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Commendable project

I was delighted to see a unique old black and white picture showing the Kolar gold mine in the British era as the cover photo of the Dec issue. The cover story *Bengaluru Rotarians “create fruits from poison” in KGF* by the editor is fascinating as it depicts the commitment of Rotarians, especially Ravishankar Dakoju, for creating a green garden from the poisonous cyanide dumps.

RI President Gordon McNally, quoting the words of Shelterbox CEO, affirms that disasters are not natural but man-made and how they can be lessened in future with human efforts. Rotary director Raju Subramanian reminds us of the necessity of helping those who are in need of healthcare.

The Editor’s note has rightly stressed on the need to be graceful in showing grace in defeat and the need for the audience to exhibit



a sporting spirit in international cricket matches.

The obit article *Rotary mourns two past presidents* by PRIP Rajendra Saboo remembers well the services of both Rotary leaders. The demise of PDG Madhura Chatrapathy is a great loss to the Rotary world. The pictures in the Dec issue are vivid and colourful.

*Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211*

The British took away tonnes of gold from the KGF mines and left behind mountains of poisonous cyanide dumps. But Dakoju has shown that Rotarians can grow delicious cherries on poisonous dumps. With guidance from Srinivasa Rao, former deputy conservator of forest, trenches were made, compost put into them, and trees and grass were planted. Now, birds and animals visit these dumps and the KGF residents can breathe dust-free, poison-free air, and enjoy the greenery. A transformation beyond imagination.

*VRT Dorairaja
RC of Tiruchirapalli — D 3000*

The Dec issue is a good balance between thought-provoking articles and an account of great social service being done by Rotarians across India. I liked *Bengaluru Rotarians “create fruits form poison” in KGF*, and other

Interesting, insightful editorials

In the December editorial, Rasheeda Bhagat pointed out about the sporting spirit missing among the spectators at the finals of Cricket World Cup and rightly wondered, ‘Is it fair to all concerned?’ In the article *What Team India can teach all of us*, the author explains how fast bowlers Shami and Siraj came in for all-round praise. As he suggests, let India replicate this DNA by being the best among nations but in a different game of humanity.

Rotary founder Paul Harris has rightly said, “Man has affinity for

his fellow man, regardless of race, creed or politics, and the greater the variety, the more the zest. All that friendliness needs is a sporting chance; it will take care of itself in any company.”

*K MK Murthy
RC Secunderabad — D 3150*

I am a voracious reader of the magazine’s editorial ever since Rasheeda Bhagat took over as the editor of *Rotary News*. Her language is charming and easy to understand. She has in-depth knowledge with a robust command over the English language. I learnt recently that she has 45 years’ experience as a journalist in

prestigious dailies like *Indian Express* and *The Hindu Business Line*.

In the Nov editorial, she has turned the spotlight on two eminent scientists — Y Nayudumma and MS Swaminathan who recently passed away. He was the epitome of simplicity, humility, affability and gentleness besides being a brilliant scientist. Empowering women in agriculture was one of his biggest passions. The legend will be remembered forever.

*Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080*

The editorial *A heartbreaking defeat* is well-written and worth

articles on empowering students in Pune, cybercrime, skilling trafficked women and the health column. As usual, the LBW column by Srinivasa Raghavan was a treat to read!

*Pramod Beri
RC Kolhapur — D 3170*

I have the Dec issue in my hands and the cover story on KGF is simply stunning. What a fresh look and great effort to change the world when industries and business are polluting the world! Rtn Ravishankar Dakoju and his team have “looked beyond themselves” to make the world a better place to live in. As a geologist of the 1970s, I have always wondered what will be the fate of Kolar, but Dakoju and his team have kindled a ray of hope, and it is really astonishing to see their success. Best wishes to his team.

*Sidduram L S
RC Mettupalayam — D 3203*

reading. Ten matches were played and won by our team. Our prime minister visited their dressing room and appreciated their good performance through the World Cup.

On the audience reaction, when large groups of spectators assemble to watch international matches, a spirit of encouragement and motivation for all players should prevail. It is unfortunate that these things were missing in the World Cup. Let’s hope we develop a better sporting spirit in the future so that the spectators cheer good shots, irrespective of the teams they come from.

*R Srinivasan, RC Bangalore
JP Nagar — D 3191*

As one who has spent all my childhood years in Kolar, I read with interest the article on KGF. The poorly paid workers earned their money risking their lives digging at depths of thousands of feet, inhaling the cyanide dust which resulted in silicosis. Compensation was unheard of. I sincerely appreciate Ravishankar Dakoju and Neil Michael who are working hard to make the cyanide dumps green and prevent the cyanide dust from polluting the air. Their effort is commendable.

I request them also to rejuvenate the Bethamangalam tank which used to supply water to KGF. The tank, fed by Palar river, has gone dry. The three lakh residents of KGF have been buying water for many years.

*HR Seetharam, RC Bangalore
Indiranagar — D 3192*

Diverse coverage

The Dec issue has a collection of so many good projects. Starting from the proud feeling that one of the Rotarians will attend COP28 meet, Ravishankar Dakoju’s KGF project

and knowing more about the late PDG Madhura Chatrapadhy to skill development for trafficked women, crematorium and biodiversity (RC Nilgiris) and *Cinema on Wheels* to RC Chandigarh’s projects and so on.

I’m happy to share that I now give the magazine to my wife, grandmother and uncle, and they like it too. Even those clubs that cant do big projects should keep at least one meet for reading/discussing the projects covered by *Rotary News*, so that their members can know what other clubs are doing. Well done. Waiting for the next issue

*Prashant Mehta
RC Kolhapur Heritage — D 3170*

The article *Uniting the World through Art* by V Muthukumaran is well-presented with details of the art festival in Chandigarh. These types of events are necessary when world peace is at great peril. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan, Bengaluru, Infosys Foundation and RC Chandigarh deserve kudos.

*M Palaniappan
RC Madurai West — D 3000*

In *Cybercrime* it was rightly pointed out that people have become addicted to the mobile phone, making common cybercrimes targeting innocent people. We have to be extra alert.

*S Mohan, RC Madurai
West — D 3000*

On the cover: A dance performance at the Bengaluru Zone Institute.

Photo: Hemant Kumar.

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

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the

Editor at rushbhagat@gmail.com or rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

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Light the path out of dark days

In difficult times like these, it's impossible to avoid feeling heartbroken over the devastation and loss of life caused by war and destruction.

Rotary always stands against harming and displacing civilian populations and using armed aggression instead of pursuing peaceful solutions. We advocate for the observance and respect of international law. We believe in strong action to defend and promote peace, even in the darkest of times.

But we also take our position as an international, nonpolitical, nonreligious organisation seriously. To respect the global perspectives and experiences of our members, and to work most effectively in our peacebuilding efforts, we do not choose sides in conflicts.

Rotary is made up of 1.4 million people in communities all over the globe who are united in our commitment to building a peaceful world. We strive to ensure that our words and actions prioritise the health and safety of our global membership and the communities where we live and serve.

Our members seek to offer humanitarian assistance to those affected by conflict, and our global reach requires that we promote peacebuilding and conflict prevention with cross-cultural, cross border connections and friendship through Rotary.

For decades, Rotary has harnessed these connections to carry out service projects, support peace fellowships and scholarships, and establish

programmes like Rotary Peace Centres to help build lasting peace. Our members also take action to promote Positive Peace, addressing the underlying causes of conflict, including poverty, discrimination, ethnic tension, lack of access to education, and unequal distribution of resources.

Rotary members who wish to wage peace can use district grants and Rotary Foundation global grants to support projects with other Rotary members that help refugees and displaced people, provide medical support, and more worldwide. Members can also work with or join peace focused Rotary Action Groups, Friendship Exchanges, Fellowships, and inter-country committees. And District Designated Funds or district cash can support our peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts.

Members and nonmembers alike can learn more about peacebuilding through the Rotary Positive Peace Academy, a free online course available to anyone with an internet connection. You can find it at positivepeace.academy/rotary.

There is no denying that incidents of violence and atrocities being perpetuated around the world seem to be escalating. Global peace is fragile, and the stakes are getting higher.

Still, we know that it is possible to bring all people together to work toward a shared goal. Rotary members do so every day in every part of the world. May our ability to unify in common purpose be a spark that helps light the path out of these dark days.

Together, let's *Create Hope in the World*.

Gordon McNally

President, Rotary International



A well-planned and executed Institute

The well-planned and executed Bengaluru zone institute generated all-round appreciation from the 800-odd participants, who returned home with a taste of good hospitality and even better food. The traditional delicacies served at the banana-leaf lunch satiated the palate of the most demanding foodies, while the variety available at the two dinners left little room for complaint. Food of course forms a very important part of any big event, and along with food if you give people the right music, lilting melodies and an array of spirits to create nostalgia for an era gone by, who can ask for more?

Add to all this the typical Indian splash of colours and the vibrance of its ethnic wear. The magical evenings had the international delegates, beginning with RI President Gordon McNally and his spouse Heather, RIPN Mario de Camargo and his spouse Denise, and so many other senior RI leaders who attended the institute, really letting down their hair, mingling with the other delegates and dancing away.

The technological brilliance that went into the various sessions of the institute was breathtaking. When exhaustion set in, which was bound to happen listening to so many speakers in a single day, and you struggled to focus on the stage after a heavenly lunch, one was often confused about where to focus... the larger than life, vivid images on the screen or the human beings holding forth in front of them on the podium! The digital displays and the audio-visual component of the proceedings were so good that RIPN Mario de Camargo commented that the technological aspect of the institute was "world-class and as good as we get in Rotary conventions."

That leadership sits lightly on his shoulders, and the amicable manner in which the couple have digested the power they obviously wield over the Rotary world, could be gauged by observing RI President McNally and his

spouse Heather. Every morning they were in the hall well before the beginning of the event and one could see them seated through the sessions. McNally displayed not even a glimmer of the fatigue he must have felt in the face of constant demands from the delegates for photographs with him and sportingly posed with them. He was all courtesy and kindness to the photographers who could not have enough of capturing his image. Heather too was the picture of courtesy and friendliness as she chatted away with whoever came forward to have a conversation with her.

Convenor and RI Director Raju Subramanian was the visible face of the three-day event, and seeing him run around, few would have guessed that he was both exhausted and indisposed and on a heavy dose of antibiotics. The secretary, PDG Sameer Hariani, as compere, did a fine job, as always. But event chair, PDG KP Nagesh, who as head of the entire team had provided direction and exemplary leadership in ensuring the smooth conduct of the various sessions, kept a low profile and remained mostly behind the scenes. To capture his image, one had to really hunt for him!

The organisers really kept McNally busy and he went along willingly. Early one cold morning, he teed off a corporate golf tournament which helped raise \$100,000 for the Polio Fund. Next morning, he flagged off a vintage car and bike rally, and took a metro ride to Whitefield to flag off the Bengaluru Midnight Marathon, which helped raise \$300,000 for TRF.

The organisers ensuring that during the institute, tender coconut water and sugarcane juice were served, along with hot beverages in environment-friendly terracotta containers, was the *sone pe suhaga* (extra fine touch). But lest you think everything was airy-fairy, rest assured some plain talking was also done to the incoming Rotary leaders on what ails Rotary in India by both the RI president and other senior leaders.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Convention is for families

Eva Remijan-Toba



Picture this: You get the chance to treat your family to an unforgettable vacation in one of Asia's top sunny destinations. How? By bringing them along to Singapore for the Rotary International Convention. You'll already have your hotel and flight booked, with a great base for sightseeing because the venues are close to museums, adventure parks, and activities for all ages. By registering as guests, your loved ones can enjoy the big-name entertainers and inspiring keynote speakers at the May 25–29 convention and join you and the entire Rotary family in *Sharing Hope With the World*.

Book tours in Singapore and nearby countries on the Host Organisation Committee site, rotarysingapore2024.org. Stay on the island to learn about food, sustainability, or the nation's rich culture. Or hop to Bangkok, for example, to take in the city's

famed street life and wander the ruins of the ancient city Ayutthaya, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

In Singapore, here are just a few family-friendly spots. At the Marina Bay Sands complex hosting breakout sessions, an ArtScience Museum exhibit transforms your drawings into computerised art on a “lush digital jungle” canvas you walk on.

Adjacent to the National Stadium convention site is a small water park on top of a building with sweeping skyline views. Splash-N-Surf has a kids playground and a wave pool for prebooked skim-boarding.

Venture to Singapore's Sentosa resort island (take the cable car!) to explore S.E.A. Aquarium, Universal Studios Singapore with its Jurassic Park zone, or Skyline Luge where you zoom down tree-lined trails on carts.

**Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org**

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Editor

Rasheeda Bhagat

Deputy Editor

Jaishree Padmanabhan

Administration and Advertisement Manager

Vishwanathan K

Rotary News Trust

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

Phone: 044 42145666

rotarynews@rosaonline.org

www.rotarynewsonline.org



Magazine

Director speak



Rotary's focus on healthcare

across India. Moreover, our endeavours include advocating Thalassaemia awareness, promoting organ donation, and recently we have also set up over 2,000 dialysis machines across India to cater to kidney patients.

At Rotary, we also advocate cervical and breast cancer awareness and immunisation. In 2022–23, Rotary's impactful Programs of Scale initiative allocated a \$2 million grant to combat cervical cancer in Egypt, aiming to vaccinate over 30,000 girls and offer screening to 10,000 women. The previous year, a similar grant was given to Zambia, focusing on reducing malaria cases.

Rotary India's initiative, Project Positive Health, tackles India's NCD (non-communicable disease) epidemic, aiming to curb 60 per cent of deaths by sensitising people on this issue. Let's unite to address this pressing health challenge and create a healthier future for India.

I urge all clubs/districts to harness the strength of Disease Prevention and Treatment Rotary Action Group to access a wealth of expertise, resources and a vast global network, fostering the creation and execution of sustainable and impactful service projects.

Friends, let's stand united in our commitment to transform health challenges and pave the way for a brighter, healthier future. Wishing you all a Happy New Year filled with abundance of joy and good health.

Anirudha Roychowdhury

RI Director, 2023–25

As we revel in the joy of the holiday season, let us not forget the immense power we hold to make a profound impact on the world around us. December marks Disease Prevention and Treatment month at Rotary, a time when our collective efforts shine in promoting healthcare and combating diseases within our communities.

Friends, we are standing on the brink of a historic moment — from millions of reported polio cases annually, we are down to just six, yes, six reported cases! We are in the threshold of 2024, a new horizon awaits us, let's make this a historic year with zero reported cases, total eradication of polio. Can we do it? Yes, I believe we can.

With polio as priority, Rotary's commitment also addresses a myriad of health priorities. We provide critical care equipment to hospitals for enabling prompt and effective treatment for the community's health needs. We ensure that no child succumbs to heart diseases by providing life-saving paediatric heart surgery. Our dedication to healthcare extends through initiatives like our support for blood banks and the establishment of numerous Rotary eye hospitals and multi-specialty healthcare facilities

Make the Foundation yours



The new year ushers in promise and hope, a time to resolve to do things differently. We can do more than just hope for the best. We can take steps — big and small — to make changes in every aspect of our lives, including Rotary.

Here's a New Year's resolution to consider: Remember that The Rotary Foundation belongs to you. The Foundation is a global force, doing our good work in the world. Just like anything that belongs to you, it requires care and attention. How can we do this?

First, get to know your Foundation better this year. Did you know that in 2023, the Foundation achieved a maximum four-star rating from Charity Navigator for the 15th consecutive year? This places your Foundation among the world's top charities. Why do we consistently receive this honour? It's because we are financially strong, have a broad reach, and are highly effective with the gifts you give: 91 per cent of funds are allocated to programme awards and operations.

Another way to engage with your Foundation is to support it through a gift, every year. We've set an ambitious fundraising goal of \$500 million this year, and I'm confident that, with your support, we will achieve it. This year, I'm especially counting on those Rotarians and Rotaractors who have not yet contributed to make their first gift. Because The Rotary Foundation is an excellent steward, you can be confident that your gift will make a difference, whether it's in polio eradication, literacy initiatives, peace education, or any other area in which we excel.

In 2024, resolve to share the Foundation with others. The Foundation is too great to keep to ourselves. Spread the word during your fundraisers and events. Let the public know that The Rotary Foundation plays a significant role in everything we do, including in our many partnerships. Anyone can support the Foundation, even people who are not in Rotary.

Lastly this year, take action. Your Foundation is waiting for you to roll up your sleeves and make use of its resources to make the world a better place. Seek out global or district grant projects. Consider partnering with a Rotaract club in 2024 to support a grant or collaborate on one. Team up with Rotary and Rotaract clubs in your area to plan your biggest million dollar dinner fundraiser or End Polio Now event.

Whatever you decide to do in 2024, commit to keeping our Foundation in your plans. I can't wait to hear about all the great things we will accomplish this year.

Barry Rassin
TRF Trustee Chair

Support our Foundation

The Rotary Foundation was founded by past president Arch C Klumph. He envisioned what would be possible if Rotarians had such a Foundation to support their efforts. It was through Rotary that he made this ambition a reality. He believed that service to humankind truly changes our world, and for that reason, it is the greatest work of life.



Whether it is setting up a trauma centre and equipping operation theatres in Karaikal or funding upgradation of schools in Anand; whether it is running a Rotary hospital in Saregam or eye banks in Mumbai and Thane; funding check dams in rural Maharashtra; cleft lip surgeries in the Philippines or medical missions in Africa; through the work of TRF we are touching lives and transforming communities

But one simple fact remains — all programmes of TRF and the good work that it does depends on the contributions of Rotarians. Why do we give to TRF?

The Rotary Foundation transforms your gifts into service projects that change lives both close to home and around the world. During the past 107 years, the Foundation has spent over \$4 billion on life-changing, sustainable projects. Today global grants allow us to do large-scale, impactful projects across the world. Supporting the Annual Fund today allows us to do GGs tomorrow. Hence supporting the Annual Fund is critical. The Fund depends on contributions from Every Rotarian, Every Year.

We give to TRF to fulfil our promise of eradicating polio. The journey has been long, arduous and challenging but today we are closer than ever to a polio-free world. This is the time to rededicate and redouble our efforts. We cannot slacken our polio work. The End Polio Now campaign is not just about raising money; it is about saving our children.

Supporting the Endowment Fund ensures a bright tomorrow for our Rotary Foundation. The goal is \$2.025 billion by 2025. When we reach the goal it will enable us to have about \$40 million in spendable earnings every year; year after year. Think of how much good we can do.

Each one of you, dear readers, is the heart of Rotary. Thank you for your kindness and generosity in supporting TRF. In the new year let us invest in our Rotary Foundation and continue Doing Good in the World.

Bharat Pandya
TRF Trustee Vice Chair



The following pages contain moments, images, talking points and coverage of the Bengaluru zone institute.



Institute convenor RI Director Raju Subramanian (L) with Institute chair PDG KP Nagesh.



**Text by Rasheeda Bhagat
& Jaishree**

In more ways than one zone institute 2023, titled RISE, was an elaborately planned and meticulously executed event of the year. While convenor and RI director Raju Subramanian was the visible face of the three-day event organised in Bengaluru, and secretary PDG Sameer Hariani was often seen on the stage as the compere, the chairman of the institute PDG KP Nagesh, who had

headed the entire team and provided direction and exemplary leadership in ensuring the smooth conduct of the varying sessions, kept a low-key profile and remained mostly behind the scenes.

The single-most and very visible wow factor was the technical competence and hard work that had obviously gone into the digital displays on the main podium. It was difficult to find display panels with garish colours; the



Institute Convenor RID Raju Subramanian and Vidhya being led by children for the inaugural of the RISE Zone Institute.



From L: PRID Manoj Desai, Sharmishtha and PRIP Kalyan Banerjee enjoying lunch served on banana leaf.



From L: Madhavi, TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, PRIP K R Ravindran and Vanathy.



RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and Shipra.



PRID Ashok Mahajan and Nayantara.



PRID A S Venkatesh and Vinita.

images of the speakers that popped up on the screen were so vivid and life-like that it often took a split second to decide where to focus the camera — on the actual persons on the stage or their images in the background. The technology used was so good that on one occasion convenor Subramanian invited RIPN Mario de Camargo onto the stage to repeat what he had told him... the quality of the digital displays and the other accompanying technological tools “were world class and as good as we get in Rotary conventions.”

Hardly any of the 800-odd delegates would have missed the perennial presence of RI President Gordon McNally and his spouse Heather at the various sessions. Unbelievably, they showed little visible proof of the fatigue they must have felt and arrived at the venue well ahead of time. Forget the slightest hint of irritation, President McNally was all courtesy and smiles when a stream of delegates approached him to take pictures.

We could not help noticing the courtesy he extended and the camaraderie he shared with the several photographers capturing images of the proceedings. There were moments, on the sidelines of the sessions, when he playfully took away the camera from the professional photographer and started clicking his pictures. Heather too was the picture of friendliness and courtesy, and showed genuine interest in chatting with the Rotarians and their spouses who approached her.

The growing clout of India in the Rotary world and the fact that Rotary activities in India are taken very seriously by top RI leadership could be seen from the plethora of senior Rotary leaders from across the world. Apart from the RI president and his spouse, the event was also attended by RIPN Mario de Camargo and his spouse Denise, RI directors Hans-Hermann Kasten (partner Nadja), Jeremy Hurst (partner Michelle), Ghim Bok Chew, Henrique de Vasconcelos (partner Renata) and TRF trustees Larry Lunsford and Aziz Memon.





Clockwise from top left:

From L: RID Hans-Hermann Kasten, Michelle, RID Jeremy Hurst, RI President Gordon McInally, Heather and Nadja Picard (spouse of RID Kasten); PRID Venkatesh and Vinita with RID Henrique Barbosa de Vasconcelos and Renata; The Midnight Marathon being flagged off by President McInally in the presence of Institute Chair Nagesh and Secretary Sameer Hariani (L); Sonal and PRID Kamal Sanghvi with PDGs R Srinivasan and ISAK Nazar; PRIP Rajendra Saboo, President McInally and Heather; President McInally, Vidhya, Heather and RID Subramanian.

Left: President McInally tees off a shot in the presence of Institute Chair K P Nagesh (L) and Ravishankar Dakoju (R).





Clockwise from top: From L: Vinita, Heather and Vidhya; President McInally takes a selfie with a photographer; Sonal and PRID Kamal Sanghvi; PRIP Saboo dances with Heather; From L: Mala, PRID C Basker and PRIP Saboo; RID Vasconcelos takes a selfie with PRIP Banerjee; TRF Vice Chair Pandya with PDG J Sridhar and his spouse Punitha; RID Anirudha Roychowdhury and PDG Kalpana Khound.

Centre: President McInally with TRF Trustee Larry Lunsford and Nadja Picard.





The magic spell that the colours, vivaciousness and vibrance of Indian clothes, music and dance, and of course mouth-watering food, cast over each of these senior leaders and their spouses was evident for all to see.

President McNally had some heavy demands made on him by the organisers and he willingly played sport. Literally waking up at dawn, one cold morning... but then ‘cold’ is a relative word for one who hails from Scotland... he teed off a corporate golf tournament which helped raise \$100,000 for the Polio Fund. Ten donors contributed for the cause. “This initiative will be worth \$300,000 with the Gates Foundation donation of 2:1 with TRF,” he announced.

Another morning saw him flagging off a vintage car and bike rally in front of the Vidhana Soudha that houses the Karnataka state legislature. This event, hosted by RID 3191 and 3192, in association with the Karnataka Vintage & Classic Car Club, was a public image exercise to raise awareness on mental health.

Accompanied by Nagesh and Hariani, McNally rode on a metro train to Whitefield to flag off the 16th edition of the Bengaluru Midnight Marathon with a participation of over 10,000 runners. The programme helped raise \$300,000 for TRF. The event was founded by RC Bangalore IT Corridor in 2007 to support various deserving charities in India.

The banana-leaf lunch was a much-talked about experience. Around 800 guests were served South Indian style lunch, including Karnataka’s unique cuisine, on eco-friendly banana leaves. All through the two days of the institute, tender coconut water and sugarcane juice were served at the counter, along with tea/coffee in clay containers. On the inaugural night, delegates at every dinner table were treated to a bottle of specially curated Rosé Brut wine.



Clockwise: RIPN Mario de Camargo dancing with the delegates; RID Subramanian with Roopa and PDG Hariani; RC Bangalore member Ravishankar Dakoju and his spouse Paola with Heather.



Going by the packages the women delegates were carrying, the saree stalls at the House of Friendship did brisk business. Punitha, spouse of PDG J Sridhar said, “My purse is lighter by ₹10,000,” showing a mustard Mysore silk sari. The art gallery sporting some beautiful paintings also attracted a good number of aficionados.

An AI-based photo search was introduced in the RISE App that helped to identify photos in just five seconds through an option called ‘selfie search’.

Keeping with the digital era, the *Institute Directory*, designed by RID 3191 PDG HR Ananth, had a QR code for the governors, which will throw up their accomplishments as DGs. Photos of the institute can be viewed on the *Picture Panorama* page of the directory through the QR code.

For more photos, visit www.rotarynewsonline.org

Pictures by RNT Team and Institute photographers

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

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Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 37,123

Rotaract clubs : 11,061

Interact clubs : 15,028

RCCs : 13,227

Rotary members : 1,186,961

Rotaract members: 167,857

Interact members : 345,644

As on December 18, 2023

Membership Summary

As on December 1, 2023

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	6,146	6.28	73	503	34	254
2982	86	3,844	6.37	35	840	95	174
3000	140	6,078	11.94	117	1,915	224	216
3011	138	5,138	29.23	85	2,391	149	37
3012	154	3,842	22.88	77	779	99	61
3020	86	5,031	7.59	50	1,043	119	351
3030	101	5,739	15.84	128	1,946	521	384
3040	113	2,486	14.80	52	913	79	213
3053	74	2,944	16.41	25	397	42	131
3055	80	2,942	11.90	67	1,094	73	376
3056	89	3,899	25.67	51	579	103	201
3060	105	5,098	16.08	68	2,236	61	143
3070	125	3,362	16.15	49	602	51	63
3080	109	4,283	12.61	115	1,967	170	122
3090	120	2,612	6.93	50	636	193	166
3100	114	2,248	11.34	15	138	36	151
3110	147	3,903	11.17	17	110	48	107
3120	89	3,664	15.72	49	652	28	55
3131	143	5,797	29.22	150	3,400	255	149
3132	90	3,715	13.73	43	628	122	203
3141	115	6,250	27.33	139	5,242	169	224
3142	108	4,016	21.66	96	2,443	113	93
3150	110	4,400	13.16	155	1,827	109	130
3160	84	2,774	9.08	32	206	95	82
3170	151	6,719	15.14	122	1,860	194	180
3181	87	3,693	10.89	44	539	93	118
3182	87	3,725	10.50	47	247	106	103
3191	94	3,626	18.31	95	2,724	143	35
3192	83	3,590	21.14	83	2,561	113	40
3201	174	6,798	9.94	138	2,249	100	93
3203	96	5,063	7.51	93	1,202	178	39
3204	75	2,453	7.26	24	226	17	13
3211	159	5,137	8.41	11	178	20	134
3212	127	4,781	11.34	95	3,703	167	153
3231	97	3,512	7.32	39	437	43	417
3232	190	6,674	19.94	129	7,261	155	100
3240	106	3,608	16.71	64	1,173	67	227
3250	109	4,208	21.77	71	1,011	65	191
3261	105	3,488	22.71	25	271	24	45
3262	114	3,875	15.87	77	747	645	286
3291	144	3,905	25.53			73	737
India Total	4,658	175,066		2,895	58,876	5,191	6,997
3220	70	2,018	16.55	97	4,775	81	77
3271	180	3,070	18.76	194	3,350	333	28
3272	162	2,232	14.20	97	1,340	26	49
3281	339	7,966	17.76	281	1,942	144	215
3282	182	3,657	9.84	170	1,331	30	47
3292	154	5,619	18.72	185	5,490	121	134
S Asia Total	5,745	199,628	15.63	3,919	77,104	5,926	7,547

Source: RI South Asia Office



World taking note of a rapidly progressing India: **S Jaishankar**

Rasheeda Bhagat

It was a picture of a resurgent India — with a buoyant economy, increasing self-sufficiency in a range of fields from food security to water and electricity connections in millions of more homes — that External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar painted at one of the most interesting sessions of the zone institute RISE in Bengaluru.

Enumerating the major changes that have happened in India in the last decade, and the way these have impacted our neighbours and the entire world, he said, “It’s often easier to speak about what lies ahead, but I want to speak about what is behind us in the last decade as that is the foundation



of what lies ahead of us in the next quarter century.”

Saying that there is a “direct connection between our achievement, capabilities, aspirations and dreams,” he said the rapidly changing and progressing India showed “what we are capable of when we have the leadership, drive and motivation. Today when the world sees India as a stronger country, it wants to know what has happened and why.”

Listing out the 10 big things that the last decade saw in India, Jaishankar said these “were a mix of challenges, opportunities and achievement in different domains, and represent all-round progress.”

While other countries said that they would first finish vaccinating their people before helping others, we were one of the few who shared our vaccines, even while we were vaccinating, and gave vaccines to 99 countries and two UN organisations.

**S Jaishankar
External Affairs Minister**

The first big challenge was Covid-19, a “once in a century happening”. As one of the ministers in a small group from the Union cabinet appointed to oversee many Covid-related issues, “I travelled around the world at a time travel was at a standstill. I saw first-hand the rapid response of the Indian public healthcare system. In the beginning, the challenge seemed completely overwhelming and yet within a few months, given the leadership and collective responsibility, we were able to deal with the crisis as a nation and build capacities at a very rapid pace.”

That was 2020; “2021 was the year of the vaccine, many other countries made the vaccine too, but the scale, quality and rapidity with which we made the vaccine was an unusual phenomenon. We not only manufactured but also invented a vaccine. Many countries at that time had a vaccine but not an organised system of vaccination... where India stood out. We were able to put 2.5 billion doses of vaccine in people’s arms largely because we had digitally organised ourselves.” This enabled people to walk in, get a shot and “by the time you returned, you had an image (certificate) on your phone!”

In the next phase, when the demand for medical oxygen was a huge challenge, so many different systems responded — industry, Railways, Air Force, and the crisis was overcome. Also, “while other countries



Left: Paola and Ravishankar Dakoju, member of RC Bangalore, being felicitated for their TRF contribution by External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar and RI President Gordon McInally. Others in the picture (from L) Institute Chair KP Nagesh, RID Raju Subramanian, RIPN Mario de Camargo, PRID Ashok Mahajan, TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, PRIP KR Ravindran, PRIDs AS Venkatesh and Kamal Sanghvi.

said that they would first finish vaccinating their people before helping others, we were one of the few who shared our vaccines, even while we were vaccinating, and gave vaccines to 99 countries and two UN organisations. It is only natural to help your neighbours but there were countries in the Caribbean, Pacific... far way and little countries, who till today tell you that we would not have got vaccines but for India.”

Coming to his own ministry, Jaishankar said the manner in which the G20 meet was handled was exemplary. “G20 is like a world cup of diplomacy where the 20 biggest and strongest nations come together and we also had nine other countries as guests and 14 international organisations. When we took up the G20 presidency, the world didn’t have too many expectations.” But the way we as organisers navigated our way around contentious issues such as the Ukraine war, “the very deep anger in the developing world — Africa, Asia and Latin America — that their problems were being overlooked by Europe, and other divides and differences and found a common ground for countries that were arguing among themselves and had positions difficult to reconcile, was commendable. I’d say G20 has been the diplomatic achievement of this year.”

And not just because “we could get everybody to agree but because we could get the most powerful countries, including ourselves, to show a new commitment to getting sustainable

Right: From L: RIPN de Camargo, RID Subramanian, PRID Mahajan, President McNally, EAM Jaishankar, TRF Vice Chair Pandya, PRIP Ravindran, PRIDs Venkatesh and Sanghvi.

Our hand extended to Sri Lanka at its darkest moment made a critical difference, and showed that India is always there for its neighbours.

EAM Jaishankar

development, promoting green growth, ensuring that international institutions like the World Bank and IMF would lend more prolifically.”

The other big factor of this decade, said the minister, was the digital infrastructure India has put together which has become “the backbone on which services are delivered and benefits given, on which you get your entitlements and your Covid certificate.

This digitalisation has created the transformation of India.”

This includes creation of a food support system which is bigger than the population of Europe and North America; it has connected people to banking; 10 years ago, one-third of Indians were out of the banking system. Gas, electricity and water connections were given to millions of people, farmers who needed extra benefits were given those. “In 10 years, gas cylinders have been given to a population bigger than that of Germany, houses built for a population bigger than that of Japan,” he added.

Similarly, the extent of social benefits was staggering; While the Ayushman Bharat Health Scheme covers 500 million people, food support is given to 800 million, the Mudra loans to 415 million, banking facilities to 450 million, and water connections to 100 million new houses, which means 500 million people.

Next, India is admired for the talent and skills of its people. “The single achievement that has imprinted itself on the conscience of the world



A resurgent economy

With broad brush strokes, EAM Jaishankar painted a picture of the emergence of India as a global economic giant. “There is talk across the world about India being a bright star in the global economy. And with good reason. We had two quarters of an extremely impressive growth rate — 7.6 per cent in the last one.” Reeling off numbers, he said in the last decade we have moved from the 10th to the 5th place in world economy; “the flow of foreign investment has doubled, exports have gone up by 75 per cent, food grain production is up, and 135 million people — more than the population of Japan — have come out of extreme poverty.”

All this had happened despite Covid “thanks to the



right decisions during a period of extreme stress and a combination of policies coming together to create this new economic momentum.” It had become easier to do business, thanks to the de-bureaucratisation, a national logistics and infrastructure policy called Gati Shakti, a strong and

sustained support to the farming sector, and a very committed campaign to promote *Make in India*. “Each one of them may look different, but its totality is giving us the tailwind with which the Indian economy is forging ahead.”

Jaishankar told the Rotarians that most of them would be flying; “how many of you know that in the last 10 years the number of airports in this country have doubled, from 75 to 150 and cities with metros gone up from five to 20? Look at the expansion of the highway system; we see the change but take it as a given, but when the world sees a country of this size moving with this rate of transformation, it is taken very seriously.”



is the successful execution of the Chandrayaan mission. That is impactful of course, but there are so many other changes. Yesterday, the Sultan of Oman paid us a state visit and was fascinated by both our space programme and drones. We have created a drone policy for both business and other applications. Today drones are being used in farms to help farmers with land surveys and other facilities, and also to help secure our borders.”

In multiple ways, things were changing. Take the issue of passports, for example. Ten years ago, you could get your passports from only 77 places;

today you can do so from 527 spots. “That increase of 450 did not come from new buildings; we repurposed post offices and postal employees. Every day in India two colleges open, and every week a new university!”

With all this, India and Indians were getting ready for the global workspace and Indian talent, skill and creativity will be in demand across the world, Jaishankar said. “Many countries that hitherto were cautious about people from India coming there, are today actively seeking us out to reach agreements. In last one year I have signed agreements with Germany, Austria, Australia, Portugal and Italy for the mobility of people. Indian talent today is in demand across the world but we can make a global impact only if we do our homework, prepare that talent and give them opportunities.

And that is happening through starting more schools, building toilets, and encouraging the education of girls. This socio-economic transformation of India is really going to propel us in the next 25 years.”

Of course, there are challenges; at our borders and from our neighbours, but these are being handled, he said.

Summing up, he said that this overall and rapid transformation of India had been possible thanks to proper leadership right at the top. “The moment we get the right leadership, motivate ourselves and work collectively, we are able to surprise even ourselves by the extent of our achievements.”

Even the countries around us had benefitted, he said, giving the example of Sri Lanka which had gone into “a very deep economic crisis and while the rest of the world, including institutions which are supposed to respond to such crises, were debating what to do, India stepped forward. Our hand

extended to Sri Lanka at its darkest moment made a critical difference, and showed that India is always there for its neighbours. And the message resonates beyond our neighbourhood. Today India’s footprint is there in 600 projects across 78 countries in the world. Our doctors, social organisations, businesses have gone to far corners of the world.”

PRIP KR Ravindran thanked Jaishankar and the Indian government for its help during its economic crisis, and sought his advice on Rotarians’ difficulty in navigating tricky global situations in places such as Ukraine or Gaza. Jaishankar said that when the Ukraine conflict started, India brought back 19,000 students who were there, and did much more. One story which really didn’t get much traction was how so many Indian organisations went there to help especially with the refugees; “they ran soup kitchens, and helped the refugees coming out in so many ways. I understand navigation in a polarised situation is not easy. But if you are well established and have a track record, even in a difficult situation you can make a difference.... if there is anything I can do for you, give me a shout.”

Responding to another question from RIPN Mario de Camargo, who hails from Brazil, on the future of BRICS, the EAM said, “I think it will grow, gain in influence and even members; we have agreed to expand BRICS by six more members the next year we meet.” It would grow because



EAM Jaishankar and RID Subramanian with Institute Secretary PDG Sameer Hariani.



Dakoju announcing his contribution of ₹15 crore to TRF in the presence of his wife Paola, Institute Secretary Hariani and Chair KP Nagesh.

the domination of only some countries would end, and BRICS is giving a clear message that “look, we are here and the world is a very diverse place, and cannot be run only by a few countries.”

To a question from TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya on when Indians would be allowed to travel visa-free in more countries, Jaishankar said it was already happening. Recently Thailand and Malaysia had started giving visa-free

entry to Indians. “This will grow when we ensure that the mobility is legal; that is why we are doing these mobility agreements with different countries.”

To a question on when India would become a developed nation, he quipped “Make sure you live for the next 25 years!” He added that India was definitely going places; “but we should not lose that momentum, or take our foot off the accelerator. A major part of reform is never compare yourself with your past, set yourself ambitious targets, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi has fired up the energy of this society and that will propel us forward.”

At the session, moderated by institute chair and RI director Raju Subramanian, Ravishankar Dakoju, from RC Bangalore, presented three cheques of ₹5 crore each to The Rotary Foundation. Accompanied by his wife Paola, he said with this amount of ₹15 crore, he was completing 50 per cent of the sum of ₹100 crore he has pledged to the Foundation. While ₹5 crore of this money will go for service projects in Nigeria, ₹5 crore will be used for projects in Bangladesh and the remaining ₹5 crore for work in India.

The UN is getting less and less effective

A question at the zone institute that got an interesting response from External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar was when would India get a permanent seat in the UN. The problem, he said, was that “the UN is like an old club with a set of members who do not want to let go of their grip and want to retain control over the club. They do not want to admit more members, as they are not too keen to have their practices questioned. In a way it’s a human failing but today I think this is harming the world, because on key issues confronting the world, the UN is getting less and less effective.”

He added that the global sentiment was such that if “you ask the 200 countries of the world do you want reform or not, a very large number will say ‘Yes, we want reform’.”

The fact remained that the UN was established with a membership of only about 50 countries. “Imagine a business that has grown four times and yet you do not want to change the original promotor of that business. It is not fair and I think there is a realisation of that. I am sure it will happen, we will keep at it and I am sure that history is on our side here,” he added.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Next institute... Kochi

Team Rotary News



Kochi Zone Institute Chair PDG John Daniel presents a model snake boat, a traditional war boat of Kerala, to RI President Gordon McNally and Heather. Also present (from L) PDG S Muthupalaniappan, Kochi Institute Secretary Jose Chacko, his spouse Mary and Meera Daniel (R).

RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury, as convenor of the next Rotary zone institute, along with his wife Shipra, invited delegates of the Bengaluru institute to “enjoy the enchanting backwaters

and nature’s captivating beauty” at Kochi, Kerala — the venue for the 2024 institute to be held at the Lulu Convention Centre, Grand Hyatt, Bolgatty Islands, during Dec 6–8.

RI director Raju Subramanian is the co-convenor and PDG John Daniel (RID 3211) the chair for the institute. TRF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya, PRIDs Kamal Sanghvi and AS Venkatesh are the chief advisors. PDGs Madhav Chandran (co-chair), Jose Chacko (secretary) and BM Sivarraj (treasurer) will also steer the event.

“It is our institute and each institute must be better than the past. Each one of us should support the Kochi institute to ensure that our friendships will help us build a better Rotary in India,” said RID Subramanian. Conveying his best wishes to RID Roychowdhury, he said, “Vidhya and I will walk with you every inch of the way to support this institute.” Over 700 delegates were registered at the Bengaluru institute.



RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury at the stall promoting the 2024 Rotary Zone Institute for which he is the convenor.

Pictures by K Vishwanathan

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Rotary's absence in Gaza explained

Rasheeda Bhagat

At the zone institute in Bengaluru, in the session *Frankly Speaking* conducted as always by PRIP KR Ravindran, there were several googlies, as the moderator himself called them, pitched to senior RI leaders such as RI President Gordon McNally, RIPN Mario de Camargo, Trustee Larry Lunsford and RI director Raju Subramanian. At the session Ravindran asked President McNally why Rotary was yet to reach humanitarian aid in the Israel-Palestine

conflict zone in Gaza. It had done so with great speed in Ukraine, he said.

President McNally clarified that Rotary was able to quickly step in and help Ukraine as that country has a “strong Rotary presence,” and infrastructure on the ground to facilitate the distribution of aid material was available. But this could not be done quickly where strong Rotary infrastructure on the ground was missing since there are no Rotary clubs in Gaza.

He added, “In the Middle East conflict, we all know that on Oct 6 there was a terrible incident that started the present conflict. On Oct 13 there was a joint meeting of the Board of Trustees and the Board of Directors, a group of about 34 people and that joint forum came out with a statement of fact based on what had happened on Oct 6 and the following seven days.”

There were different reactions to this statement from different sides. But what was important was that Rotary did want to step in with humanitarian aid in the worst affected areas where innocent civilians were suffering and was exploring ways to do this as soon as possible. “Overall, the call for Rotary clubs around the world is to do what we do best — take action as soon as we can,” he said.

Trustee Larry Lunsford added that a couple of days before the inaugural of the institute, both he and TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya had attended a TRF Board meet. One of the matters discussed was how TRF could extend some humanitarian aid in this crisis situation. “We noted that while this is not one of the new disasters of magnitude, and does not merit a



From L: TRF Trustee Larry Lunsford, RIPN Mario de Camargo, PRIP K R Ravindran and RI President Gordon McNally.

specific disaster response from us, that does not mean that Rotary does not want to be a part of the humanitarian effort there. The trustees are working on this issue even as we speak here,” he added.

Discontinuation of the presidential theme

Interspersing the session with his characteristic humorous quips, Ravindran began the session saying he “wanted to ask simple questions like who started Rotary” but instead would ask questions, including the one on the “reasoning behind the RI Board’s decision to do away with the presidential theme.”

President Gordon said the Board had taken the decision to discontinue the presidential theme from 2025–26 onwards, but not the annual message. “We removed the responsibility from one individual to set the annual message, and believe me, having myself gone through the process, it is a big responsibility on one individual to set the annual message. When I was nominee I was told: ‘Remember it will be on your gravestone... it is such

The practices, and at times the intimidation, that go on are not fair. We have to show Rotary as a shining example of an organisation that has ethical standards.

Gordon McNally
RI President

Election blues in India

At the *Frankly Speaking* session moderated by PRIPKR Ravindran, RI President Gordon McNally was asked to comment on the “strong letter” he and RIPE Urchick had addressed to Indian Rotarians on election complaints, going to court etc. “I have a suggestion, why don’t we allow electioneering and canvassing just like Lions and other organisations,” said Ravindran.

McNally responded: “Rotary is above that; we are an ethical organisation and should behave in that manner. We did not select India as our target but we have to be honest and say that this does happen in this country. While Heather and I have seen the most wonderful projects being done in

India by the most wonderful Rotarians in India, we also know that a cloud hangs over Rotary in India in the behaviour and practices of some of the leadership.”

He, along with Rotary’s future leadership, was “determined to make inroads into that by identifying that behaviour and calling it out. You cannot say that because we do such great work you have to tolerate such behaviour. Rotary is above that and better than that, probably everybody in this room is above and better than that. The practices, and at times the intimidation, that go on are not fair. We have to show Rotary as a shining example of an organisation that has ethical standards.”

an important decision you are going to make.”

So in the interest of both consistency and continuity, from 2025 onwards, the incoming president “will work with the strategic planning and communications committee to develop a message which will be consistent going forward.” The attempt was to move away from a particular year belonging to a particular individual. “For eg, this is not ‘my year’; during this year, I am simply moving Rotary forward and Stephanie (Urchick) will do the same next year and hand it over to Mario. In the future, the president nominee will work very closely with the team to develop an

annual message which has focus on continuity.”

Diversity, equity inclusion

Ravindran next raised a query on the DEI mantra and said that even though in essence it included “race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, etc, we seem to be focusing only on women. What are we going to do to include the others? Also what are we going to do if we have an RI president who is gay?”

De Camargo’s response: “The largest company in the world, Apple, is worth \$3 trillion and its CEO Tim Cook is gay. He wasn’t elected CEO of Apple because he was gay but because he was competent. That



From L: TRF Trustee Lunsford, RIPN de Camargo, PRIP Ravindran, RI President McNally and RI Director Raju Subramanian.

he turns out to be gay is absolutely nobody's business. For the Apple shareholders what is important is Cook's professional competence and skill. So if we ever have an RI president who happens to be gay, my question to him or her will be: How are you going to increase membership, raise funds for TRF and so on."

He added that for the first time in RI's history, his wife and he had decided to have a female aide for them. "She will be the first ever woman to be aide to an RI president. I chose her not because she was female but we decided she was the best person for that position." Competent women do not need any quotas; "Rotary is slowly tending towards equality, and if you have competence, talent and skill, we will find you... woman, man, older, younger, black, white, Hindu or Christian. You may

come from US, Brazil, Scotland, we are going to search for you."

The next question addressed to RID Subramanian was that in many places the Rotary membership was being quoted as 1.4 million, including

Rotary is slowly tending towards equality, and if you have competence, talent and skill, we will find you... woman, man, older, younger, black, white, Hindu or Christian, from US, Brazil or Scotland.

Mario de Camargo
RI President-nominee

the 200,000-odd Rotaractors. Was this fair, to include those numbers and quote Rotary membership as 1.4 million? And those numbers were already down; after they had been asked to pay membership fee the Rotaract numbers had fallen from 209,000 to 130,000 or so.

Subramanian said he believed that after the CoL decision to make Rotaract a part of Rotary, it was acceptable "to add the Rotaract membership to Rotary membership but not group the two together. That will give a true picture of where the Rotary and Rotaract membership is."

He added that the dilemma was also that institution-based Rotaractors drifted away once their education was over, whereas community-based Rotaractors tended to stay on. "Institution-based Rotaractors don't generally get assimilated into community-based clubs. That is a loss we need to address."

McInally raised a question mark on the accuracy of the number of Rotaractors that had been “lost” after we started charging them membership dues. He suspected that numbers were never accurate to begin with because without dues being charged there was never any way of ascertaining the correct number of Rotaractors.

Paul and Jean Harris Home

Ravindran then quizzed trustee Lunsford about the Board of Trustees turning down the request of a Taiwan club which wanted to make a donation towards the Paul Harris home, but through TRF, in order to get points for its members.

Lunsford replied that there was no question that all Rotarians had a lot of reverence for the Rotary founder and respected the “collective efforts around the Rotary world to maintain that home of Paul and Jean Harris as it was back in 1947 when they were living there.” A foundation called the Paul and Jean Harris Home Foundation had been set up for this purpose.”

But there are complicated and different tax systems in the US and other countries for donations coming to such foundations. “So even though the trustees are interested in supporting such an effort (for the Paul Harris home), they don’t really see TRF as a conduit to give money to other foundations.” Some

would argue that an exception should be made in this case, “but at the moment the Board has decided not to make that exception because this would create a precedent as there are many Rotary-affiliated charities both at the local, club, district and international levels.” So the trustees had decided to continue to look at TRF as “a set up to receive its own contributions and spend them in TRF programmes and not serve as a pass-through for other foundations.”

A similar query had now come from India too, and the matter will once again come up before the trustees at their next meeting, he added.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat



End Polio car rally in RID 3212

Team Rotary News

An End Polio car rally was organised jointly by RCs Pearl City Tuticorin and Tirunelveli Avira, RID 3212, on World Polio Day (Oct 24) to mark the birth anniversary of Dr Jonas Salk, who developed the first successful polio vaccine.

PDG Chinnadurai Abdullah, district coordinator, End Polio Now, flagged off the car rally from Thoothukudi to Tirunelveli in which 25 polio survivors travelled with an equal number of Rotarians in 15 cars and a van. End Polio banners, along with boards and placards detailing Rotary’s global role in the eradication of the disease were stuck on the cars, and flyers distributed. DG R Muthiah Pillai welcomed the rallyists in Tirunelveli.

A small procession was held which ended with the garlanding of the statue of Rotary founder Paul Harris. DG Pillai distributed sweets



DG Muthiah Pillai (left) presents a souvenir to a polio-inflicted girl after the car rally in the presence of PDG Chinnadurai Abdullah (centre), RC Pearl City Tuticorin president Mohamed Ibrahim and RC Tirunelveli Avira president Syed Ali Fatima, Rotarians and polio survivors.

and firecrackers to the polio survivors. Later, balloons with End Polio Now slogans were released to drive home the message that polio needs to be eradicated from the world completely.

RC Pearl City Tuticorin president Mohamed Ibrahim, secretary Vignesh, and RC Tirunelveli Avira president Syed Ali Fatima, and secretary Ayisha Parveen organised the car rally. ■

Continuity and teamwork

the need of the hour

Jaishree

I am not a fan of the expression — ‘my year’. It is not ‘your year’ either. It is Rotary’s years. We are custodians of the office we all hold for 12 months. I am not a king or a god. Neither are you. We are Rotarians doing our job taking the organisation forward in a continuously improving manner,” said RI President Gordon McNally, addressing the DGEs at the Bengaluru zone institute.

Stressing the spirit of continuity, he said that each initiative and project initiated during a term should transcend individual tenures, contributing to Rotary’s enduring success. “It is not about who gets the credit for

something, as long as that something is done right,” he quoted American poet Ralph Waldo Emerson.

President McNally and Heather have toured nine cities in India in April. “India is a wonderful part of Rotary. The rest of the world must also look up and celebrate all the wonderful things that you do. But there is an elephant in the room,” said the president, referring to the election issues and related complaints being made from the districts to the RI Board. “The behaviour that goes on during the elections, the intimidation that takes place, the campaigning — all these are tarnishing the wonderful jewel that India should be in Rotary’s crown.

I may not have the power to restore the Kohinoor diamond but I would love to see the jewel in Rotary’s crown polished and shining brightly.”

He drew a parallel between Rotary and rugby, emphasising the value of collaborative work. “Just as every player is essential for a rugby team’s success, the collective talent of all DGs is vital to advancing Rotary. Let’s work as a team, not in isolation or against each other, and run the race together,” he urged.

Institute convenor and RI director Raju Subramanian echoed the RI president’s sentiments, addressing concern about electioneering misbehaviour. “Most of you get into electioneering and neglect membership, service projects and public image. You’re all people with immaculate capacity and capability. Channelise your talent to proper use, to develop the clubs, and not to create differences in



Jaishree

From L: (Back row) TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, PRID AS Venkatesh, Institute convenor and RID Raju Subramanian, co-convenor RID Anirudha Roychowdhury, PRIP KR Ravindran and GETS chair PDG Deepak Purohit. (Front row) Madhavi Pandya, Shipra Roychowdhury, Vidhya Subramanian, Vanathy Ravindran, Vinita Venkatesh and Veena Purohit at the GETS inaugural.

the districts. Bring everyone together so that the district becomes one wholesome body capable of enlarging the scope of the service we do, the communities we can touch and the lives we can change. That is what is creating hope in the world.”

Highlighting the various achievements of Rotary in India, he said, “Nobody does such innovative service projects as we do. We are number two in Foundation giving and number one in membership. So concentrate on what you need to do as governor, to propel the organisation’s glory.”

“What difference does it make to you who gets elected as governor. You are disintegrating the clubs by supporting various groups. Without clubs there is no Rotary. Stop going to courts. Settle your disputes within your districts.”

Director Subramanian continued: “If I come across any electioneering at the zonal elections, even if it is a PDG or DG, I will take it up in a strong way. RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury and I know what it feels like when we go to the Board meeting. It does not give us joy when we meet our fellow Rotarians when so many complaints are shot off to the Board from India. If we can correct this, India will truly be a jewel in Rotary’s crown. Unfortunately, the British took away the Kohinoor, but here we are destroying the Kohinoor that we have in Rotary.”

Emphasising the need for transparent financial transactions, he said, “One black spot there will denude us of the money flow into our Foundation. Connect the donor to the beneficiary directly, not through a website, so that the donor knows that his generosity is reaching the beneficiary.”

Subramanian advised the DGEs and DGNs to conduct SWOT analyses, strategise to strengthen small clubs, and underscored the importance of projecting the Rotary Wheel’s image to strengthen public image. To the DGs,



RI President Gordon McNally and RID Subramanian.

he said, “Use the next six months to get the \$40 million that we have promised for the Foundation. Do not increase membership for awards. The members you induct must stay for life in Rotary and not leave at the beginning of the following year.”

Speaking on ethics in leadership, PRIP KR Ravindran touched upon three critical issues — elections, stewardship or accountability and appointments. “When you have a law that clearly discourages election campaigning you cannot do that. That does not make us ethical,” he said, and urged the DGEs to announce in their districts that if they find any canvassing, their names will be removed from the ballot paper.

As member of the first Stewardship Committee set up by RI, with PRIP Mark Maloney as chairman, Ravindran recalled visiting a nursery that belonged to another person. “The club had shown it to the Foundation as their community project to claim money under the matching grants programme.” He cited two other instances of fictitious projects — one

of an ambulance being used “by a judge to carry his books to the court and another ambulance used as a tourist vehicle!” Another instance was that of an image of a tube well that a Rotary club was sharing on several occasions as different projects to get grants from TRF. Transparency in stewardship, he argued, is vital to maintain the trust of the community.

“I find that sometimes when people are punished by the RI Board, two years later someone else goes and presents a paper to get that reversed. My request to the president is that your Board should not excuse these people without going back to the president of the Board that originally punished him. Because you don’t know the facts,” he said.

Talking about appointments he said it is a win-win for the district leader “when you appoint good people because they do the work and you get the credit.”

In Rotary, ethical leadership is not a phase. “It is the foundation upon which our organisation’s reputation and success has been built. Ethical leadership starts at the top. If the top is rotten, everything that follows is also rotten. As leaders, you

need to set the tone. Our principles are enshrined in our 4-Way Test designed by Herbert Taylor in 1932. It serves as a model code for all your actions, to look beyond the superficial and do something that is fair to all. The example that we set sends ripples through the whole organisation,” he said.

RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury, the co-convenor of the institute, said that Rotary needs leaders with a forward thinking mindset and who can give strategic direction for the future with focus on Rotary clubs. “Strengthen the clubs and involve the Rotarians in your plans. Membership retention can happen only when the interest of each Rotarian is sustained.”

TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya urged the district leaders to develop their capabilities to become better. “This year and this position will not repeat again. You have one year. So

Channelise your talent to proper use, to develop the clubs, and not to create differences in the districts.

Raju Subramanian
RI Director

set your goals and inspire your team to dream and do more. Lead by example. When you are in a leadership position your team will keenly watch you to see if you are doing what you are asking them to do.” Emphasising collaboration over individual recognition, he said, “There is no ‘I’ in Rotary, it is always ‘we’. Treat everyone with respect. You are one among equals. Remember you cannot email a hug or a handshake. Always reserve a smile or a hug for all your team members. Never compromise integrity which is very critical for the reputation of our organisation.”

Pandya urged leaders to approach challenges with a fresh perspective, advocating resilience and the power of

a positive mindset. “Do not let challenges pull you down. Instead take advantage of the prevailing situation and soar high like an eagle. The greatest weapon that you have is to put your soul and mind on fire and success is inevitable,” he said.

General trainer PRID AS Venkatesh said, “Being a governor is not about getting awards. Those awards will soon be forgotten by everyone else except yourself. But what people will remember is the impact you have created through your leadership in your region. Awards are actually an unfair way of comparing districts because the composition, population, priorities, needs and resources that you have at your disposal in each district are different. So strive to do better than what you think you can do.”

PDG Deepak Purohit was the chair of the GETS and PDG Gurjeet Sekhon, the chairman of the GNTS. The district trainers’ training seminar has been renamed as the district learning facilitators seminar and was chaired by PDG S Nagendra. ■

RC Mansa Royal conducts a cancer detection camp

Team Rotary News

Under a global grant partnership with RC Taipei Tungteh Taiwan, RID 3522, and RC Delhi Rajdhani, RID 3011, RC Faridkot, RID 3090, handed over the Rotary Gunwati Bansal Memorial Cancer Detection Van worth \$200,000 to the Baba Farid University of Health Sciences, Faridkot, in 2017–18. The project was then led by late PDG Vinod Bansal.



Rotarians in front of the cancer screening van.

The van has been actively carrying out early detection and awareness camps in rural Rajasthan and Punjab, in collaboration with Rotary clubs of RID 3090. Recently, RC Mansa Royal, RID 3090, used the van for screenings,

with the help of a team of doctors and technicians from Baba Farid University. Over 100 people in villages near Mansa were screened and around 55 were referred to city hospitals for further diagnosis. ■



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TRF donors make India proud

Rasheeda Bhagat

At a grand and elegantly executed sit-down dinner, with personalised menu cards on every table for every guest, held on the eve of the Bengaluru zone institute, senior Rotary leaders led by RI President Gordon McNally, RI directors Raju Subramanian and Anirudha Roychowdhury, TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya and several other RI leaders and senior leaders from Rotary India, toasted The Rotary Foundation.

A little earlier, the new Arch Klumph Society members from India (list in box) shared their stories on the essence of giving, of what had motivated them to donate to TRF, whether it was for building toilets, literacy and schools, community healthcare and sanitation projects, skilling women and physically-challenged, and similar community development projects.

Thanking the new AKS inductees profusely for their generosity, President McNally said that it was always an inspiring and special moment for him and his wife Heather to go around the world for similar events. “Such events are such a wonderful chance for us to hear the



RI President Gordon McNally greets RI Director Henrique Barbosa de Vasconcelos.





Above: (From L) AKS inductees Ranjit Pratap and Uma; Saroj and Ghanshyam Agrawal; and Gowri and Srinivas. (Back row) Meena and Krishna Choudhary; Bahri Malhotra's family members — Pooja Sood, Preeti and Ashwini Malhotra; and PDG VR Muthu.

Left: (From L) PRIPs K R Ravindran, Rajendra Saboo and Kalyan Banerjee with RI President Gordon McInally.

Right: (From L) RID 3191 DG Udaykumar Bhaskara, Uma Nagesh, Ravishankar Dakoju, PDG Vinay Kulkarni and Institute Chair KP Nagesh.



Above: TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya with RID Anirudha Roychowdhury and Shipra.

Left: PRIPs Saboo and Banerjee.

stories of what drives the passion of those who contribute so generously to our Foundation. Every donation to our Foundation is important, but by virtue of the extent to which you are contributing to TRF, you are very important to us and we celebrate you. I never sit through such celebrations without thinking of the beneficiaries of our Foundation.”

As he heard them share their stories, “in the last few minutes I have thought of people that Heather and I have met over the past few months who have benefitted in the spheres in which you have declared your interest. I think of the children of the schools in Mexico that I visited a couple of weeks ago, who were given school resources thanks to Rotary funding, thanks to a TRF

AKS inductees

VR Muthu and Malarvizhi Muthu	- RID 3212
Indrani and DR Patnaik	- RID 3261
Ghanshyam and Saroj Agrawal	- RID 3192
Ranjit Pratap and Uma Ranjit	- RID 3232
Gowri Srinivas and Srinivas T	- RID 3191
Krishna and Meena Choudhary	- RID 3141
Late Bahri Baldevraj and Late Kanwal Malhotra (represented by Rtn Ashwini and Priti Malhotra)	- RID 3131
Roop and Beena Jyoti	- RID 3292

Clockwise from below: TRF Vice Chair Pandya with RRFs (from L) Rakesh Sharma, Deepak Gupta, Sam Movva and Madhav Chandran; (From L) PDGs Sandip Agarwalla, Raja Seenivasan, VR Muthu, Jayanthi Seenivasan, Kamala Muthupalaniappan and Malini Agarwalla; (From L) RID Raju Subramanian, PRIP Saboo, Heather, President McInally, PRIP Ravindran, Vanathy and TRF Vice Chair Pandya; (From L) TRF Vice Chair Pandya, PRID Basker, RIDs Jeremy Hurst and Subramanian, and PRID Manoj Desai; (From L) Uma, Sonal, PRID Kamal Sanghvi and PDG Nagesh; TRF Vice Chair Pandya in conversation with President McInally as PDGs N Subramanian (L) and Ashok Kantoor look on.





Clockwise from above: President McNally and Heather with Usha Saboo; Institute Convenor RID Subramanian with RID Vasconcelos, Renata, Nadja and RID Hans-Hermann Kasten; (From L) Vidhya, RID Subramanian, TRF Vice Chair Pandya and Madhavi; RC Madras past president Ranjit Pratap, PRID C Basker and PRIP Ravindran; Heather in conversation with PRIP Banerjee; Institute Secretary PDG Sameer Hariani and Roopa.

grant, thanks to people like yourselves. I think of the young people in Mongolia just a month ago, the beneficiaries of TRF who were given houses to develop their futures. Of the abused children in Korea who are being helped in the sphere of mental health thanks to TRF.”

Added McNally: “I stand here not simply as the RI president to say ‘Thank you’ to all of you. I stand on behalf of all those beneficiaries... on behalf of the children of Mexico, the people of Mongolia and the children of Korea to thank your generosity.”

Thanking AKS members and all the donors to TRF, TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya told the



PRIPs Saboo, Banerjee and Ravindran.



AKS member Muthu shares his thoughts in the presence of TRF Vice Chair Pandya, President McInally and Trustee Larry Lunsford.



PDG Deepak Gupta and Reena with PRID Basker and Mala.



PRIP Saboo and Usha with Sharmishtha and PRID Manoj Desai.



PRIDs Ashok Mahajan and Sanghvi.



Usha Saboo and Nayantara Mahajan share a hug.

gathering, “If Rotarians are the heart of Rotary, TRF is the backbone of Rotary. TRF benefits millions of people across the world starting from our own doorstep and extending to each and every corner of the world.”

Institute convenor and RI director Subramanian said: “We meet here to look back, reflect and support our Foundation this year and every year. Don’t make it about my year or your year; it is our year, this year and every year. It is necessary for each of us to continue to contribute to this Foundation, as we are in Rotary to give and not take. Each year must be a better year than the last year...”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat
Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

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Rotary stalwarts honoured

Rasheeda Bhagat

At the Rotary zone institute, two Rotary stalwarts in India, both past RI presidents — Rajendra Saboo and Kalyan Banerjee — were presented lifetime achievements awards.

Reading out PRIP Saboo’s citation, RI director Raju Subramanian said he was being honoured for “a lifetime of exemplary service. As a distinguished industrialist, philanthropist and visionary leader, Saboo has held pivotal roles including trustee chair of The Rotary Foundation.” His impact had extended beyond the boardroom with notable contribution to Rotary’s healthcare projects across Africa since 1998. “His commitment to community service and education transcended borders... His legacy, marked by service beyond borders, continues to inspire Rotary and non-Rotary communities alike.” He was being honoured for “his transformative contribution and unwavering dedication to Rotary’s ideal of service above self.”

In his acceptance speech, Saboo said he had come to Chandigarh for business and “became a Rotarian to get

to know people.” His journey in Rotary became exciting as he made friends, became club president, district governor, RI director and finally RI president. When his wife Usha suggested that “we should do hands on service and look beyond India,” he had initiated the medical missions in Africa which had brought him a lot of satisfaction.

Adding a few words, in a very moving speech, Usha Saboo expressed her “gratitude for all the love, recognition and respect you have extended to Raja. His speech and hearing are impaired but at 90, he is still doing medical missions, organising heart surgeries and attending all his club (RC Chandigarh) projects.” He could do all this “because you are his friends in Rotary and are keeping the spirit of Rotary alive in him.”

Honouring PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, RID Subramanian said that as “the third Indian RI president, his tenure saw India become a major

contributor to TRF. A director of United Phosphorus, he has played a pivotal role in transforming Vapi into an industrial centre.” His extensive Rotary journey since 1972 had brought him many leadership positions, taking him right to the pinnacle of Rotary as RI president. He had served in various international committees, “notably steering polio eradication efforts in India. His philosophy and leadership are captured in his words: ‘Leading in Rotary is different because here you are leading your equals. You are not here to give orders but to lend support’.” These words put in a nutshell “his ethos for collaborative leadership and service. This lifetime achievement award recognises his exceptional leadership in fostering collaboration and service above self.”

Addressing the meeting Banerjee thanked the institute committee for the “recognition and honour you bestow on me today.” Striking a note of humility, he quoted the words of Nobel laureate Rabindranath Tagore when he was told he was the recipient of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1911. “In his

Left: PRIP Rajendra Saboo and Usha being honoured by RI President Gordon McNally and Heather in the presence of (from L) Institute Chair KP Nagesh, RIPN Mario de Camargo, RID Raju Subramanian, Vidhya, PRIP K R Ravindran, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, RID Anirudha Roychowdhury and TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya.



RI President McNally honours PRIP Banerjee. PRIP Saboo, RIPN de Camargo, PRIP Ravindran and RID Roychowdhury applaud.

inimitable words he had said: ‘I am undeserving of the wonderful garland you bestow on me and it is an honour difficult to comprehend as I have been doing what I have always done.’

He too believed that all that he had done through Rotary, “that I cherish,” was working for 51 years along with other Rotarians in serving people. “It was incredible when India became free from the dread of the



RID Subramanian reading the citation honouring PRID Panduranga Setty. Setty’s son Shyam and President McNally look on.

polio disease in 2012 (when he was RI president). As happens on such occasions, the people on the field do the job, the bossman gets the recognition! Having said that it was truly an incredible job done, as none had expected it would happen so soon.”

Also, he added, “I was fortunate to lead TRF in 2016–17, when for the first time TRF raised \$300 million.”

Banerjee then struck a poignant note which left several eyes moist in the audience. Expressing his pain and anguish at losing his wife Binota, he said, “Unfortunately my luck ran out soon after, because during the Covid days I lost my better half Binota to a complicated kidney surgery.

I am trying unsuccessfully yet to recover from that loss, by immersing myself once again in Rotary, by building a university in Vapi, working yet again to build health-care facilities, travelling and engaging in other community work. It brings to mind that old Kishore Kumar song: ‘*Musafir hoon yaaro, Na ghar hei na thikana, Mujhe chalte jana hei, Bus chalte jana.*’ (I am a traveller with no home, no address, my goal is to keep going on, and on.)

PRID Panduranga Setty was posthumously given a Lifetime Achievement Award, presented to his son Shyam, for his exemplary service to Rotary. He passed away on January 21, 2023.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Branding Rotary for GenNext

V Muthukumar

You can tell more than a million real life stories that inspire people to join Rotary. “But you have to narrate them in a consistent, structured and nuanced manner to create Brand Rotary that will take this global NGO to the next generations for a new legacy,” said Nupur Gadkari, global marketing head, Candex, a fin-tech company, and an expert in devising consumer brand strategies.

Addressing delegates at the Bengaluru zone institute, she said the median age of the world population is 30 years, and “this generation stays connected to the internet and hooked on to social media 24x7.” So, how you create brand Rotary with a distinct logo, colour, messaging, font and backdrop... all these will make an impact on the layman’s mind, she said.

Today’s youngsters are open to new ideas, emerging tech like ChatGPT, artificial intelligence, etc, as

social media has penetrated their consciousness and traditional media like newspapers, TV and radio are passe. Hence, Rotary must change with the times. There is an information overload, thanks to social media, and with all this clutter, “Rotary has to stand out with a brand identity of its own. We need to adopt new technologies to draw the attention of a young market where the attention span is very low.”

Rotary is not competing with giants like Coca Cola, McDonalds, Kellogg’s or UN agencies, “but we can create a great brand on what we are... drawing on the power of our Rotary stories,” she pointed out.

Time to reflect

It is important to get our story right across the targeted people. An ‘emotional connect’ with the community is critical for building an iconic brand Rotary, and for that “Rotarians must

be in sync with other members for a unified one voice, one language and one idea approach for greater impact. It has to leverage its innate power of storytelling to create a brand legacy for generations to come,” she added.

Health literacy in schools

With Rotary on the verge of achieving a polio-free world, “going forward, it can make schools promote children’s health by working with various stakeholders. For, improving children’s lives and health is an important part of Rotary’s DNA,” said Dr Rüdiger Krech, director, Health Promotion, WHO, Geneva, during a plenary session.

The health crisis during the Covid pandemic has exposed the fractures in society plagued by ecological, political, commercial, digital and social determinants affecting health and leading to social inequities, within



RI Director Jeremy Hurst and PRID Ashok Mahajan honour Nupur Gadkari. Also in the picture are (from L) PRID Manoj Desai, RI Director Raju Subramanian, Vidhya and TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya.

social groups and nations, he said. Also, climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution threaten humanity.

The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, adopted in 1986, calls for developing networks with villages, cities, schools, colleges, offices, workplaces, homes and markets for “setting up a conducive environment to address health risk factors in a globalised world.” Schools are a unique setting for preventive intervention. “Schools offering health literacy will benefit not only the students, but also their parents, teachers and local communities.” They will allow children to develop cognitive and socio-emotional skills for healthy behaviour.

“The example of polio shows how complex the eradication of a disease is. Your teams are working hard to catch the last wild polio cases in Pakistan and Afghanistan. This requires combatting misinformation and building trust in the communities.” Expressing optimism that “we all will celebrate a huge victory of



RI President Gordon McNally presents an award to Dr Rüdiger Krech, director, WHO.

public health after the elimination of polio,” he said, “the world today is much different from what it was in 1979, when Rotary took up the fight against polio.” While there were around 200 million travellers in 1979, today there are around 1.6 billion in

a year, a phenomenal growth in tourism, Krech said. He urged Rotary to take the lead in promoting schools that deliver health literacy across the world to reduce the NCD risk factors.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

Doing Good with TRF help

3-in-1 medical facility in Guwahati

Team Rotary News

Assam health minister Keshab Mahanta inaugurated three state-of-art facilities — a blood bank, an eye hospital and a physiotherapy

unit — at the KGMT Hospital, Guwahati, in the presence of DG Nilesh Agarwal, PDGs Manas Chaudhuri, Kalpana Khound and Debashish Das.



DG Nilesh Agarwal (seventh from R) with PDGs Prabhat Kedia, Kalpana Khound, Debashish Das, Manas Chaudhuri and project primary contact Budhin Barthakur after the inauguration of the facilities at the KGMT Hospital, Guwahati.

The facilities were set up by RID 3240 at around ₹2 crore through a global grant project with RID 3282, Bangladesh, as partner. During his tenure as governor in 2019–20, PDG Das initiated the project with \$30,000 as a Directed Gift to form a seed fund for the GG project.

Later, a committee was formed with Budhin Borthakur as the primary contact. PDGs Arvind Phukan (from the US), NN Dutta, Prabhat Kedia and Arijit Endow, Dr Anil Mahanta and other Rotarians from all the eight clubs in Guwahati had worked for the success of the medical project. ■



Success mantras for incoming leaders

Jaishree

Dream, connect, persist – these are the guiding principles that RIPN Mario de Camargo emphasised to the DGNs at the Bengaluru zone institute.

Reflecting on The Rotary Foundation’s inception, de Camargo underlined the importance of dreaming big. “When Arch Klumph established the Foundation in 1917, he was its only believer as Rotary presidents around the world thought that the Foundation will compete with RI for attention. Klumph had to set up the Foundation office in his own company because RI would not dedicate a room for its office. The first real contribution, aside from the \$26.5 initial fund, was the \$1.7 million donation that Rotarians gave to the Foundation to honour Paul Harris’ death in

1947. Klumph had to wait patiently for 30 years to fulfil his dream,” he said.

The second mantra is to connect, recognising that success is a collaborative effort. “You will never be able to do anything by yourself. Neither can I. I will always depend on you and you will in turn depend on your presidents, and they will depend on Rotarians. If there is no team work, there is no work. If you do not know to gather a team you cannot achieve anything.”

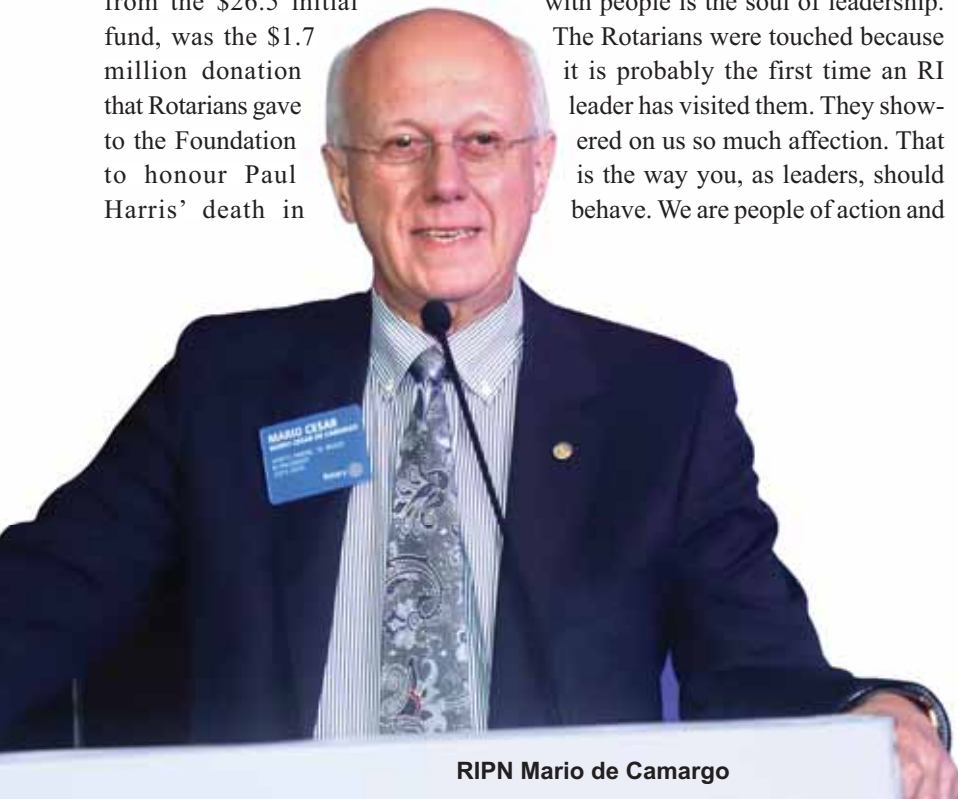
Reflecting on his and spouse Denise’s visit to Mysuru, Belur and Hassan just before the institute, de Camargo underscored the significance of personal connections. “Connecting with people is the soul of leadership. The Rotarians were touched because it is probably the first time an RI leader has visited them. They showered on us so much affection. That is the way you, as leaders, should behave. We are people of action and

our actions must speak much more than our words. Rotarians are not stupid. If we are not fair, they will not listen to us. If you are not committed enough to act, your good projects and ideas will not come to fruition.”

Embrace failure, was his third mantra. Every leader encounters challenges, but the choice to rise after a fall defines true leadership. “You must just get up, dust off and move on, and never be defeated by failure. Success is not final, and failure is not fatal,” he said, and urged the incoming leaders to develop the art of apology. “You will face disagreements. Be ready for debates and discussions. When the discussion gets heated, don’t hesitate to apologise, and your team will respect you. Take responsibility for the results. I take responsibility at the global level, and you do so at the district level.”

TRF trustee Larry Lunsford from the US gave an insight into the future of the Foundation to the DGNs. If every one of us pitches in with whatever way, and if every one of our districts can do a million-dollar dinner, we can reach our goal — to raise \$2.025 billion by 2025,” he said. He commended India’s generosity to TRF. “We are 15 trustees with a tremendous obligation to channelise your resources well, to create the right programmes.”

He urged the incoming leaders to support the Paul Harris Society which recognises members who contribute



RIPN Mario de Camargo

\$1,000 every year to the Annual Fund. India ranks third in this membership. “I look forward to the day when India tops the list,” he said. Complimenting India for showing the way with Rotary-CSR partnerships, he mentioned plans to replicate this programme in Brazil, Australia and New Zealand. “We are doing an inventory of the countries around the world that may have the opportunities for the CSR platform.”

Talking about what next after polio, he said, “we do not have a lot of conversation on that yet, as we have to see the end of Polio first. Programs of Scale could be a possibility because we are trying to build our global grants to a higher structure. We must find programmes to continue to engage with the Gates partnership,” he said.

The Foundation is planning to set up Rotary Peace Centres in the Middle East or North Africa by 2024; and open one in Latin America. “By 2030, we will have nine Peace centres and will be replacing the one at the Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, with another one in Asia,” said Lunsford.



TRF Trustee Larry Lunsford and RID Jeremy Hurst

Reflecting RI President Gordon McInally’s call for continuity, RI director Jeremy Hurst from Cayman Islands, UK, stressed the importance of sustained effort, envisioning Rotary’s growth beyond individual terms. “Imagine how well we can do if we can build continuity, and not be like a jigsaw where we go in one direction one year and then another the next year. The worst challenge is taking it

as ‘my year’ rather than ‘our year’. We should hand over the baton of Rotary to our successor and continue assisting to take the organisation forward.”

He said that the Board has approved a membership growth goal of 12.5 lakh members by 2030 in celebration of Rotary’s 125th birth anniversary. More learning programmes will be launched on July 1, 2024 to assist governor nominees to meet our goals,” he added. ■



Weaving livelihoods

Team Rotary News

RC Chennai Sea View, RID 3232, provided 10 motorised sewing machines and repaired 25 old machines at the Guild of Service Seva Samajam Boys Home. These machines will help provide vocational training for the inmates to aid them in income generation. The club installed an RO plant at the Home to provide safe drinking water for them.



Members of RC Chennai Sea View after gifting sewing machines and wet grinders. Usha Saraogi, chairperson, district women’s empowerment committee, is seen second from right.

A commercial wet grinder, along with a large idli cooker, vessels and groceries, and a motorised sewing machine was gifted by the club to the Annai Bharata Matha Self Help Group

located in a slum. “This will help the women earn a decent sum either by pursuing tailoring as a vocation or establishing an eatery,” said club president Shivani Khemka. ■



RI's focus on zero-based budgeting

V Muthukumaran

Rotary International will sustain its zero-based budgeting with all expenses justified and approved before the start of the financial year. "But we may expect a deficit year in fiscal 2028 and the RI Board is working to overcome it taking into account the rising inflation and other expenses," said PRID Manoj Desai presenting the Rotary's five-year financial forecast at the Bengaluru zone institute.

With presence in over 200 countries and geographic areas, Rotary caters to the needs of its 1.4 million Rotarians and Rotaractors in just over 46,000 Rotary and Rotaract clubs. "We operate over 100 bank accounts in 68 currencies through our eight regional offices and depend primarily on three types of revenues — membership dues (71 per cent of the RI's income); investment returns (2 per cent, but it depends on the market volatility); and services and other avenues (27 per cent), but this is offset by expenses incurred in holding Rotary conventions



PRID Manoj Desai

and events," explained Desai. After RI dues came into force from July 2022 for Rotaract, "membership bills were raised for 10,700 Rotaract clubs having around 1,68,000 Rotaractors in 180 countries and till June this year, around 60 per cent of them have paid their RI dues," he noted.

For the fiscal 2024, membership dues will contribute \$90 million, investment returns will chip in with \$2 million, and services and other avenues will bring an income of \$35 million. "Thus the projected income

for the current year is \$127 million, with around 70 per cent of it coming from members' dues."

As Rotary members contribute directly to the growth of RI, "around 58 per cent of its operating costs are meant for funding leadership events and assisting Rotary clubs in many ways in their service projects," said Desai. At least 20 per cent of its income is being spent on enhancing its public image worldwide; and the rest 22 per cent is set aside for administrative cost, regulatory compliances, office rent and legal support.

It will be a challenge to manage the next two financial years as the RI Board will be trying its best to avoid a deficit budgeting by using part of its reserves in fiscal 2028. "It is up to the Rotary leaders to come together at the Council on Legislation (CoL) to take vital decisions and steer Rotary so that we continue our journey with sound financial health," added Desai. ■

Disha 2024 to be held in Delhi



Disha, the orientation and goal-setting seminar for DGEs, DGNs and incoming district chairs of the various Rotary verticals including membership, TRF and public image, will be held at the Leela Ambience Convention Hall in Delhi from March 15–17, 2024.

RID Raju Subramanian is the convener and RID Anirudha Roychowdhury, the co-convener. PDG Sharat Jain is the chair and PDG Gurjeet Sekhon, the secretary. Online registration for the Disha seminar can be made at <https://disha2024.rotaryindia.org>. ■

Now India matters in global games

V Muthukumaran



RI President Gordon McNally and PDG VR Muthu honour swimmer Prabhat Koli with an award. From L: PDG Chandu Agarwal, RID Raju Subramanian, Raju Koli, archers Aditi Gopichand Swami, Ojas Deotale, coach Pravin Sawant and Jhankar Gadkari.

India had never won 100 medals in world games, until the Hangzhou Asian Games in Sept-Oct 2023, when our sportsmen set a new benchmark with a record tally of 107 medals. The credit for the great show must go to the 16-member archery team members, most of whom are coached by Pravin Sawant, the hospital ward boy-turned-police constable in Satara, Maharashtra.

“Our archers rose like a phoenix to achieve success overcoming adversity and many hurdles,” said Jhankar Gadkari from RC Deonar, while moderating a panel talk with archers, their coach Sawant, open water swimmer Prabhat and his father-turned-coach Raju Koli at the Rotary zone institute in Bengaluru. Aditi Gopichand Swami (17), the world’s youngest senior archery champion, and 21-year-old Ojas Deotale, the first Indian male to win a gold at the World Archery Championship (Berlin, 2023) and currently ninth in the global ranking,

are products of Drushti Archery Academy being run by Sawant at an one-acre sugarcane field in Satara.

Both the young archers were groomed by Sawant who in his younger days aspired to become a champion, but his economic condition and poor facilities available to him put a halt to his ambition. Prabhat Koli (23), the youngest person to complete the Oceans Seven, the world’s toughest sea routes, said his parents advised him to ‘swim with your mind, not body’ as open water swimming is all about “80 per cent mental strength and only 20 per cent physical endurance.”

Tribulations

While the archers’ rise as world champions is a gallant story of grit, resolutions and tribulations, it was their coach Sawant who made it happen at his academy, and this despite facing many hurdles, said Gadkari. “While following his passion of coaching the archers, Sawant had to

quit his job, was forced to sell his house, mortgaged his mother’s and wife’s jewellery, and overcame hurdles to set up the training centre.” Now aiming for Olympic medals, the archery coach said, “I have a strong bond with my young pupils, and will be happy if we can add more facilities and equipment in my academy for robust training.”

Originally a cash prize of ₹9 lakh (₹2 lakh each for the three sportsmen and ₹1.5 lakh each for the two coaches) had been planned, but with institute convenor Raju Subramanian inviting spontaneous donations, there was an outpouring of generosity from the delegates, pushing the total prize money to ₹17 lakh. Subramanian and PRID C Basker (₹2 lakh each) were among the contributors.

Picture: V Muthukumaran

More Institute stories in the next issue.

RC Thane Hills sets up autism centre in Mumbai

Rasheeda Bhagat

The genesis of the freshly minted Dr V Subramanian Autism Centre in Navi Mumbai, an initiative of RC Thane Hills, RID 3142, dates back to nearly two decades. The 100-odd children who will ultimately become students here, and the 1,000 children who will receive various kinds of therapies through special educators, may never know it, but the facility has become available to them, thanks to the sensitivity, concern and passion of one man...

immediate past president of the club Jayaram Mendon.

An electronic engineer by profession, he conceived and planned this project right from the time he became president-nominee of the club three years ago. For over three years, if he worked on its completion with single-minded devotion, it was because of what he had experienced years ago in Dubai, where he had worked for 19 years.

“During those days, I found there was a high level of infertility

among young Indian couples staying there and one of the main causes for their condition was consumption of too much of frozen foods. I believe that this is one of the main causes of infertility,” he says.

To overcome this problem, many young couples were seeking IVF (in-vitro fertilisation) treatment. Mendon says he found from his personal experience that about 20–30 IVF babies out of 100 were, in those days, getting some kind of neuro disorder, including autism. “My wife and I were advised to go for IVF and I advised my friends, a couple, to do the same.”

While his own daughter, who was one year younger to his friend’s son — both were born with IVF help — had no disorder, “my friend’s son was autistic and I had blamed myself over the years wondering why I had advised my friends to go for IVF treatment.”

That was in 2007–08; but having watched his friend’s wife’s long struggle in managing and educating an autistic child had always proved disturbing for him. “Of course, now the Dubai Autism Centre has been established, but in those days the facilities and services for autistic children were very limited.”





PRID Ashok Mahajan in conversation with (from L) past president Raju Subramanian, A S Kumar, Dr Dattaram Fonde, founder, Santosh Institute, and past president Jayaram Mendon.

Even now, he says, at the Dubai centre, “certain specific educational patterns, different kinds of therapies and use of paramedics are not available. As you can imagine, the situation in India was even more pathetic. So our team at the club decided to bring all the required branches of autism into one place through this project.”

Past president of the club Atul Bhide, a core member of this project

team, said the project was executed at a cost of ₹1.4 crore. But to set up this centre, in a place like Navi Mumbai, it was impossible to buy the land. So the club teamed up with the Matru Milan Vikasa Kendra (MMVK), an NGO in Navi Mumbai, which already has a spacious facility, and is running services for disabled children. They agreed to give the Rotarians about 12,000sqft of space to set up their dream autism centre.

“When we discussed our plans to set up an autism centre, and proposed a partnership, they immediately embraced the idea and gave us the space in their own premises. Were we to buy land for this centre in Navi Mumbai, it would have cost us nearly ₹15 crore,” surmises Mendon.

He adds that Dr Seetha, the wife of one of the club’s past presidents Dr Raju, who had always cherished the dream of establishing a facility



The Matru Milan Vikasa Kendra, an NGO, gave us the space in Navi Mumbai. If we had to buy the space it would have cost us ₹15 crore!

Jayaram Mendon
past president, RC Thane Hills

for special children, donated ₹1 crore to set up this autism centre in memory of her father Dr V Subramanian, who had rebuilt the famous Shanmukhananda Auditorium in Mumbai after the fire. Other notable donors include past president Vijay Shetty, with club member Anup Surve, putting in immense work to see it through.

Bhide explains that part of the total amount spent on the project — ₹1.4 crore — came from a global grant. “This wasn’t a regular global grant; we got some amount from the district gift fund, and as the GG rules require an international partner, we took on board a Nepal club, RC Pokhara Midtown, as a non-financial partner.”

Mendon adds that a lot of care has been taken to see that a wide range of the latest therapies and other kinds of activities required for the autistic are available at the centre which will be managed and operated by the Santosh Institute for Mentally Challenged Children, which runs over half a dozen such facilities for the autistic in Mumbai.

Describing the centre as “a state-of-the-art training facility and a ray of hope both for autistic children

In those days babies born through the IVF procedure were getting some kind of neuro disorder, including autism.



PRID Mahajan and club president Govind Khetan with the winner of the Triumph Run.





Different kinds of therapies being offered at the autism centre set up by the Rotary Club of Thane Hills.

and their parents,” Mendon says the therapies and treatment methods on offer include occupation therapy, sensory integration, physiotherapy, speech therapy, music, yoga, sand and aqua therapy.

Asked to explain ‘sand therapy’ he says, “Sand has a particular characteristic. When children go to the beach, they get excited; that is because sand triggers certain neurons in the brain and our educators will work with that concept. As for aqua therapy, we are going to build a swimming pool at the same place; there is space available for that too!”

The project is divided into five categories to give a one-stop solution to children and teenagers with autism. This centre will act as an early intervention centre for physical development — of both the body and the brain of the child; cognitive development (thinking and learning); behavioural development; and social and emotional development (the child’s ability to form relationships and cope with emotions).



A participant at the Triumph Carnival.

It also has an autism school, a teacher training facility, and will also function as a vocational setup, Mendon added.

On the beneficiaries, the Rotarian says they will include special children with autism and related spectrum of disorders, who are living in Navi Mumbai, Thane and Mumbai as also the rest of Maharashtra.

While the facilities, equipment and manpower are big enough to be able to take in 100 autistic children and 1,000 others with related disorders, he estimates that in the first year maybe about 50 children will come to the school for regular sessions and gradually the centre will function to its full capacity.

The fees will be charged according to the paying capacity of the child, with there being a 50 per cent discount for the less privileged. And the fees charged will be comparatively less than other institutions offering similar facilities. “I can assure you that in the coming days this will develop into a one-of-its-kind school with different therapies and modern infrastructure available in one place. Apart from 100 students at the school and 1,000 with other related disabilities who will benefit through different kinds of therapies, around 2,000 parents, teachers and shadow teachers will also benefit from this centre.”

The club has 120 members, and this project has been made possible, thanks to the support from quite a few of them. Club president Govind Khetan adds that to ensure sustainability of the centre, the core team has worked out financial support for its smooth functioning. While ₹1.2 lakh a month has been promised by past president V Chandrasekharan, ₹50,000 a month will be given by Fortress, a company run by club member Kumar.



Members of RC Thane Hills.

On Nov 18, the centre was inaugurated by PRID Ashok Mahajan, with RID 3142 DG Milind Kulkarni and IPDG Kailash Jethani, Father Prem and Father Arul of MMVK and Dr Dattaram Fonde from the Santosh Institute participating in the event.

Earlier in November, the club organised another mega event for

special children titled ‘Triumph Run and Carnival for Special Children,’ in which 1,500 children participated. This event began after the year 2000 when RC Thane Hills was approached by organisations of physically and mentally-challenged children saying they were not allowed to participate in marathon runs held in Mumbai. “So our club decided to hold a fun run event only for such special children, and this Triumph Run has continued every year. A few years ago, we added

some fun games, and also offer delicious food to the children, their parents and teachers. Gradually a musical event was added to the carnival, where we invite visually-challenged kids to perform on the stage along with our musicians or DJ,” says Bhide.

Khetan adds that this year 1,500 children from 45 schools, 300 teachers and 600 parents participated in the “event which has now become for these people the event of the year to watch out for!” ■

The Triumph Run and Carnival for special children being inaugurated.



RIPN De Camargo prioritises sustainable, healthy membership

Kiran Zehra

Rotary International President Nominee Mario Cesar Martins De Camargo from Brazil, was only 23 when he was invited to be a member of RC Santo André. “As RIPN I believe that my early induction into Rotary has paid off. So keep your eyes open, you might be bringing in a future RI leader when you are inviting a young member to join your club,” he said at a recent virtual meeting organised by RC Madras, RID 3232.

He commended the 95-year-old-club’s accomplishments after watching a video of its history presented by its president S Ravi. De Camargo was part of the committee deciding the bifurcation of RID 3232 which he called a “success story and this district might just have the recipe for growth.” The district will be bifurcated as RIDs 3233 and 3234 next year.

His top priority is to create sustainable, healthy membership across the globe, “by helping RI President Gordon McInally and RIPE Stephanie Urchick achieve their membership goals.” Rotarians are the priority for Rotary International and there is a need to rejuvenate the Rotary brand, he stressed.

Voicing his discontent with individuals who think they are “the new Paul Harris,” De Camargo underscored the importance of authenticity within Rotary. “Nobody is a reincarnation of Paul Harris and no one can reinvent the Rotary Wheel,” he said and warned



Rotarians to be wary of “fake members from counterfeit clubs set up for recognition.”

He recommended forming partnerships as an excellent strategy for sustainable membership growth. He encouraged Rotarians in India to engage with various professional bodies such as the Bar Association, Trade Federation and Chamber of Commerce to attract new members. With the assistance of PDGs Suresh Hari and PDG Nagesh from RID 3191, De Camargo plans to attend a meeting at the Bangalore Chamber of Industry and Commerce on his visit to India in December. Emphasising a strategic approach, he stated, “We are not going to fish people out of the stream. We must target the right talent pool, hence our outreach to these professional agencies.”

Earlier there was no competition but today NGOs are fighting for talent in terms of membership. Every club should be a combination of older members who bring experience and the young members who

bring energy.” He shared a success story of a satellite club, allowing Rotarians with time constraints to continue their service. “I encourage you to explore new club formats and avenues,” he said.

Addressing two RYE students from Brazil in Chennai, who attended the virtual meet, he advised, “enjoy your time in India. The youth exchange programme is a transformative experience. The main lesson, you will learn while you are on this exchange, is cultivating respect for others.” He noted that “pivotal decisions like welcoming women into Rotary in 1990 and #Elevate Rotaract in 2019 were rooted in a foundation of respect. Embracing diversity is a fundamental aspect of being a Rotarian.”

Expressing concern on the integration of Rotaract in Rotary at club and district levels, he said, “Take a moment to reflect on the ageing Rotary demographic, and you will understand that Rotaract is the way forward.”

On regionalisation, Camargo said that “we need to dedicate time to understand how Rotary is flourishing in India. The heart of Rotary in India beats in harmony with local cultures and embraces diversity.”

RID 3234 DGE NS Saravanan, DGN Vinod Saraogi, RID 3232 DG Ravi Raman, and PDG J Sridhar attended the meeting along with Rotarians from across the world. Club secretary M Sesha Sai delivered the vote of thanks. ■

8-year-old Indian mountaineer sets world record

Kiran Zehra

Saanvi Sood



On the snowy slopes of Mt Elbrus, the tallest peak of Russia, 8-year-old Saanvi faced a tough climb with her team of 50 trekkers, including her father Deepak Sood, member of RC Roopnagar, RID 3080. Things took an unfortunate turn when Sood had a fall and could not continue the trek. Undeterred, Saanvi pressed on, guided by her father's encouraging words over a walkie talkie. Navigating through the challenges, she reached the summit at 5,642m, setting a Guinness World Record of being the youngest climber to summit Mt Elbrus. "It felt like I was standing on the clouds. I also got a chance to plant the Indian flag on the summit," she says.

On their return, Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Singh Mann honoured her at a state-level event. PRIP Rajendra Saboo and RI Director Raju Subramanian felicitated her at the

installation ceremony of RC Roopnagar. She also received recognition from the Indian Book of Records and the Asia Book of Records. Saanvi is now a youth brand ambassador for MentorX, an US-based international early talent provider with offices in 45 countries.

Saanvi's journey began when she accompanied her father to his work-site in Kedarnath, Himachal Pradesh. Despite the challenging weather conditions, she displayed remarkable energy and enthusiasm, revealing her love for climbing and long walks. Convincing her grandparents and mother took some persuasion, but once they agreed, her father dedicated time to training her.

"We worked as a team," says Saanvi, recalling how her father took her to the gym for daily exercise, while her mother ensured she stayed up to date with school lessons and activities. "Saanvi's discipline and motivation were unwavering, waking up early for training and adhering to her schedule. Her resilience and enthusiasm amazed me," says her father.

At age six, Saanvi joined her father on a trek to Manali, completing the Rohtang Pass trek covering 18km



With her father Deepak Sood.

in a single day. Next, they completed the Everest Base Camp trek, and "I asked her if she would be interested in climbing international peaks. She immediately said 'yes,'" says Sood. They chose Mt Kilimanjaro, the highest peak in Africa, first for its climatic conditions and terrain. In July 2022, Saanvi

successfully completed this trek. In May 2023, the dynamic father-daughter duo decided to conquer the 2,228m-Mt Kosciusko, Australia's highest peak. "A comparatively easier trek," he adds and recalls that the "moment we completed the summit, we hugged each other and celebrated!"

While Saanvi initially embarked on her treks without a specific purpose, "we wanted to help her understand the responsibility that comes with such achievements. We asked her to think about a cause that she liked and wanted to support. She came up with the theme Girl Power and she will promote the empowerment of girls during her future climbs," smiles Sood.

He encourages parents to "recognise and nurture your child's potential, embrace their uniqueness and watch them achieve great heights." Saanvi's mother Geethika says being recognised as "Saanvi's Mom" in various social and educational circles is a matter of "great pride." For Saanvi, the most cherished aspect of her treks is "the time spent with Papa and climbing mountains." ■



Saanvi being felicitated by Usha and PRIP Rajendra Saboo, and RID Raju Subramanian. Also in the picture (from L) Saanvi's father Deepak Sood, RC Roopnagar president Namrita Parmar, club member Ajay Talwar and DGE Rajpal Singh.

RC Jaipur Gurukul focuses on women's healthcare projects

Rasheeda Bhagat

Eighty per cent of the members of the Rotary Club of Jaipur Gurukul (RCJ Gurukul), RID 3056, out of a total of 264, are women, so it is but natural that most of the projects done by the club, especially those related to physical and mental health, are women centric.

Headed by Princy Thomas, head of the department of Business Studies at the IIS Deemed University

in Jaipur, the club has been very active in doing a clutch of welfare projects for the community. "Ours is an institution-based club, with most of the members belonging to the university and coming from both the teaching and administration side. On our way to work many of the women observed the people living in a slum along the way, and noticed their struggle for leading a decent life and meeting their day-to-day needs.

So in September-end we organised a 10-day Food for All drive, in which the focus was on providing food to the underprivileged slum residents."

The club members collected food items such as atta, rice, sugar, pulses, oil, and other essential items and distributed these to the slum dwellers. They also raised awareness about the dangers of malnutrition and plan to continue similar efforts "to help the poor and needy in our community."

Slum dwellers given groceries by the club under its Food for All drive.



About 100 people benefitted from this drive.

But being a women-majority club, and keeping in mind the fact that women often tend to neglect their own health, while providing all the attention and care to the entire family, this club's leaders have given priority to healthcare and fitness projects focused on women. It periodically organises health talks on 'wellness for women'. One recent one was an interactive session "focusing on nutrition and dietary tips for women's health, the importance of regular exercise and types of workouts suitable for women, their gynaecological health and the importance of regular check-up," said Princy.

On the issues that this session threw up, she says that many a times, such talks tend to be monologues or lectures. "But in this particular session, the participating women had so many questions for the speaker, Dr Indira Sarin, urogynaecologist and obstetrician from Mangalam Medicity, that we shortened the talk and opened up the session for a two-way dialogue."

Most of the time women are hesitant to speak out on issues such as loss of urinary control. But in this session, they really opened up and asked what kind of remedial action was available to tackle this problem.

Princy Thomas
president, RC Jaipur Gurukul



Lunch being served to the inmates of the Apna Ghar Ashram in Jaipur.

Dr Indira discussed the importance of gynaecological health, and explained that regular check-up is essential for detecting and preventing problems such as cervical cancer, ovarian and breast cancer. Members had an opportunity to put forward their specific queries during the session. While one of the topics covered was the kind of post-natal floor pelvic exercises that should be done after delivery, there were many questions asked on loss of urinary control. "Most of the time women are shy or hesitant to speak out on such issues, and frankly, they don't get the right kind of person to ask these questions. But in this session, they really opened up and asked what kind of remedial action was available to tackle this problem that many of them face," she added.

The speaker was more than happy to address the questions and said the best part was that whether a

woman is 40, 50 or 60, such problems can be taken care of by proper exercises. "She demonstrated the exercises and made the participants do them on the spot," said Dr Megha Arya, club secretary, who is from the Department of Psychology, School of Behavioural Sciences, IIS.

The session, which was highly successful also discussed mental health issues, work-life balance and how to handle stress. Those club members who could not attend the meet physically joined online.

Another successful project, done under the club's podcast series, was a programme titled 'Game-changing lessons: Mind to medals,' in which Shagun Chowdhary, Olympian and entrepreneur, talked about her experiences. Princy explained that through these podcasts, "the club explores the stories, wisdom, and inspiration behind remarkable individuals who have not only excelled

in their profession but are also igniting a positive change in society. In this episode, Shagun, an extraordinary sportsperson and founder of Narangah, an organic farm, talked about how with passion and purpose, she has harnessed the power of wellness to achieve greatness in her career of a successful sportsperson and entrepreneur.”

This particular year, she added, the podcast series is focusing on mental health, and how through various avenues, sports being one of them, people can take care of their mental health.

Busting menstrual myths

Feeling that girl students in colleges need to be given the right perspective on menstrual health and hygiene, as in Rajasthan, even in this era, so many myths and superstitions prevail on menstruation, RCJ Gurukul, in collaboration with Unicharm, conducted a session on menstrual wellness for the girl students and teachers of Rajkiya Mahatma Gandhi Vidyalaya. “We believe that knowledge of and right information on menstrual wellness are essential for growing girls. It helps them to understand their bodies, manage their menstruation safely and hygienically, and feel confident and empowered during their periods. The session also addressed

their queries regarding certain myths associated with menstruation in the community, such as not entering the kitchen, not touching men or even coming in front of them, etc. We feel it is essential to bust such myths so that girls do not begin their adolescent stage on the wrong foot, and accept menstrual cycles with a positive mindset knowing that this is normal and every woman goes through it, and it is not evil, as some are made to believe,” said Princy. At the end of the session sanitary pads were distributed to the girls.

Breast cancer prevention

Club secretary Megha added that to commemorate Breast Cancer Awareness month, the club, in partnership with the IIS, organised a talk by Dr Uttam Soni, a renowned oncology surgeon, to spread awareness about and prevention of breast cancer. The surgeon discussed with the students





Clockwise from top left: Nutritional diet being distributed to pregnant and lactating women; Teaching aids being given to teachers; NSS and Fine Arts students of IIS Deemed University painting the walls of Mahatma Gandhi Government School; Walls sporting a fresh look in the government school; Sanitary napkin packets distributed to girls at the Rajkiya Mahatma Gandhi Vidyalaya; Podcast with Olympian Shagun Chowdhary (right).



the risk factors for breast cancer, and what can be done to reduce these factors, such as exercising regularly, maintaining a reasonable weight, eating a healthy diet, limiting alcohol consumption and totally avoiding smoking or intake of tobacco products.

Dr Soni also emphasised the need and importance of breast cancer screening, and said that all women should have regular mammograms and clinical breast exams from the age of 40, with those at high risk, beginning the screening earlier.

Other projects include sponsoring meals for the inmates of the Apna Ghar Ashram, a shelter for the homeless and those abandoned on the streets, and gifting dialysis sessions at the Shri Kanchan Dialysis, which provides free dialysis to those who can't afford it.

She thanked PDG Ashok Gupta for sponsoring a project under which the club members gifted, on the occasion of World Students' Day, a colourful wall with educational and vibrant murals telling many magic tales, to the students of the Mahatma Gandhi Government School in Jaipur. The murals were done by the NSS students of the school in collaboration with the Fine Arts students of the IIS Deemed University. ■

Meet your



Subbarao Ravuri

*Software Engineer, RC Vijayawada
Midtown, RID 3020*



Pawan Khandelwal

*Hospitality
RC Alwar, RID 3053*

Build business relationships with fellow Rotarians

In 2008–09, DG Subbarao Ravuri joined Rotary with a focus on fostering fellowship and networking. “Because the trust in Rotary is strong, I encourage Rotarians to build business relationships with one another. This will also ensure hassle-free transactions,” he says. Club presidents should create a database of the areas of interest of individual members to assign them tasks accordingly. A ‘know your members meet,’ should be organised to help dormant members get actively involved in the club.

Ravuri has initiated the ‘club visit passport’ for club presidents and secretaries to promote cross-learning among clubs and understand diverse club cultures across the district. With a five percent membership growth goal (from 4,600 to 5,000), he has tailored targets for rural clubs, in accordance with their capability. His TRF giving goal is \$1 million.

Inspired by the ‘Lead the Leaders’ programme, Ravuri has seamlessly integrated Rotary values into his personal and professional life. District wide initiatives include a focus on mental health, women’s empowerment and installing 21,000 mammography machines with CSR support across hospitals in the district.

Simplify the GG format for clubs

Pawan Khandelwal has been a Rotary member since 1998. His plans for the year include a 20 percent growth in membership across the district. He emphasises diversity, believing that “Rotary’s simplified classification system allows reaching out to individuals from various professions and backgrounds.” He encourages club presidents to address concerns about perceived high membership by underscoring the value members receive, including fellowship, service opportunities and business promotion.

Although his district has announced 17 Major Donors, he acknowledges challenges in raising TRF funds. “Members feel that they could use the money in hand for a local project because most of them do not understand the technical aspects of global grants. We set up a ₹3.5 crore blood bank primarily funded by members in Alwar. We need a simplified GG format to encourage clubs to give to TRF,” he says.

In addition to focusing on major cities, Khandelwal recognises the need for more CSR support to implement projects in rural areas. A 1,400-km cycle rally will be conducted to raise awareness about Rotary and enhance its brand image.

Governors

Kiran Zehra



Nasir H Borsadwala
Computers
RC Kolhapur Midtown, RID 3170

Reaffirm the purpose of being in Rotary

A Rotarian since 1996, DG Nasir Borsadwala believes that “Rotary shapes individuals beyond financial gains.” With a focus on Rotarians who understand and value the essence of Rotary, he has inducted 450 new members. The club with the highest retention percentage in the district will receive a trophy, named after his late parents.

He encourages club presidents to courageously remove “the bad apples in the basket. Take out the non-contributing members and reaffirm the purpose of being in Rotary,” he says.

His district runs across three states and is diverse in membership. He is “extremely proud of the seven successful all-women clubs that are leading impactful projects.” If a club is getting into a CSR project in the current year “it is important to complete the projects by June 2024 to showcase accountability to your CSR partner.”

With a TRF goal of \$1 million, his district has announced 55 Major Donors and initiated eight global grants including a milk bank in Hubli, five Happy Schools in Ichalkaranji, and plans for five dialysis centres across his district.



T R Vijaykumar
Blending and Bottling
RC Trichur Central, RID 3201

Share compelling Rotary stories

A second-generation Rotarian with his Rotary journey dating back to 1987, TR Vijaykumar aims to continue the legacy of his district in TRF contributions and impactful projects. He is urging club presidents to share compelling Rotary stories when they induct new members. Orientation, he believes, “is the only tool that will help existing members to understand their purpose in Rotary.” He aspires to grow the district membership from 6,500 to 10,000 members.

Recognising the importance of diversity, he suggests flexible meeting times to attract more women members. The district is currently carrying out five CSR initiatives. His target for TRF contribution is \$2.5 million and he has already exceeded \$ 1.1 million.

The district’s noteworthy projects include a ₹58 lakh global grant for facial deformity correction surgeries, and his home club is committed to completing 50 surgeries. Additionally, the district is focusing on creating employment opportunities for disabled individuals. With the help of gynaecologists and experts, the district has designed special maternity kits for rural mothers.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Mantra for health & longevity

Bharat & Shalan Savur

Look around and you'll generally find that the next generation is taller than yours, and life spans have increased. Yet, a longer life is not necessarily better. Life expectancy has quite a bit to do with expectations of life. American writer Dan Buettner's documentary *Live to 100* is indeed a lesson in longevity. And his 263 centenarians are personifications of that. Moreover, as he explores the happiness-health habitat, we realise that life is profoundly simple. And simply profound.

In Buettner's words: 'There is no fountain of youth or magic pill that we can take to live long, healthy, happy lives. It takes many small changes to create an environment that curates healthy living. There are populations that have achieved the outcomes we'd like to emulate.'

Here is his nine-course nutritional spread

- Consciously choose an active life. Your life is not mere existence. It is a movement. Make *just-move-it* your motto. Then, even more important, second it. This shifts potential energy to a kinetic force.
- Believe that you were born for a purpose. You are special. Perhaps, you don't know it. Tap your inner self. The answer, most often, lies within. Find your passion. And perhaps, you have found your eureka. Now, leap with it. Everyone, unknowingly, has a hole in himself; a void to fulfil. Life doesn't suck. It just takes your breath away. Now, you have your vision. Voice it. Live it. Buettner says that 'knowing your sense of purpose is

worth up to seven years of extra life expectancy.'

- Stress stalks the street called modern life. He says: 'What the world's longest-lived people have that we don't, are routines to shed that stress. Okinawans take a few moments each day to remember their ancestors. Adventists pray, Ikarians take a nap and Sardinians do happy hour.'
- Most people 'thank god for their daily bread. As do the Okinawans — with a qualification. They pray

that they can stop eating when they are 80 per cent full. He adds, 'The 20 per cent gap between not being hungry and feeling full could be the difference between losing weight or gaining it. People in the Blue Zone (regions in the world where people live longer than average) eat their smallest meal in the late afternoon or early evening and don't eat for the rest of the day.'

- Most centenarians go green. Their slant is towards plants. Red meat is measured in frequency and



consumption — 8.5 to 11.5gm per plate and restricted to five times per month.

- This might bring some cheer. Folks in all Blue Zones consume alcohol. Moderately, of course. In fact, moderate drinkers outlive non-drinkers. Their elixir is confined to two glasses of wine daily and only in friendly company. Their happy hour? 5pm. A literal high tea!
- Believers outnumbered non-believers by an overwhelming 263:5. Buettner's survey revealed that 'the faithful who participated in such services four times a month added 4 to 14 years to their life expectancy.'
- Most Indians would happily go along with this. Living with or



near parents, grandparents, lowered health risks and mortality rates of the offspring too. Similarly, having a life partner added up to three years of life expectancy.

- Buettner also found that those who networked with friendly/family groups that had either been born to or cultivated kith and kinships of their own kind reaped healthy benefits.

Go for green

Let's move to meals. The 80 per cent full stomach after a meal makes sense. For the stomach requires that space for digestive purposes. Lack of stomach space restricts the free flow of digestive juices and, in turn, creates acidic and other tummy-related problems. Balance your meals to optimise nutrition. Ensure you have enough green in your plate to accompany the protein-carb content.

Now, let's head back to his buffet for the last course.

Form a group of like-minded people to maintain and motivate Buettner's menu. This group will give your action plan, momentum and motivation when, and if you, slack or lack either or both.

If you are in a position to, encourage your staff/society to a healthier holistic lifestyle. Similarly, if you have a say in social, city, state or national affairs, create a society that moves physically. Example: Create walking and bikeable spaces in the city. If you can't do that, like most of us, go vote for green in any and whichever way you can.

The parable of paradise

Buettner's passage goes way beyond the exotic settings and apparent eccentricities of these golden oldies. His work is a literal back-to-the-future for mankind. It compels us to examine our existence as we stand at the current crossroads of change and continuity. To realise that and make peace with nature, man himself has to act more natural. For it is he

The 80 per cent full stomach after a meal makes sense. For the stomach requires that space for digestive purposes.

who is the alien — not some imaginary creature from outer space. Yes, indeed, man is the villain of the piece/peace. Mother Earth has absorbed centuries of such environmental abuse from our species. Today's man carries the cross of crisis for both his own and his forefathers' ecological misconduct. He has to surrender to his surroundings and render assistance, repair his own life and life around him. The American's lessons in longevity would be futile, if man carries on the way he has for so long. Global warming and the natural consequences of fire and weather storms, the meltdown at the earth's polar ends and mountain tops have seemingly come to stay. Man has to run the extra environmental mile on earth's treadmill just to stay still at his present place and maintain that position.

To run this gauntlet and then reverse the course of nature is not easy. But then again, life sometimes has no soft landings, no easy answers, nor comfortable solutions. Yet, somehow, some way, man, the fallen angel, has to rise to the occasion. And perhaps loft the earth itself back to paradise.

Buettner beckons. Set the Blue Zone tone. Finally, moderation may be the new modern mantra.

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

Tribal homes get tap water

Jaishree

Rotary Club of Mumbai Kandivli West, RID 3141, has helped each one of the 183 households in the tribal village Chhotyachi Wadi, 120km from Mumbai, in Palghar district, get water at their homes through its rural development project.

The club undertook this community service last year under the leadership of its then president Rakesh Shah. When the Rotarians visited the village then, “it was sad to see the villagers bringing water in pots from a private well, fed by a natural spring, about 1.5km away. The water was available only during Jun-July and Feb-March. During the other months they would trudge farther to collect water,” said Shah. So the club made plans to deepen the well by 10 feet to increase the water storage, recharged the spring by identifying aquifers feeding it and



Past president of RC Mumbai Khandivli West Rakesh Shah (centre) and club members in front of the water tank installed at the tribal village.

also explored possibilities of more connecting springs. A 10,000-litre storage tank was constructed, a pump and motor were installed to draw water from the well, pipes were laid and taps were provided at each home as part of the project. As power supply is irregular in the region, solar panels were installed to ensure uninterrupted functioning of the water pump.

The villagers are small-time farmers. Now they have sufficient

water for consumption and farming, he said.

The project, costing ₹20 lakh, was funded with help from three corporates — Eisneramper (India) Consultants (₹12.5 lakh); Overseas Polymer (₹2 lakh) and Securities Investment Management (₹1.2 lakh), along with club members, who raised ₹3.87 lakh.

To benefit over 500 people, the work was completed in October and IPDG Sandip Agarwalla inaugurated it. This year, under the leadership of president Prithika Samane, a fundraiser fetched a whopping ₹1.4 crore to support various service projects. “We will add another ₹40 lakh in the next couple of months,” said Prithika.

The club plans to provide a CT scanner (₹1.2 crore) to the Kandivli Hitwardhak Mandal Hospital with the support of IPCA Laboratories. A spoken English and personality development programme to benefit 600 students studying in vernacular medium schools are also on the cards. BNI India will be supporting this ₹6 lakh project. A mega cleaning drive was executed at the Juhu beach with the participation of the club members and staff of the US-based corporate Eisneramper (India) Consultants. ■



Club president Prithika Samani with artistes at a fundraiser cultural programme organised by the club.

Over 1 lakh girls empowered through Project Asmita

Team Rotary News

RC Bibwewadi Pune, RID 3131, in partnership with its CSR ally GTPL Hathway, has expanded *Project Asmita* to impact over one lakh girls across Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka and Goa. Since its inception in 2019–20, this project has transitioned from addressing gynaecological health to confronting critical issues like sexual abuse. Videos and booklets in three languages, reaching school girls in these four states, have been distributed.

(*Rotary News* had published an article about this project: *A mega empowerment project for 80,000 girls* in the Oct 2022 issue: <https://rotarynewsonline.org/2022/10/a-mega-empowerment-project-for-80000-girls>).

This year’s milestones, tailored exclusively for college girls, involve collaborative efforts from multiple Rotary districts and clubs at over 250 locations. The extensive programme introduced video content, practical tools and booklets encompassing



Doctors explaining health-related issues to students as part of *Project Asmita*.

financial literacy, mental health, technological skills and self-defence lessons. Girls were also given pepper spray for self-defence, and multivitamin supplements.

“With focus on teaching girls about managing money, making smart investments and saving wisely, they

can make better choices with their money and have a better financial future,” said project counsellor and the club’s charter president Jignesh Pandya.

During the project launch, DG Manjoo Phadke shared a personal story of her early school days. “I helped a few fellow students who were being ‘troubled’ by a badminton coach. We voiced our concern and complained about him to school authorities. Probably that was the beginning of *Project Asmita* for me,” she said. RID 3170 DG Nasir Borsadwala commented, “The depth of this project and the lives it touches is admirable. More districts should join this initiative.”

DGE Shital Shah, along with many PDGs from RID 3131 and DGE Tushar Shah from RID 3160, were present at the project launch. ■



Students with booklets distributed to them by RC Bibwewadi.

The New Year begins with a countdown to 2030. That will be a landmark year in the global effort to heal the earth and contain global warming. Time moves rather steadily and seventy-two odd months from now, the nations of the world will subject themselves to an environmental audit to see if the sustainable goals they had set for themselves have been achieved. Have we collectively delivered or not.

So, what does the average citizen have to do with global warming and climate change, you may wonder. Leave that to the scientists and the policy makers to handle, you might say. Well, I am the last one to spoil the good cheer and celebrations of the season, but after the hangover settles it might be a good time to make some commitments to ensure the health and longevity of Mother Earth. Remember, just as every drop makes the ocean, so does every individual or organisational effort.

To start with, weave in certain basic green practices into the daily life of your family, your office and your neighbourhood. Let us begin with where you spend the maximum amount of time—home. One of the big commitments you can make to the planet is by simply segregating your waste and urging others to follow the same practice. This exercise that takes less than three minutes has an enormous multiplier effect down the waste management chain. If waste is segregated into dry and wet waste,

One of the big commitments you can make to the planet is by simply segregating your waste and urging others to follow the same practice.



Join the ranks of the green warriors in 2024

Preeti Mehra

It is the time of the year to make commitments that make you count



it will easily reach the right recyclers without the ordeal of someone having to manually segregate it or it being dumped in a garbage dump or worse still, land up in a landfill unsegregated. If separated at the point of its source, wet waste (which largely means cooked food, vegetable peels, leaves, grass etc.) makes excellent compost and can be used for gardens, farms, fields and to rejuvenate the soil. Dry waste that comprises paper, cardboard, plastic, bottles, tins, jars, and almost anything else, if not mixed with wet waste is easier to handle, sell and recycle.

So, what does one have to do to achieve this simple feat? All you need is one green plastic bucket, one red one and a largish jute bag. Toss your wet waste into the green, soiled dry waste into the red one and the totally dry waste like newspapers and wrappers

etc. into the jute bag. One toss of your hand can do the trick, and it can save a tiny fraction of the methane emissions that are adding to the greenhouse effect.

Now, you may as an individual be segregating trash already, but what about your neighbours, your workforce, your relatives and friends? If everyone was doing it, we wouldn't be facing such a waste management crisis in the country, would we?

Waste, in fact, is a key word in the effort to reach the earth's 2030 sustainability goals. This means that nothing, absolutely nothing, should be wasted, be it energy, water or fresh air. They all are precious commodities in a world that is fast getting depleted of its natural resources due to us humans.

So, what would our green practices include? They need not be heroic deeds, but elementary everyday acts that may go unnoticed by people but are immensely satisfying. For instance, switching off lights and fans before leaving a room only needs presence of mind. Avoiding switching on the air-conditioning in your home or office as much as you can is not that difficult. Remember, a little bit of sweating gets the body rid of toxins! Closing the water tap when brushing your teeth, and conserving water when bathing or washing is not an effort. Every drop counts and we often lose many, many litres of this precious commodity through totally thoughtless action.

I have seen homes in our country where water pipes have small leaks for years on end, allowing fresh drinking water to wastefully flow away. The family will find the funds to buy a car but will not prioritise getting the water pipes replaced. And when we consider that India comes 13th among the world's 17 "extremely water stressed countries" as was revealed in the Aqueduct Water Risk Atlas released by the World Resources Institute, we must worry all the more about our future water status.

Crackers are banned as they seriously impact air quality, yet they are used for the entertainment of individuals, including political parties, year after year.

Air pollution too is an issue that is crying for attention in many cities. In Delhi the situation becomes 'hazardous' several times in a year, but green practices are set aside for convenience or for celebrations. Diwali is a joyous as well as a pious festival for us, but how come we lose all sense of the law every single year. Crackers are banned as they seriously impact air quality, but they must be used for the entertainment of individuals year after year. Even political parties indulge in bursting crackers during a celebration. Why can't they devise a non-polluting way to celebrate?

Your choice of transport too can help you join the ranks of the green warriors. We all know the rules— try to use public transport, pool your car or two-wheeler, walk to your destination if it is near enough instead of adding to the pollution, choose an electric vehicle over a fossil fuel one — but do we follow these guiding principles when the time comes? We could if we are committed enough. And it is this commitment that I have been talking about. Could 2024 be the year in which you dedicate yourself to advocate waste segregation, clean air, saving energy and water at home, in office and in the community? If so, you would be part of the solution the world is seeking.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



Rotary revamps a chemotherapy ward

V Muthukumar

An 18-bed chemotherapy ward at the Tamil Nadu Government Multi Super Speciality Hospital (TNGMSSH), Omandurar Estate, was upgraded by RC Madras Central, RID 3232, with a CSR grant of ₹25 lakh from the Hyderabad-based Natco Pharma.

When *Project Sakthi*, a brainchild of IPDG N Nandakumar, for early detection and treatment of breast and cervical cancer, was under progress, “we wanted to reach out to patients through our permanent projects like Rotary Central Margaret Sidney Hospital, bone bank at the Adyar Cancer Institute and Rotary Central-TTK-VHS Blood Bank,” recalls Y Raghava Rao, director, special projects, RC Madras Central. During a preliminary study, they found

that only a handful of hospitals like the TNGMSSH and Government Royapettah Hospital are providing cancer treatment to patients in Tamil Nadu. “The cancer wards at these hospitals lacked critical equipment and other assets for daycare treatment. We chose the Omandurar hospital, a super speciality centre, as its chemotherapy ward gets 1,000–1,500 patients a month,” he explains.

After meeting former TN health secretary Senthilkumar and hospital director Dr R Vimala, the five-member project team led by Rao did a needs assessment which found that there were “large gaps in critical care equipment, staff amenities like nurse stations and food storage, and lack of suitable ambience for patients at the chemo ward.”

Holistic approach

Through a collaborative effort in which healthcare experts, oncologists and patients were consulted, the project team took a holistic view to fill the deficiencies at the daycare ward. “An amount of ₹25 lakh for revamping the daycare ward was needed and Natco agreed to fund it.”

Medical equipment like biosafety cabinets, 5-parameter monitors, infusion pumps, ultrasound linear probe and mechanised ICU beds were installed after necessary permission. “To ensure dignity and privacy to the patients, we recreated the interiors and completed the project by July this year,” he added. The ultimate objective is to provide modern cancer care to needy patients and *Project Sakthi* has already installed 10 mammography units at government, private hospitals and public health centres, says IPDG Nandakumar.

He thanked DGN Vinod Saraogi and project chair Rao for “seeing through this ward upgrade project which will benefit thousands of patients who are being treated free at this hospital.” Breast cancer has taken epidemic proportions of late in Chennai and patients are being treated four times in three weeks at the chemo ward, says Dr B Ramkumar, HoD, Medical Oncology, TNGMSSH.

“Chemotherapy is always a high-stress treatment. But with new facilities and medicines, we can reduce the pain and make the therapy acceptable to patients,” says Saraogi. Vasana Gopalasamy, AVP, Chennai plant, Natco Pharma, says, “it is a pleasure to donate through Rotary and reach out to cancer patients.” ■



From R: RC Madras Central special projects director Y Raghava Rao, IPDG N Nandakumar, club president Prakash Vaidyanathan, DGN Vinod Saraogi, Usha Saraogi and TNGMSSH director R Vimala.

Team Rotary News

Eight Rotary clubs of Aurangabad, RID 3132 — RCs Aurangabad, Aurangabad Elite, Aurangabad Central, Aurangabad Midtown, Aurangabad West, Aurangabad Metro, Aurangabad East and Aurangabad Cantonment — together planted 1,000 saplings along riverbanks in two villages, Naigvan and Babhultel, in the Vaijapur taluk near Aurangabad.

“DG Swati Herkal suggested that clubs in our district plant saplings near water bodies so that they have sufficient water to grow and the endeavour will help prevent soil erosion,” says project coordinator Swati Smart. This initiative, a part of the district’s *Jaldhara* project, aims to prevent flooding and promote biodiversity. Naigvan and Babhultel are drought-prone villages but during monsoon, the villagers suffer heavy loss due to crop damage as the rivers overflow. Developing greenery will



Rotarians planting saplings on the riverbank.

help improve the water table too, says Swati.

The club procured saplings worth ₹25,000 from the Marathwada Rural Development Organisation and with the help of villagers, planted them along the riverbanks. They will be nurtured and maintained by the NGO. In the long run, the fruit-bearing trees

such as custard apple, tamarind and bamboo will help enhance the livelihood of the villagers.

The project also aims to empower local communities by forming women’s self-help groups to explore income generation opportunities through activities such as paper-making, sewing and pod splitting. ■

Students learn to build telescopes



A volunteer from the Open Space Foundation teaching students to use a telescope. Club president Reshma Ramesh (second from R) and club member Divya Hari are also in the picture.

The Rotary E-Club of Metro Dynamix, RID 3201, recently funded and extended the reach of *Project Vinveli* by providing training to construct telescopes to students in 24 government schools in rural Coimbatore. “This hands-on telescope building will inspire a new wave of learning and exploration for the students,” said club president Reshma Ramesh. The project cost ₹3.12 lakh.

In April 2023, the club had conducted a similar workshop for the students of a government school in Thudiyalur, a suburb in the city. Technical experts from the Open Space Foundation guided them in constructing the telescope. ■



Wordsworld

People in Places



Sandhya Rao

Two short novels set in Seoul and Pondicherry unravel the beating hearts that colour — or discolour — life, ... and more

Kim Jiyoung, *Born 1982* by the South Korean writer Cho Nam-Joo was our book club's November read. Originally published in Korean in 2016 and in a crisp English translation by Jamie Chang in 2018, it is reputed to have created a sensation with its 'riveting, original and uncompromising' take on gender inequality and discrimination in Korean society. Reading partly like fiction and partly like a report, with source attribution and all, this tightly wrought narrative is a classic example of how local is

global. In other words, the mundane, misogynistic, soul-destroying condition an average Korean woman finds herself in, mirrors attitudes pervading societies all over the world, proving that the line between developed and developing nations is thin indeed.

Kim Jiyoung is the middle child, with an older sister and a younger brother. Her status in society is determined early, having been born a daughter. Her mother aborts the third pregnancy and it is only when she is certain that she goes through the fourth, for a boy. Joy! The girls' growing years revolve entirely around privileges and advantages being provided to their brother, while they share or make do with what remains — food, space, clothes, education, the works.

She grows up, takes up a job, marries, has a child. Through those years she contends with being overlooked for challenges and promotions at work because she is female, and is persuaded by a 'supportive' husband to give up her job for the sake of the impending birth. Slowly, she slips into a morass of societal obligations and expectations. There's no physical abuse but the life that is chalked out for her to lead, filled with duties, fraught with responsibilities, leads inevitably to a flatlining state of mind. Until one day, when she is in her early thirties, it begins to affect her mental health. How this manifests in Jiyoung and what happens to her thereafter, is what the book reveals. However, the larger picture is unmissable, and if it is a woman

reading this book, Jiyoung could well be you. The bland style of telling serves to increase a sense of dread.

You could call this a docu-novel, backed up as the story is with detailed references to facts and figures pertaining to South Korea. For instance, in the context of the mother's abortion: 'Abortion due to medical problems had been legal for ten years at that point, and checking the sex of the foetus and aborting females was common practice, as if 'daughter' was a medical problem. (*The reference to misogyny here is to a book called "Statistical Family" by Park Jaehyun.*) This went on throughout the 1990s, and in the early 1990s, the very height of the male-to-female ratio imbalance, when the ratio for the third child and beyond was over two-to-one. (*Here the reference is to "sex ratio at birth by birth order" from Statistics Korea.*)' Information

blends seamlessly with

the narrative, making the novel's central argument forceful while retaining the flow of fiction. Elsewhere we read: 'In 2014, around the time Kim Jiyoung left the company, one in five married women in Korea quit their job because of

marriage, pregnancy, childbirth and childcare, or the education of their young children.' It's not surprising that the author, a former television scriptwriter, drew on her own experience as a woman, having herself quit her job after childbirth.



The Moon Over Pondicherry by Sunayana Panda is a completely different cup of tea except that here too there is intent: to showcase the Union Territory of Pondicherry. And the author does a good job of it so that we get a nuanced sense of the place, its history and what makes, or breaks, its people. The story begins in 1910 when Pondicherry was still very much a French bastion, with all aspects of political, economic and social life ruled by the French colonialists. Over time, we see how things change, or rather how relationships integrate and/or disintegrate, to create Pondicherry's curious smorgasbord of various historical influences.

Sunayana takes us through the streets and parks, along the beach and past monuments that still survive, stopping to gaze at the architecture, participate in street games, bow at places of worship, feel the sea breeze, and partake of the many cuisines on offer. Love unravels as well as disagreements as the generations come and go. Slowly, Pondicherry develops an interesting, inclusive character even as it nurtures its quarters: French, Tamil, fishing, Aurobindo Ashram, Auroville... The traditional, the bohemian, the in-between, coexist. Many locals are descended from the commingling of French and Tamil, local names have a French flavour, French and Creole cuisine rules and people visit from all parts of India and the world for rest and recreation.

The writing is simple yet surprisingly engaging, making *The Moon Over Pondicherry* an

interesting and informative read. We see Pondicherry from the inside, through the hearts and minds of residents, and begin to understand its special appeal.

The author showcases the Pondicheriness of Pondicherry, now officially called Puducherry, with affection and detail. However, you are unlikely to find the book anywhere except in

Pondicherry, or you might want to purchase it from the author directly.

For the 'more' of the blurb, there is *Independence* by Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni, a book I can't put down. Surprising, because I haven't read any of her other books so far, mainly because I don't much care for mythology-based fiction and I was under the misconception that much of her writing was in this genre. Not so this one. It tells the story of three sisters living in a village near Calcutta during the fag end of India's struggle for independence. Partition is looming, the nation is in turmoil and they grapple with their own, individual challenges while caught in the impending circumstances of history.

The narrative surges forward steadily and keeps the reader

wanting to know what happens next. If you are of my vintage, you will be able to fill in what's unsaid thanks to your own understanding or knowledge of India's history of the last hundred years or so. You also more fully understand the quotation from the well-known, path-blazing writer Amrita Pritam, at the start of the novel, as you read on: 'There are many stories which are not on paper; they are written on the minds and bodies of women.' Especially, this will resonate with readers of my age. My maternal grandmother, for instance, was full of stories of Independence, even as she had an unending store of stories from the epics. My mother had her own stories to share, many of them 'written on the minds and bodies of women'. I recall in particular her saying how Gandhiji said that women need never be afraid because they had the most potent

weapon in their hands: chilli powder from their own kitchens.

Deepa the oldest of the three sisters is in love with a youth leader of the Muslim League, Jamini the devout and devoted middle one helps her mother stitch kantha, and Priya the youngest wants to be a doctor like her father who is a tragic victim of communal violence. Through their experiences they learn what it means to be independent, and at what price it comes. It's a reminder that the freedom we take for granted was hard fought.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist



Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Rejuvenation for cancer patients



DG Arun Bhargava experiences an Access Bar therapy.

RC Mumbai Sion, RID 3141, and Nana Palkar Smruti Samiti, Mumbai, have marked 54 weeks of providing rejuvenation to cancer patients through 1,000 Access Bar sessions. Access Bar is a gentle treatment using light touch on the head to bring positive thoughts, benefiting cancer patients and those with conditions like dementia and Alzheimer's.

Digital literacy drive in Bengaluru



A digital classroom in one of the schools in rural Karnataka.

RC Bangalore Lakeside, RID 3191, in collaboration with HP India and NIIT Foundation, implemented the HP-ALFA project, providing digital classrooms to 72 government schools in rural Karnataka. The project will benefit over 40,000 students and 300 teachers. The initiative aims to reduce the digital divide and empower students from Classes 8–10.

Mobile hospital in Chennai



The mobile hospital being flagged off at the Saveetha Medical College and Hospital, Chennai.

A mobile hospital was launched at the Saveetha Medical College and Hospital in Chennai by RC Chennai Green City, RI District 3232, in association with HSI Automotives and Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences. Healthcare services will be provided to people within a 50km radius of the Saveetha hospital.

Tree plantation drive in Indore



Club members and BSF Jawans at the plantation site.

RC Indore North, RID 3040, planted 1,000 trees at the BSF campus in Indore with BSF officers, jawans, club members and Rotaractors. The club has planted over 10,000 trees in the past five years. ■

From RI South Asia

Named Funds - online giving through Rotary website

Donors can now make online contribution through *MyRotary* towards their existing Named Endowed Fund. Sign into *My Rotary* and click on “Donate”.

Choose “Named Fund” from the top menu. Enter the gift ID and click “Search”. The name of the fund will display, if it is the correct fund, they can complete the Donation section.

Give online on behalf of club or club members

All club officers, such as the club president, club Foundation chair, membership chair, executive secretary/director, secretary and treasurer, can make online contributions on behalf of their club members through their *My Rotary* account with their credit/debit card or net banking, eliminating the need to send individual members’ cheques. While the contribution credit is

assigned to individual members, the 80G receipt is generated solely in the club leader’s name as the remitter and not in the name of individual members.

A detailed walkthrough of this process is available at http://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/give_online_on_behalf_of_club_or_club_members_sao.pdf

2022–23 annual report

In this year’s annual report, we look back at some of our most memorable moments, share inspirational stories of clubs making a difference, and learn from donors about why they contribute to The Rotary Foundation. <https://www.rotary.org/en/annual-report-2023>

Annual Fund Challenge and Paul Harris Championship Award

The Annual Fund Challenge is being presented by RRFCs in zones 4, 5, 6 and 7

	PLATINUM	GOLD	SILVER
For District	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
Award	Crystal for District	Plaque for District	Smaller Plaque for District
For Club	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
Award	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.

to encourage support for the Annual Fund. Participating in this challenge gives your district and club the chance to receive special awards from zone leaders at the 2024 Regional Rotary Institute. As part of this challenge, districts are presented with an

extra chance to earn the esteemed Paul Harris Championship Award by demonstrating their district’s dedication to the Paul Harris Society. The last date to qualify for Annual Fund Challenge awards is **January 31, 2024**. For more details, refer the image above.

Have you read Rotary News Plus?



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Every month we bring out the online publication **ROTARY NEWS PLUS** to feature your projects. This is sent by mid-month to every **subscribing member** whose email ID we have.

Read *Rotary News Plus* on our website www.rotarynewsonline.org.

We have received complaints that not all subscribers are getting the e-version of *Rotary News Plus* every month. But, **of the total number of 150,471 subscribers**, we have email IDs of **only 99,439 members**.

Please update your email ID at rotarynews@rosaonline.org in this format: Your name, club, district and email ID.

Skilling youth for BPO

V Muthukumaran



From Left: RC Banjara Hills secretary Neeraja Ramarao, RID 3150 DG Busireddy Shankar Reddy, club president Durga Prasad Madasu, DGN Ram Prasad and Rama Rao with the HR staff of *Project Upadhi*.

Having come up in life through hard work, RC Banjara Hills president Durga Prasad Madasu, RID 3150, has given shape to his dream project, *Upadhi* (jobs in Telugu). Through a 21-day training programme, the project aims to skill 1,500 youth across India from less privileged families who have passed out of Class 12, but are unable to pursue higher education.

As CEO of CorpOne, a BPO firm in Hyderabad, Madasu was distressed to find that “thousands of students passing out of Class 12 in Telangana and Andhra Pradesh are forced to take up menial, low-paying jobs to support their families facing economic challenges,” he says. In Telangana alone, around seven lakh students appear for Class 12 board exams, and among them thousands are from poor families that cannot afford higher education

for their children. Between July and December the club has trained 1,200 candidates in computer and communication skills at the CorpOne Training Academy. “All of them were guaranteed job placements in BPOs and telemarketing firms.” Till now, 1,000 trainees have got jobs and “the rest are waiting for job offers.”

In a month, 15–20 batches, with 12–15 youngsters in each, are trained by a team of eight professionals, a mix of CorpOne staff and freelance trainers. “The BPO job training is totally free for students. For those from places other than Hyderabad, accommodation is arranged by the club. But they have to take care of food expenses,” explains Madasu.

Into six months now, the BPO job training has won admirers from other district clubs and social media influencers. The study programme has

two components — week-long theory classes followed by 15 days of on-job training for different BPO verticals, he says.

Vivek, a trainee from Bidar, is the sole breadwinner in his family having lost his father. He is employed in a BPO firm now. “His family is doing well, thanks to his good salary. With the money he is earning, he wants to study further,” says the club president.

Recalling his hard life, Madasu says, “I started working at an entry-level BPO job while doing my graduation and rose up in my company hierarchy through diligent work over a decade. So, whether Rotary continues with *Upadhi* or not, I will continue training the youth for BPO jobs,” he asserts.

Club president-elect Anitha Patibandla wants to continue with *Project Upadhi*. ■

District Wise TRF Contribution as on November 2023

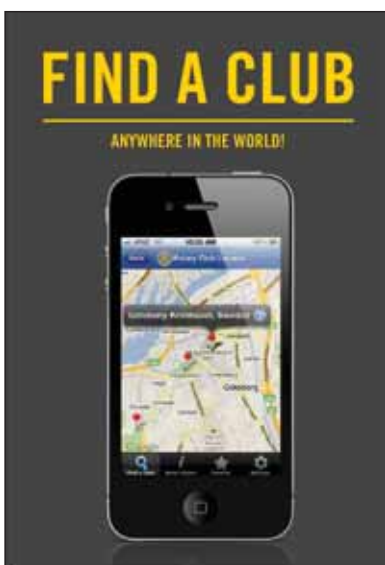
(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution	
India						
2981	18,316	625	1,000	0	19,941	
2982	19,915	644	7,085	4,488	32,133	
3000	52,422	290	0	22,918	75,630	
3011	88,279	21,483	26,089	163,587	299,437	
3012	10,130	50	0	9,346	19,526	
3020	84,880	6,369	30,223	40,500	161,972	
3030	55,531	27,248	275	143,582	226,637	
3040	1,643	108	0	25	1,777	
3053	8,495	0	0	12,439	20,934	
3055	43,021	1,745	30	6,228	51,025	
3056	13,676	100	0	0	13,776	
3060	53,599	9,515	200	100,546	163,860	
3070	2,995	20	0	0	3,015	
3080	22,413	12,773	0	5,357	40,543	
3090	32,077	713	0	5,121	37,911	
3100	50,941	1,205	25,301	6,203	83,651	
3110	3,582	30	0	78,298	81,910	
3120	10,067	129	0	0	10,195	
3131	283,874	6,514	15,098	383,154	688,640	
3132	71,703	2,485	10,000	18,629	102,817	
3141	205,758	7,171	59,012	375,046	646,987	
3142	226,138	4,771	14,500	116	245,525	
3150	27,929	30,478	160,411	73,365	292,183	
3160	9,219	1,051	0	0	10,269	
3170	48,255	25,712	2,500	70,474	146,941	
3181	45,576	1,659	0	50	47,284	
3182	18,019	4,452	0	0	22,471	
3191	25,327	5,211	60,976	111,416	202,929	
3192	27,999	8,761	0	23,943	60,703	
3201	56,489	42,778	45,563	946,173	1,091,003	
3203	13,592	14,105	1,220	15,550	44,467	
3204	9,754	2,511	0	6,561	18,826	
3211	28,264	4,236	27,325	84,792	144,617	
3212	41,173	17,576	0	38,196	96,945	
3231	1,497	1,438	0	0	2,935	
3232	23,920	12,170	14,005	788,761	838,855	
3240	50,860	7,768	0	5,342	63,970	
3250	16,980	2,092	26	10,298	29,395	
3261	11,089	269	0	2,989	14,346	
3262	15,632	3,682	1,000	2,575	22,889	
3291	59,227	2,118	41,646	1,050	104,040	
3220	Sri Lanka	26,999	2,476	0	773	30,248
3271	Pakistan	13,781	52,053	0	20,402	86,237
3272	Pakistan	1,342	385	0	25	1,752
3281	Bangladesh	20,709	1,978	2,000	184,226	208,914
3282	Bangladesh	90,461	4,463	1,000	9,116	105,040
3292	Nepal	136,933	19,549	3,000	57,695	217,177



New members from different groups in our communities bring fresh perspectives and ideas to our clubs and expand Rotary's presence. Invite prospective members from all backgrounds to experience Rotary.

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Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, AoF and World Fund.
 PolioPlus excludes Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. **Source:** RISAO

RC Veeranam Lake City — RID 2981



Cloth bags were distributed to the public to create awareness on environment and solid waste management under the *Say No to Plastic* campaign.

RC Ghaziabad Sapphire — RID 3012



DG Priyatosh Gupta inaugurated a mammography camp in the presence of AG Anita Singhal, club president Jyoti Garg and other members.

RC Madurai Blossom — RID 3000



Blankets and mats were donated to homeless people at Thiruparankunram under *Project Lovely Leo* which earned goodwill among the public.

RC Nashik Godavari — RID 3030



Around 2,000 girls were inoculated at two cervical cancer vaccination camps in the presence of DG Asha Venugopal and Zilla Parishad CEO Ashima Mittal.

RC Delhi Okhla City — RID 3011



Practice books, sponsored by Ratna Foundation, were donated to students of Class 1–5 at the Government Primary School in Gejha village, Noida.

RC Ujjain Greater — RID 3040



DGN Sushil Malhotra inaugurated a computer lab at the Sewa Bharti Vanvasi Balika Chatrawas, Ujjain, which will benefit 60 girls in Class 6–12.

RC Bikaner Marudhara — RID 3053



Over 140 children at the Teresa Children Academy were screened for eye defects as part of *Netra Jyoti Kalash* campaign.

RC Nabha Greater — RID 3090



Jerseys and shoes were distributed to 365 students at the Government Senior Secondary School for Girls in Nabha in the presence of PDG Amzad Ali.

RC Jaipur Mid Town — RID 3056



On the occasion of Diwali, 6,000 sweet boxes were distributed to jawans at the South Western Army Command, Jaipur.

RC Kanpur North — RID 3110



Food packets were distributed at the Hallet Hospital on the marriage anniversaries of Rotarian couples — Radha Kishan and Suman Gupta; and Nishant and Richa Vadera.

RC Shimla Midtown — RID 3080



Ceiling fans were installed at the government schools in Manju and Hatnali villages of Shimla; and four ceiling fans were given to shopkeepers at Mandi and Solan areas.

RC Pune Pride — RID 3131



Thirty women were groomed by professionals through a six-month project — NAWNI (Nurturing Atmanirbhar Women in Novel Initiatives).

RC Ahmednagar — RID 3132



Around 2,000 aspirants attended a job fair in which 57 firms participated. It was held jointly with six other clubs.

RC Tumkur Central — RID 3192



Club members cleaned the Prahalaad Rao Park, Maruthinagar, to mark Gandhi Jayanthi, thus earning goodwill of the public.

RC Kolhapur City — RID 3170



Sewing machines were donated to two women, thanks to sponsorship from club president Tushar Bhumkar and Suryakant Dinde.

RC Kochi United — RID 3201



The club honoured individuals and institutions engaged in public service with Smile Awards at the district public image and leadership seminar.

RC Puttur — RID 3181



Sewing machines worth ₹6,500 each were donated to seven girls from Kodipady village who were trained in tailoring.

RC Sivakasi Diamonds — RID 3212



A toilet block (₹3 lakh) was inaugurated by DGE Meerankhan Saleem at the CSI School for the Deaf. Tamilnad Mercantile Bank sponsored the project.

RC Vaniyambadi — RID 3231



A shelter worth ₹30,000 was constructed for a cobbler family at Amburpet with cash contributions from three club members.

RC Raipur — RID 3261

Over 130 girls were examined by teams from the Hearing Care Centre and Shri Dani Care Multispeciality Hospital at a health camp. An eye camp screened school teachers.



RC Chennai Thiruvanmiyur — RID 3232



A 45-day workshop on aari embroidery was conducted for 20 women in partnership with the Women's India Association.

RC Bhubaneswar Meadows — RID 3262

Under the project *Our Daughter, Our Pride*, scholarships (₹7,500 each) were given to 16 meritorious girls from underprivileged families.



RC Burdwan South — RID 3240



Club member Neeraj Khandelwal's mother Prati-bha donated ₹12,000 to RILM's TEACH programme. The funds will enable four children to return to school.

RC Calcutta Universe — RID 3291

A 55-inch TV was installed at the Thal-assaemic Children's ward of Kolkata Police Hospital with sponsorship from Susmita Sarkar.



Compiled by V Muthukumaran



**TCA Srinivasa
Raghavan**

Of aggression and bizarre behaviour



In 1992 I was giving a lift in Delhi to a colleague who was visiting from Calcutta. We came to a traffic signal which had just turned red and halted. Within a few seconds there were around 20 cars waiting, silently, for the signal to turn green. This greatly intrigued my colleague who couldn't understand why no one was blowing his or her horn. "In Calcutta it is like a multi-instrument orchestra at a red light," he said.

I must say this came as a total surprise to me. I had never thought of Delhiwallahs as either disciplined or law-abiding. I told him about how drivers in Delhi, and indeed all over north India, thought nothing of driving on the wrong side or going the wrong way on a one-way street. This happened to me once on a city bridge. I stopped my car in front of the offending driver. He couldn't move and was incensed. I asked him to reverse and come back the right way. His reply was "I have been driving for 26 years and no one has ever questioned my right." I stood my ground and eventually the man had to reverse.

This aggression has spread all over India now. Other parts of the country used to be better but now they have fully absorbed this particular aspect of national integration and unity in diversity. You can see the insouciance with the law or rules everywhere. The attitude is law and rules are for others, not for us. Even simple courtesy has taken a backseat. A few months ago, my wife

had to intervene to help an old couple at a hospital counter where a couple of much younger persons were trying to jump the queue. When my wife asked them to get into the line, they said they were in a hurry to get to the nearby film theatre!

In Delhi where I have been living since 1958, this sort of thing is absolutely common. Get ahead, whatever the inconvenience to others. Queues are for the weak. If you are strong, break them. If someone protests, start fighting. This aggression can extend to all kinds of things. Once, while travelling in the chair car on a train, a couple put their suitcases on the luggage racks above our seats. They tangled with the wrong guy because despite my grand *Tambrahm* name, I am totally a *dilliwala*. I took

A few months ago, my wife had to intervene to help an old couple at a hospital counter where a couple of youngsters were trying to jump the queue. When she asked them to get into the line, they said they were in a hurry to get to the nearby film theatre!

down their suitcases and put them on their seats. The man tried to fight but my vocabulary surprised him into silence.

My first experience of this kind of bizarre behaviour was in school in Delhi in the early 1960s. I was 10 years old. Our class had been sent on the annual picnic to see sugarcane fields. The destination was around 50km away in western UP. On route we had to cross the old iron bridge over the Yamuna river. As we were crossing it, three of the bigger boys started snatching the lunch boxes of the smaller students and flinging them out of the windows. The two teachers in charge of the trip eventually managed to stop them but not before about a dozen lunch boxes had been thrown out.

At lunch time the teachers took away the truant boys' lunch and distributed it to those whose boxes they had thrown out. As you can imagine this didn't go down well with the three bullies. Our parents were waiting to take us home when we returned to the school that evening. Those three boys started weeping that the teachers had taken away their food. So the parents started yelling. After some time, when what had happened was explained to them, they said it was ok, boys would be boys. No reprimand, no scolding. Just that it was ok. I was told a few weeks ago that one of them has been sent to jail for some minor crime. I don't know what happened to the other two. They probably became politicians. ■



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and thoughts convert into actions."

A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

A Career Guidance Programme

■ A Project by Rotary Club of Virudhunagar (RID-3212)

Education becomes more meaningful when the learner realizes its purpose. To today's students, Career Guidance stands as the primary lesson. RID 3212 organizes and presents Project Kalam as an exclusive session for school students to understand the opportunities around, to analyze the scope and to choose the right stream. Mr. Tenzing Paulrajan, Soft Skills Trainer, STEP2SUCCESS, is the key speaker of this Career Guidance Programme. Let's together strive to guide our young generation in the best possible way.

Project Kalam

As on

December, 2023

No. of Occurrences

67

No. of Beneficiaries

17005

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CONTACT

An Entity of
Excel group
 www.excelgroup.co.in

Corporate Office
 Old No. 52, New No. 8, Dr. BN Road (Opp. Singapore Embassy), Chennai - 17 PH: +91 44 49166999