privileged families, earning goodwill for the club in the neighbourhood.

## RC Vaniyambadi — RID 3231



Four sewing machines (₹18,640) were donated at a workshop held jointly with the Micro and Small Scale Industries Association, Tirupattur.

## RC Kendujhar Green — RID 3262



Over 1,870 students and 62 staff at the Saraswati Shishu Vidya Mandir were given medicines for lymphatic filariasis disease.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



**TCA Srinivasa  
Raghavan**

# The wheelchair brigade at airports



**W**e Indians are a strange lot and most of the time we don't realise how strange we are. For example, have you noticed how many perfectly healthy Indians demand the use of wheelchairs at airports? I have a cousin who is in her late sixties and walks five kilometres every-day, come rain or shine. But whenever she has to catch a flight, she suddenly finds herself limping, huffing, puffing and feeling faint. Her son who books her tickets refuses to book a wheelchair for her. But she is very resourceful and always manages to get one.

One day I asked her why she did this? "Don't you know you may be depriving someone who genuinely needs one?" I said. Her response was clear: it wasn't her problem, it was the airport's. But I persisted. I asked her why she wanted to be trundled around by some young man who would demand a tip. Her reply took me aback. She said she never tips anyone. Her logic is that she is not going to see them ever again so how does it matter? She does this in restaurants also. As logic goes, it's impeccable.

"But why can't you walk to the gate," I asked her, "when you are capable of it." Her answer was that getting herself onto a flight was "boring" and with a wheelchair it became someone else's responsibility. "I just sit and enjoy the ride," she said and added

that on the other side, after landing, she didn't have to lift her bags. The wheelchair boy took care of it, little knowing that she wouldn't tip him. And she does this a lot, about 8–10 times a year.

She isn't the only one, of course. I have been noticing how the wheelchair brigade has gone up from one or two per flight a few years ago to five or six and sometimes even more now. What angers me is that you can see these people walking quite normally to the toilets because they don't want the attendant there. Indeed, I have even seen many of them discharging the attendants at the boarding gate and walking down quite normally to the aircraft to their seats. Why, I have once

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I've been noticing how  
the wheelchair brigade has  
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---

seen two of them, obviously friends, go walking, not a care in the world to a restaurant, eat, and return to their wheelchair while the attendants and the wheelchairs both waited for around half-an-hour.

In contrast, you hardly ever see a wheelchair at foreign airports. I travel abroad at least once a year to visit my grandchildren and have never seen wheelchairs except in Dubai where they have been requisitioned by... guess who? Yes, Indians travelling out of India. On the return flights there are none. How does one explain that?

Abroad, even 90-year-old men and women, if they can, walk the distance. Indians, however, don't seem to care when outbound from India. The logic clearly is that if it's there for the taking, take it. In a way, it's the same logic as the one Indians use in restaurants. If it's free, eat lots of it. I once watched a man polish off an entire bottle of ketchup. It was, I must admit, fascinating to watch his dedication to freebooting because he added the sauce to all dishes, even fried fish. The same thing goes for pickled onions and mouth fresheners which get eaten by the fistful during and after the meal.

So here's a suggestion for airports: start charging for wheelchairs — ₹500 should do. Plus a compulsory tip of ₹200. That will ensure a steep fall in the demand for wheelchairs. ■





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