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Showcasing women DGs

The Editor's cover article *Seven women governors break through the glass ceiling in India* was superb. Congratulations to them. V Muthukumaran's *Keep giving to TRF* was magnificent since TRF is the number one humanitarian NGO in the world with Four-Star rating from Charity Navigator, US.

Daniel Chittilappilly
RC Kaloor — D 3201



What Rotary clubs can do to help the environment is informative and useful. In the Go Green column, the article *Water is not for wasting* is an eyeopener to all as water scarcity will continue to scare us. *Club Hop* photos are colourful with apt narrative.

The April issue is excellent, with so many interesting articles. Kudos to the editorial team for the beautiful magazine every month.

Philip Mulappone M T
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211

Delighted to see the colourful cover photo of the April edition, featuring seven women district governors. The accompanying article is interesting as they have openly expressed their views about women's empowerment and how Rotary has moulded them into good leaders. RI President Gordon McInally has given a graphic account of wars plaguing various parts of the world and the need for Rotary to usher in peace. The editor has nicely explained the gender inequalities faced by women in all fields. RID Raju Subramanian talks about positive changes and the importance of club activities. TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin has focused on environment projects.

It is heartening to see the cover page with women district governors. Women comprise only 23 per cent of Rotary membership; there is still a long way to go. The latest mantra — diversity, equity and inclusion — can only be fulfilled if more women members join the organisation.

RI director Raju Subramanian's words "... how our commitment transcends mere volunteering; it becomes woven into our lives. We don't just set goals; we embody purpose," are remarkable.

N Anthri Vedi, RC Hyderabad
Mega City — D 3150

Water warriors

India could become a water scarce nation in the near future due to mismatch between the resources and demand, warns Preethi Mehra in her article *Water is not for wasting*. Because of our carelessness we waste some quantity of water, which if saved, could benefit us in the long run; but charity begins at home. By adopting simple steps to control and regulate the flow of water while having a shower, shaving, brushing your teeth, arresting pipeline leakage, replacing washers in dripping taps, we can save water.

At homes, mopping of floors is recommended. Rainwater harvesting is a must as it stores water and also reduces waterlogging. The government's

scheme of constructing 1.42 crore rainwater harvesting and recharge structures across the country will save 185 billion cubic meters of rainfall. We must consume water judiciously by becoming 'water warriors' in our community.

VRT Dorairaja
RC Tiruchirapalli — D 3000

Congratulate the editorial team of *Rotary News* for portraying the honesty of Rotary in such an effective manner. This is journalism at its best here. The warning letter of RI President Gordon McInally (Sept 2023) to Rotary leaders of some countries regarding violation of the Code of Conduct has come at the right time.

At present, PETS/SETS are going on and Rotary's code of polices need to be strictly followed in these training programmes.

They should know that a Rotary club can lose its charter and can be shut down for influencing members' votes. It is imperative for every incoming Rotary club president/Board member to nip harassment issues at the bud and not allow matters to escalate. The Rotary oath on code of conduct, to be taken, understood and displayed along with The 4-Way Test, might be adopted during the installation of Rotary clubs in India.

With Rotaractors taking part in RYLAs and GSEs in large numbers, district committee members should

Kudos to Lankan Rotarians: PRIP Risely

Thank you for sending me *Rotary News* each month. I particularly enjoyed reading in the March issue about the early cancer detection centre in Sri Lanka, which is an outstanding example of cooperation between the Rotary clubs of Colombo and Birmingham plus our Rotary Foundation. It is also an example of how a relationship with a generous group such as the Dilmah Foundation can bring such a wonderful project to fruition. Congratulations to past president KR Ravindran for facilitating this excellent facility.

PRIP Ian Riseley

be trained in handling charges of harassment during elections and follow the reporting procedure as listed in the Code of Conduct with nil retaliation to the complainants.

*Jagannath Santra
RC Jamshedpur — D 3250*

I went through the report on Sri Lankan Rotarians who are doing excellent work in beating breast and cervical cancer in women. Rotary in India too is doing this noble task by sending screening vans in various part of India, especially in small towns and villages, to provide free tests to women for breast and cervical cancer. It is great that girls in the age group of 10–14 years are vaccinated as a preventive measure. Great work done by Rotarians to save the lives of daughters, mothers and friends.

*T D Bhatia, RC Delhi
Mayur Vihar — D 3012*

Nurturing Rotaractors pays huge dividend

The article *Rotary-Rotaract relationship is still evolving* in the March issue has stirred me to share my views with you.

The concept of Rotaract being a part of the broader Rotary family had existed ever since the youngsters were brought into our fold but it was on paper only, till the last COL, when it started to take root in earnest.

My home club, RC Malda Central, had sponsored a Rotaract club about a decade ago. But after a few years, the new board was not interested in mentoring it and the Rotaract club had languished. Later on, the following club presidents and boards showed a positive intent to nurture the Rotaract club, and made an astounding impact.

Apart from their regular activity, Rotaractors took active part in the district conference when I was the DG in 2018–19. Many of them spent sleepless nights, and took up several responsibilities under the guidance of Rotarians. The teamwork was to be seen to be believed. Hats off to them.

This year, nine of our past Rotaractors have joined my home club. Already they are taking on leadership roles and we are happy that our future is now secure. But the Rotary-Rotaract relationship is still not well-defined in the minds of the majority of our Rotarians. We need to define this relationship clearly if Rotary has to survive. There is no shortcut.

*Sayantana Gupta, RC Malda
Central — D 3240*

With reference to Srinivasa Raghavan’s article *Dealing with the invasion of the idiots* in the April issue, one can say his son is brilliant in the usage of the word

‘obedient’ as a safeguard, and indeed very smart to choose journalism as his career, a profession which fools many.

*Ishwardayal Jaiman
RC Greater Lucknow — D 3120*

On the cover: A portrait by budding cinematographer Mohammad Ibrahim whose mother is being treated for mental illness at The Banyan, Chennai.

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

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The first glimmers of a lasting change

I am deeply gratified by *Rotary* magazine's focus on mental health in the May edition — and I'm ecstatic about the enthusiasm shown across the world in the past year to better support the mental health needs of each other and the people we serve.

In January 2023 when I first spoke about the need for Rotary to become more engaged on this crisis, I noted that the global mental health system couldn't be described as broken only because it didn't exist. But I also offered a highly aspirational wish that Rotary could help build that system.

The first glimmers of this vision have been brought to light by you in dozens of mental health projects. But just as important is the invitation many of you have given to fellow Rotary members to share their stories.

I am impressed by the leadership young Rotarians and Rotaractors have shown, and some of their brave, inspiring stories are highlighted in these pages. Former Rotaractor Freddie Almazan has an especially powerful personal narrative that you can learn — and hear firsthand at this month's Rotary International Convention in Singapore.

Rotary clubs in Colorado endowing a paediatric mental health fellowship at Children's Hospital Colorado is a project with the kind of sustainable impact that creates lasting change.

At the convention, you can also hear from 2024 People of Action honourees lauded for the impact they and their clubs have made through mental health initiatives. Bindi Rajasegaran will talk about a Rotary-led project in Malaysia helping children develop skills to cope with mental health challenges and building capacity for support throughout the country.

In addition, Rita Aggarwal, an officer of the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives, will be recognised for her success in applying the Wellness in a Box framework, a mental health literacy approach for adolescents, in her hometown of Nagpur, India. This highly scalable and clinically backed framework can be adapted for use just about anywhere — reach out to the action group if your club would like to support or implement it.

As we look ahead, the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives will play a critical leadership role in promoting proven, measurable projects. In doing so, it will empower clubs to focus on initiatives that drive scalable, sustainable impact.

I invite you to go to the Learning Center on *My Rotary* and check out the *Increase Your Impact* series, which includes a wonderful short video explaining impact. When we focus on impact, we bring Rotary's vision statement to life, creating lasting change across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Gordon McNally
President, Rotary International



Does peace have a chance in our world?

The escalation of hostilities between Israel and Iran, while the war rages in Ukraine, and civilians continue to be butchered in Gaza, reflects the troubled times we live in. Random gun attacks in the US, recent stabbings in Australia, ongoing conflict in Sudan and Syria, all paint a dark picture of our world today. An eye for an eye... or two eyes for one, seems to be the credo in geopolitics today. Amidst unprecedented violence and bloodshed, while the assault on Ukraine continued, the Hamas carried out a bloody attack on Israel, which responded ferociously, pounding Palestine with bombs, making no distinction between civilians and Hamas militants. Hospitals and homes were bombed, and turned into rubble, and people were killed in thousands. Each morning, the world woke up to heartrending images of children... injured, burnt, or dead... bringing to mind Shakespeare's famous lines from *King Lear*: "As flies to wanton boys are we to the gods; They kill us for their sport."

But here, gods were replaced by humans. The relentless attacks on Gaza continued; most western nations led by the US cheering from the sidelines, as Gaza's helpless civilians, most of them women and children, died in thousands. They were finally jolted, and frowned, when the Israel military killed seven World Central Kitchen aid workers delivering humanitarian aid in Gaza. Israel acted swiftly and sacked a couple of senior military officials. But who can condone Israel's disproportionate and twisted response to the Hamas attack... destroying hospitals, killing innocent children? There is a limit to collateral damage. The numbers say it all; is this how a nation should exercise its "right to defend itself," when that 'defence' results in the death of

over 30,000 Palestinian civilians, the majority being women and children, over 200 aid workers and around 100 Palestinian journalists trying to report from that horror zone? What about respect for international humanitarian law or rules of war? Or, do these exist only for the world's weaker and not powerful nations?

More violence and tension came when Iran responded to Israel killing two of its senior generals and several others at its diplomatic facility in Syria, by launching some 300 drones and a few missiles on Israel, almost all of which were intercepted and destroyed with help from the US, UK and Jordan. This escalation spooked financial markets across the world and in the cacophony of sound that resulted, what was pushed to the inside pages was the raging armed conflict in Sudan. So and so Annalena Baerbock, the German foreign minister, described it as "the worst child displacement crisis in the world," while addressing the recent international humanitarian conference on Sudan held in Paris. And yet, she added, "in many of our countries, as the war enters its second year, it is practically absent from our daily news. Every life counts equally, whether in Ukraine, in Gaza, or in Sudan." The international community was just not doing enough, she said.

As the drums of war beat with a greater frenzy, Rotary's Peace Centres and Peace Scholars gain a greater relevance and sharper focus. Every drop of peace matters in this raging flood of hate, violence and war that has engulfed our world.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Share hope in Singapore



Aidan O'Leary of the World Health Organisation.

The speakers list is packed with inspiration.

Breakout sessions are primed to provide tools for your club. And the House of Friendship booths are set to spark connections. The 2024 Rotary International Convention unfurls its pageantry this month against the backdrop of spectacular Singapore, whose beauty and cultures enrich this international business nerve centre.

Listen to Aidan O'Leary, polio eradication director at the World Health Organisation, discuss the work that is Rotary's legacy. Big-name speakers like O'Leary are one reason Chris Offer, a member of the Rotary Club of Ladner, British Columbia, goes to conventions year after year. "There are remarkable people onstage," he says.

Other speakers include Rotary Peace Fellow Alexandra Rose, who helps communities heal through cultural practices, and Jack Sim, who founded the World

Toilet Organisation to break sanitation taboos.

Offer and his wife, Penny, also a Ladner club member, enjoy adding a vacation to convention trips, and he relishes the exciting atmosphere as well as the chance to make a "heck of a lot of new friends."

You'll find friends and excitement at Singapore's GastroBeats, a food and music festival that opens exclusively for Rotary on Saturday, May 25. Browse all of the signature events on the convention webpage.

Mingle at the House of Friendship and choose from dozens of breakout sessions, including ones on how to grow membership and deepen your projects' impact.

You'll be *Sharing Hope With the World* and having fun May 25–29. Did you notice the bagpipe rock band on the schedule? Don't miss the Red Hot Chili Pipers.

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org

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Magazine

Director speak



Empowering young leaders

To honour and empower our young leaders during this special month, here are four ways to celebrate the Youth Service month:

- **Recognition events:** Gather to recognise the remarkable achievements and contributions of our youth leaders, shining a spotlight on their impactful work.
- **Youth-led projects:** Support and participate in service projects initiated and led by our youth members, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility.
- **Mentorship programmes:** Establish mentorship programmes pairing experienced Rotarians with young leaders, providing guidance and leadership development opportunities.
- **Leadership workshops:** Organise workshops and training sessions focused on developing leadership skills among our youth participants, empowering them to drive positive change.

Let us embrace the Youth Service month with enthusiasm and dedication, reaffirming our commitment to nurturing the next generation of leaders. Together, we can create a brighter future for Rotary and the communities we serve.

Anirudha Roychowdhury

RI Director, 2023–25

Dear fellow Rotarians,

As we embrace the vibrant spirit of May, we are reminded that it is not just another month on Rotary's calendar, but rather a time of profound significance. May heralds the arrival of Youth Service month — a time when we celebrate the invaluable contributions and boundless potential of our young leaders within the Rotary family.

Rotary believes in developing the next generation of leaders. Our programmes help young leaders in building leadership skills, expand education and learn the value of service.

Currently under youth service, we involve youth right from age 12 through Interact clubs. Under RYLA, we want young people to learn new skills, build confidence and have fun, and of course we have the Youth Exchange programme and Rotaract.

The young generation brings fresh perspectives, innovative ideas, and a passion for service that invigorates our communities and inspires us all. By empowering our youth, we ensure a sustainable legacy of service and leadership for generations to come.

Service at the centre



There's something magical about Rotary. Even after all these years of being a member, I continue to be amazed by it.

Take successful leaders from various backgrounds and professions and bring them together under a set of core values with service at the centre. Add networks and friendship and then watch the magic start happening.

It's you — Rotarians and Rotaractors — who make that magic happen. You are the business and community leaders and the entrepreneurs who bring your passions, skills, and interests to everything we do. It's you who think outside of the box and apply what you know to serve others.

I see the same magic in Rotary Foundation grants that are funded by you and led by you. It's present in the partnership between Rotary clubs in Canada and Uganda that supports economic and community development and vocational training at the same time. This global grant-funded initiative trains Ugandan youths in welding and related skills to make wheelchairs for a children's home serving people with disabilities. Technicians receive training in Canada and return home with valuable skills to start enterprises, helping meet the need for wheelchairs in the community.

Another global grant-supported project that reflects Rotary's entrepreneurial spirit is in Guatemala. To address the challenges of limited internet access for rural schools, a host club in Guatemala partnered with Irish members to initiate a project that is equipping six schools and three community centres in the rural Sololá area with plug-and-play servers containing educational materials like books and videos. The grant also furnishes laptops and uninterruptible power supplies and trains teachers, benefiting about 1,800 individuals as it leverages technology for literacy and education.

Don't forget: Foundation global grants also support scholarships. One such scholarship, sponsored by Italian and German clubs, focuses on artificial intelligence in disease prevention and treatment. Italian scholar Salvatore Galati conducted research at a university in Bonn, Germany, using AI algorithms to analyse vast datasets for innovative drug development. Such computer-aided approaches can reduce costs and research time in the development of life saving drugs.

It's fantastic to see us innovating and incorporating new approaches and technology into our Foundation grants. I look forward to meeting many of you at the 2024 Rotary International Convention in Singapore in a few short weeks, where we will learn about new opportunities to serve and innovate. It will be a chance to celebrate that Rotary magic and the many ways we *Create Hope in the World*.

Barry Rassin
TRF Trustee Chair

Thank you for your support

As people of action, you dream about making the world a better place, and do the necessary work to make it a reality. TRF makes these transformative service



projects possible. But remember the Foundation relies on your and your clubs' integrity and stewardship to ensure effective usage of the funds for the purpose for which they were given. Stewardship means treating TRF funds as a sacred trust, conducting competent and thorough supervision of the project, reporting irregularity to TRF, implementing projects as approved, financial review of projects, timely and complete reporting and following The 4-Way Test. The faith and trust that TRF enjoys all over the world is primarily due to the sound stewardship of the donated funds.

Once the donor understands that his funds were used responsibly, he/she is much more likely to support more projects. That is the basis of the Paul Harris Society, Major Donors and AKS members. These generous Rotarians give again and again due to their trust in TRF.

I am happy to share that as of April all Rotary districts of India are compliant with grant reporting. That is commendable considering the volume of grants that India does year after year. Kudos to the district TRF teams and the grants team at the South Asia Office. Well done all!

Change in mindset is difficult but is happening — to make a difference by investing and giving to TRF. This is propelling TRF from strength to strength in our zones. As we approach the end of another Rotary year, it is time to rededicate and redouble our efforts to support all three TRF funds — the Annual, Polio and Endowment Funds.

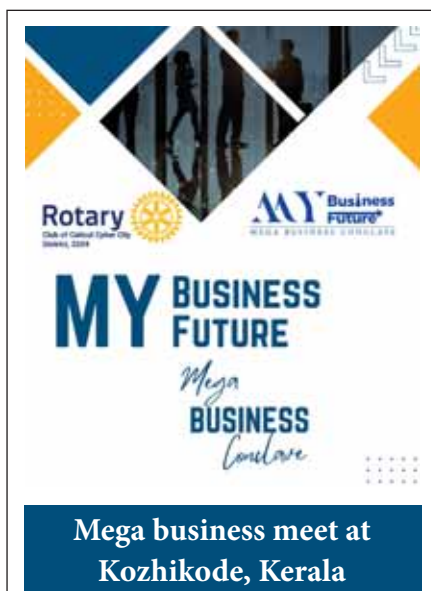
Thank you all for your support, with which we can together create more hope and opportunity in our world.

Bharat Pandya
TRF Trustee Vice Chair

Membership Summary

As on April 1, 2024

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	6,041	5.94	73	503	34	254
2982	87	3,891	6.04	43	898	95	186
3000	144	6,066	11.98	121	1,807	257	217
3011	137	5,144	30.02	87	2,427	161	38
3012	167	4,190	24.68	77	1,131	101	61
3020	82	4,786	7.75	41	722	122	351
3030	101	5,766	16.53	54	868	524	385
3040	111	2,454	14.55	41	814	80	214
3053	73	2,915	16.60	27	413	42	131
3055	77	3,114	12.40	70	1,081	75	377
3056	87	3,800	24.29	35	475	108	201
3060	103	5,194	15.88	67	2,230	68	144
3070	119	3,296	15.81	49	595	53	63
3080	108	4,328	12.45	65	1,919	173	126
3090	125	2,669	6.03	21	382	194	166
3100	112	2,222	10.53	13	58	36	151
3110	140	3,824	11.74	18	125	51	109
3120	89	3,664	15.69	45	544	28	55
3131	141	5,686	32.10	126	3,029	273	150
3132	93	3,793	14.05	44	639	128	213
3141	115	6,346	27.72	140	5,800	176	229
3142	107	3,902	21.35	64	2,292	120	96
3150	109	4,331	13.62	156	2,014	115	130
3160	80	2,654	8.82	32	258	95	82
3170	151	6,711	15.15	125	1,964	200	180
3181	88	3,712	10.59	44	490	95	121
3182	86	3,714	10.55	48	250	107	103
3191	94	3,548	18.35	94	3,158	153	35
3192	83	3,472	21.31	87	2,391	148	40
3201	176	6,822	9.88	138	2,627	105	95
3203	96	5,013	7.30	50	941	189	39
3204	78	2,572	6.77	24	237	17	13
3211	161	5,244	8.45	9	97	21	135
3212	124	4,722	11.35	100	3,765	172	153
3231	96	3,470	7.03	39	515	48	417
3232	188	6,497	20.92	129	4,722	159	102
3240	104	3,548	17.14	47	795	69	231
3250	107	4,162	22.27	71	994	66	191
3261	99	3,360	22.77	26	275	32	45
3262	117	3,874	15.51	79	788	646	287
3291	145	3,886	26.09			75	747
India Total	4,640	174,403		2,619	55,033	5,411	7,063
3220	69	1,981	16.81	97	4,092	85	77
3271	111	1,557	21.32	194	2,051	333	28
0063 (3272)	132	1,426	17.81	97	1,227	26	49
0064 (3281)	331	7,341	17.67	249	1,718	144	213
0065 (3282)	180	3,578	10.01	179	1,340	30	49
3292	156	5,547	18.64	185	5,408	126	136
S Asia Total	5,619	195,833	15.81	3,620	70,869	6,155	7,615



Mega business meet at Kozhikode, Kerala

Rotary Club of Calicut Cyber City, RID 3204, is organising a mega business and investors' meet — **My Business, My Future** — at the **Calicut Trade Centre, Kozhikode, Kerala, on May 21 & 22**. The programme aims to raise funds to purchase an Alco Scan van (to detect substance usage) and dialysis machines. Apart from Rotarians, members of BNI, JCI, Chamber of Commerce and other business communities will be participating in the meet.

The club invites sponsorship for the event and stall participation for an exhibition at the meet which will also feature a business seminar and roundtable networking.

For more details, contact club president **K V Saveesh (80894 06306)** or secretary **Nithin Babu (95263 00299)**.

Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs	:	36,929
Rotaract clubs	:	10,684
Interact clubs	:	15,621
RCCs	:	13,401
Rotary members	:	1,181,107
Rotaract members	:	162,312
Interact members	:	359,375

As on April 15, 2024

Understanding mental health challenges in youngsters

Jaishree

My neighbour was perplexed when her 20-year-old nephew constantly complained to her that someone was following him every time he steps out of the house. He even insisted that she accompany him which she did one night, and reassured him that there was no one shadowing them. Another day he verbally abused the apartment complex security person saying that he was laughing at him when he was not. The young man was suffering from schizophrenia, a serious mental disorder. It took a while for the family to understand his state of mind and provide him psychiatric help.

About 10–12 per cent young adults (below age 30) and 1–2 per cent children (below 14) suffer from mental health illness in India, says Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar, consultant psychiatrist and founder of SNEHA, a suicide prevention NGO in Chennai. Good mental health would mean that one possesses a balanced mind, confidence and self-esteem. Mental illness significantly affects how a person thinks, perceives and reacts, and can range from psychosis, which is a chemical imbalance in the body, to neurosis, which is poor attitudinal learning during growing or formative years.

Between 8–14, children develop ‘conduct disorders’ such as temper, anxiety, nocturnal enuresis (involuntary urination while sleeping at night), food and school phobias. “Children

might refuse to go to school after episodes of shame, rude behaviour by teacher or being bullied by classmates. It could also be due to learning challenges,” she says. Children experience social alienation particularly when they change school or during transition from primary to high school. Developmental disorders such as dyslexia, ADHD or autism can be treated if diagnosed early, she says.

“Many parents do not accept that their child has a mental illness and hesitate to get professional advice. In villages even today people take their ward to a temple priest or a tantric who will most likely wave neem leaves over them or chant mantras offering a cure. Mental illness is not yet viewed as a medical problem in our country,” says child psychologist Dr Bhanumati Sharma.

According to the numbers quoted in the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* in 2019, even before the Covid pandemic, at least 50 million children in India were affected with mental health issues; 80–90 per cent of them never sought support. The scenario is slightly improved after Covid, says Dr Lakshmi. But the stigma is still there. “People must be educated that it is okay to be not okay. Mental wellness is intrinsically linked to physical health and wellness. The role of parents, families and communities in listening to children and supporting them to talk about mental health issues helps to address them early,” she adds.





Highlighting the fact that there was a spike in the number of walk-ins to her clinic soon after the pandemic, she says, “we all went through a challenging time living through risks and restrictions, an uncertain life with the risk of death, losing a loved one or losing a job. For children, being away from family, friends, classrooms and play, caused isolation and anxiety. They have not only been living an emotional tragedy, many were also at a higher risk of neglect and abuse.”

Mental health issues in youngsters

Dr Bhanumati observes that about half of all mental illnesses are known to begin by age 14, and three-quarters by mid-20s. Depression, mood swings, schizophrenia and bipolar disorders manifest during the twenties. Academic and peer pressure, family issues, failures, relationship issues, rejection — “all these factors can gradually lead up to mental disorders, particularly when such people do not find a sympathetic ear to share their anxieties



with. Alcohol addiction or substance abuse begins to creep into their life, making it all the more miserable.”

Dr Lakshmi says that substance abuse is common in children even at 15, particularly in urban metros. “I have addressed school-going children addicted to weed, hashish and heroin. They are not even aware of its side effects. All that they know and care about is that it gives them an ‘instant high’. These mind-altering drugs will later lead to psychotic disorders.” She says that tobacco products such as vape and cool lip are rampantly sold in tea shops close to school campuses. “School children think it is cool to use these products. The first reaction from a parent when a teacher complains about it is to deny that their child is capable of such stuff, and that he/she must be covering up for someone else.”

The cognitive brain of a human being matures by 18, while the emotional brain matures only by 25. “Many things can be

stressful in the life of a 20-something — from finance to career choices to relationships to family stress — as he/she starts to show up in the world as an adult. Prompt guidance and reassurance from loved ones will give them the confidence to face life's challenges.”

Mental health in LGBTQ youth

LGBT persons are at a greater risk of poor mental health, says Dr Lakshmi. They report elevated rates of emotional distress, mood and anxiety disorders, self-harm and suicidal ideation when compared to heterosexual youth. “Stigma and discrimination, and lack of support in the many institutions that guide the lives of the LGBTQ youth (their schools, families, workplace) leave them more vulnerable to experiences that may compromise their mental health.” Parental acceptance and peer support can help them with positive mental health and self-acceptance when they come out about their sexual identity and orientation.

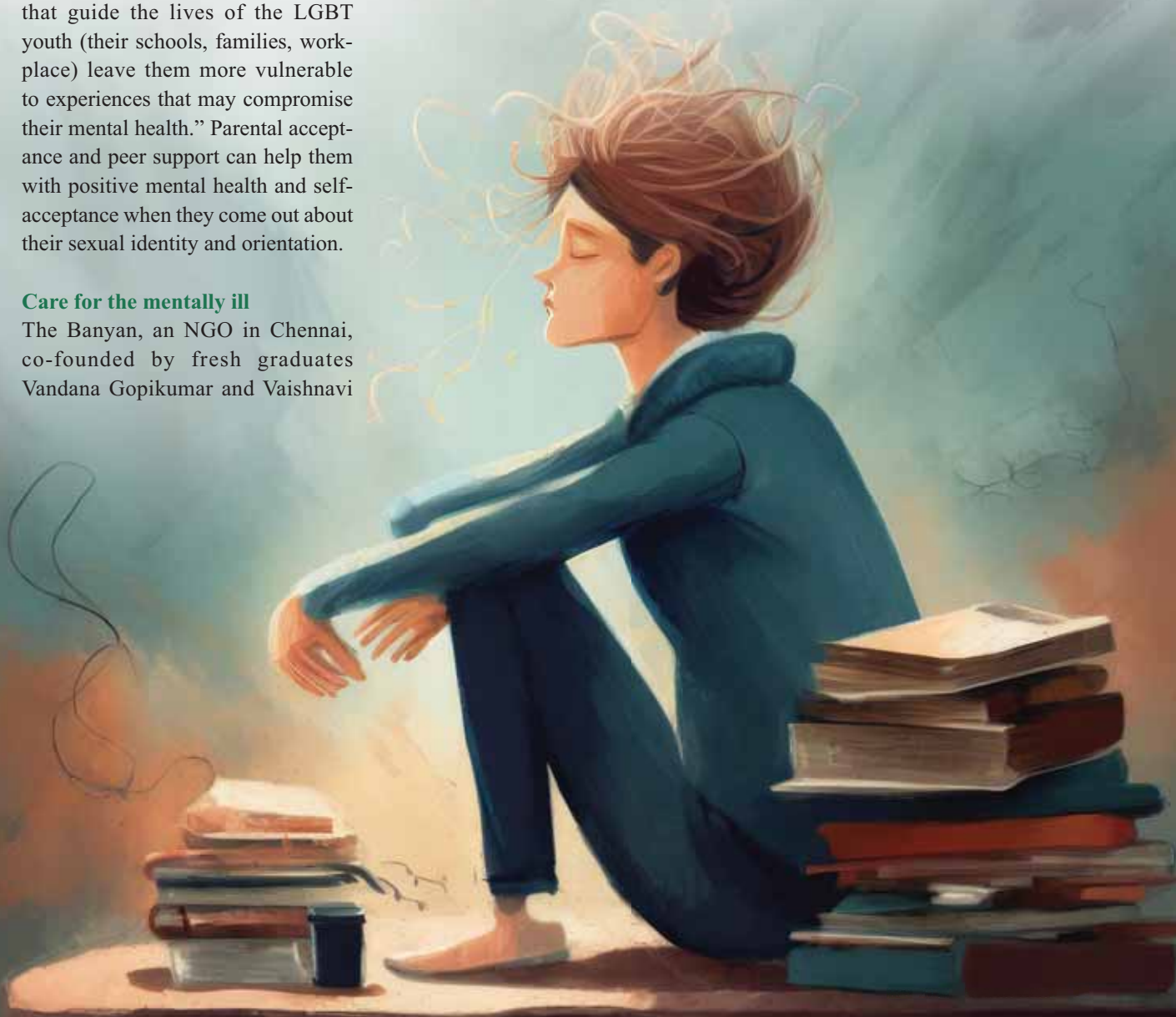
Care for the mentally ill

The Banyan, an NGO in Chennai, co-founded by fresh graduates Vandana Gopikumar and Vaishnavi

Jayakumar in 1993, provides extensive services to mentally-ill and abandoned women. Over the years it has grown to include several facilities such as the Emergency Care and Recovery Centre offering hospital-based settings, the Centre for Mental Health and Inclusive Development promoting the Home Again model and the Centre for Social Needs and Livelihood. It has outreach clinics across Chennai and other cities, and in 10 other Indian states including Kerala, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Assam. It is also working with various state governments. The Banyan Academy of Leadership in Mental

Health (BALM), in association with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and Sundaram Fasteners, offer capacity building, masters, PhD and diploma programmes in mental health.

“Our volunteers regularly look out for people with mental health issues, or we get referrals from the police and the public,” says Deepika Eashwaran, senior research associate at BALM. Home Again model offers homes shared by three to five women requiring long-term treatment under the care of a community worker. “This model mimics a familial environment and helps in faster healing,” she says.







The women engage in a wide range of work, and embrace leisure, recreation and socialisation with the community. Vocational training in art and craft, hospitality and beauty services, and healthcare training as peer advocates and personal assistants, and work placements are offered at The Banyan.

“You will find a talented artist, despite grappling with paranoid schizophrenia, who paints vibrant images of nature. Elderly women gather to cut vegetables for distribution to supermarkets; block printing provides solace and income for one woman, while others form part of an SHG that runs a roadside cart offering affordable dishes. With active support of volunteers, they all strive to reconcile their mental struggles with the demands of daily life,” adds Deepika.

Once their *clients* get better, the NGO works with the police and local organisations to reconnect them with their families. Volunteers visit their homes and educate the family members on illness management. The after-care programme ensures continuity of care after the individual returns home, with the help of civil society organisations, government agencies and community health workers.

Parental mental illness

At a lecture series organised in Chennai by The Banyan, an exhibition

People must be educated that it is okay to be not okay. Mental wellness is intrinsically linked to physical health and wellness.

Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar



Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar, founder of SNEHA, a suicide prevention NGO in Chennai

of poignant photographs taken by two youngsters, Mohammed Ibrahim and Thenarasan, was inaugurated by noted cinematographer PC Sreeram. Both their mothers are recovering, under the care of Banyan, from serious mental health issues. Sadly, their fathers had deserted their families soon after the two were born.

Ibrahim hails from Ajmer and was brought up by his *nani*. “Salma, my mother was mentally affected after my father deserted us as soon as I was born in 2002. She slowly withdrew into a shell; my *nani* and *mama* took her to the dargah where they said that she was possessed by some spirit. She would often run out of the house half-clothed; she never took care of me,” he says.

One day Salma boarded a train that incidentally took her to Chennai, where the police took her to Banyan. She was treated and brought back to Ajmer after two years. But once home, she stopped her medication and suffered relapse. As the family was poor, they had no means to take her back to

Symptoms to watch out for

Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar, consultant psychiatrist, points out the warning signs of mental health disorders to look out for in children and young adults:

- Changes in sleep pattern
- Changes in mood including anger, sadness or irritability
- Headaches
- Unusual or out-of-character behaviour
- Memory loss
- Withdrawal from routine and social interactions
- Increased dependence on drugs or alcohol

- Sudden weight gain or loss
- Hallucinations or delusions

To ensure better emotional and mental wellbeing in youngsters:

- Cut down behavioural addiction such as addiction to gadgets, social media and gaming. Internet and social media addiction further hurt the mental wellbeing of young people.
- Enforce strict bedtime and switch off gadgets one hour before bedtime. The family too should follow the rule.
- Encourage healthy conversation within the family and enable a healthy, happy environment. Avoid helicopter parenting or being extra strict. Set boundaries and encourage children to act within that.
- Teach them emotional control and problem-solving. Make children understand that it is okay to fail and let them learn from their failures.
- Ensure that the individual has a positive support system. Encourage open conversations and remove taboos around mental health.

Chennai and until such time, she was tied up in chains at her home.

Meanwhile, Ibrahim had a wayward childhood. “I would go to school only because I got food there, roam around the streets of Ajmer where tourists would offer me rotis and sweets, and steal chappals from the dargah, just for the fun of it. I had no connection with my mom and people

would call me *pagli ka ladka* (son of a mad woman),” he recalls.

A few years later, with support from philanthropists, his grandmother took Salma back to the Banyan, leaving Ibrahim in a madrasa. “That was the most difficult period and I was lonely as the atmosphere at the madrasa was controlled. I would cry my heart out and pray for better days.” He found solace in reading the *Quran*. Soon his grandmother took him to Chennai and “then there was no looking back. The Banyan took care of my education, improved my social skills and gave shape to my future. I owe my entire life to them,” he says. He was admitted into an international school in the city where he struggled with his lessons initially after which he became a topper.

Ibrahim is presently doing media studies at the Srishti Manipal College in Bengaluru, and is interning with cinematographer Sreeram as his assistant. Salma is much better now and is happy to watch her son grow. “For me, my work isn’t just about capturing images

or scenes; it’s about reflecting on my own experiences, and sharing stories that resonate deeply with me,” he says.

Thenarasan’s mother Thiruselvi is also healing well and he is engaged as a peer advocate with The Banyan. He is pursuing a career in photojournalism at the BALM after completing Bachelor’s in Electronics that was sponsored by The Banyan.

Teaching soft skills to children builds their competency, says Dr Ramesh Raghavan, professor, NYU Silver School of Social Work, New York, who spoke at the event that focused on supporting child and adolescent mental health in the context of parental mental illness. He points out that the issue of reaching out to the population can be easily addressed as India has a large network of *anganwadis* and *balwadis*.

Every year, around two lakh children from across the country flock to Kota, Rajasthan, to join coaching classes to prepare for JEE and NEET. Several die by suicide, due to depression and stress. “The children



Dr Ramesh Raghavan
professor, NYU Silver School of
Social Work, New York

I have addressed school-going children addicted to weed, hashish and heroin. They are not even aware of its side effects. All that they know and care about is that it gives them an ‘instant high’.

Dr Lakshmi Vijayakumar

are admitted to these institutes at age 15 or 16. They miss out on the benefits of school, extracurricular activities and friendships, and are under intense pressure to perform. Some parents have pledged their property and want their child to succeed in the exams,” says Dr Chetna Duggal, associate professor, Tata Institute of Social Research. There needs to be a comprehensive overhaul in the approach of both coaching institutes and parents to address the alarming rise in student suicides, she adds.

Dr Lakshmi says that the important step involves making integrated efforts in our homes, educational institutes and at the community level to discuss and accept mental health challenges, just like physical health problems. This will help in dismantling

the taboos that prevent most children and adolescents from seeking help. Younger people must be told that acknowledging and seeking help for mental health challenges is a sign of intellect and maturity, not something to be ashamed about. Higher secondary schools should initiate counselling programmes to encourage children to develop a positive mindset, she suggests.

At the RI Convention in Singapore (May 25–29), on the mainstage and in breakout sessions, several speakers, including former Rotarator Freddie Almazan will address mental health topics, including those concerning young people. Almazan was shot in the head at 13, and left paralysed on one side of his face and body. He overcame despair, depression and thoughts of suicide while growing up in California, to live a “ridiculously good life.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Creating hope in a Naxal-infested area

Rasheeda Bhagat

Women and children at the 'grand women's gathering' organised by RC Nagpur South East at the Naxal-infested Mehtakheda village.



Organising ‘a grand women’s gathering’ in the village Mehtakheda, located on the border of Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh (Gondia district), and known as a Naxal-affected area, must have taken a lot of courage, I ask Rajeev Warbhe, president of the Rotary Club Of Nagpur South East, RID 3030, which had recently organised this event.

In this mega gathering, various activities were organised for women from rural and tribal Naxal areas, including a kabaddi match, tribal dances, and providing a connect to women’s self-help groups with banking, healthcare and agricultural

We’ve organised free medical camps in the Naxal-affected villages of this region and have given out free medicines.

Rajeev Warbhe
president, RC Nagpur
South East

services provided by the government of India, but about which residents in remote, rural areas have little or no knowledge.

Answering my question, Warbhe smiles and says, “I was the medical director of my club for three years, and during that time, our club has been conducting medical camps in

Naxalite infested districts of Gondia and Gadchiroli in partnership with the local police. Actually, in recent times, the situation pertaining to Naxal activities has changed. Community policing has started, and along with other government departments, the local police have been reaching government welfare schemes to the people and improving their relations with the villagers living in these areas.”

He says that some of the recent initiatives undertaken by the police department include crucial and helpful activities such as helping the villagers to get Aadhaar cards and benefits under government welfare schemes such as the Ayushman



Clockwise from right:

Village women being welcomed to the event.

A health checkup camp in progress.

Villagers at the Shalinitai Meghe Super Speciality Hospital, Nagpur, after undergoing cataract surgery.

Villagers being transported to their homes after surgery.





Bharat Yojana and other schemes. Also, he adds, the agriculture ministry of GoI has so many subsidy schemes for the farming community, which these villagers know nothing about, and the police have been helping them to connect with the local agricultural officials and benefit from these schemes. “By such action, the police and some other government departments have won the confidence of the

people, so and so that when these people face any problem, they first contact the police,” he adds.

In this changing scenario, Warbhe explains that the club members had earlier conducted a school programme where lot of women had come, and after

discussion and consultation with the Gondia SP Nikhil Pingle, and the local NGO which works with the villagers, the Rotarians organised the gala event for the women, where the Rotarians educated them about the various government schemes, connected them to the people to be contacted for the different schemes, and gave out gifts to both the women and children of the local zilla



parishad school. Though the club spent only around ₹48,000 on this programme, its impact was huge.

Healthcare services for “the underprivileged communities residing in the Naxal-affected districts of Gondia and Gadchiroli have been an ongoing project of RC Nagpur South East, conducted in association with the Police Dal to ensure security and accessibility in these areas. We’ve organised

So many of the cataract operation beneficiaries didn't even know that they can get such an operation done, or it is available. Many of the people were afraid even to enter a hospital.

free medical camps in remote villages within the Naxal-affected areas of this region and offered a variety of medical services, including consultations, diagnostics such as tests for BP, diabetes, ECG, sickle cell anaemia in women, and have given out free medicines.”

After the screening, those requiring further care are taken to the Shalinitai Meghe Super



Specialty Hospital, Nagpur, for treatment and free surgeries. Warbhe says that during and after the medical camps he had earlier organised, “around 1,350 cataract operations for the people from these villages were done and we also organise the transport to drop them back to their homes after the treatment.”

While the club is committed to continue health camps in these remote rural and tribal areas, Warbhe says that so many of the cataract operation beneficiaries “didn’t even know that they can get such an operation done, or it is available. They have lived in such circumstances, that many of the people were afraid even to enter a hospital. And those who were admitted, didn’t like to sleep on beds and spread a bedsheet on the floor and slept on it. I myself know a couple who flatly refused to even come to the hospital for treatment.”

The club president added that the Rotarians have also been working to improve facilities and infrastructure

In recent times, the situation pertaining to Naxal activities has changed. Community policing has started, and along with other government departments, the local police have been reaching government welfare schemes to the people and improving their relations with the villagers living in these areas.

Rajeev Warbhe

at the zilla parishad schools by painting the building, giving new furniture etc. During the grand event for the women, 1,000 sanitary napkins were distributed to rural women, five sets of vermicompost units were given to women’s self-help groups and 500 water aerators were distributed to the women, and some gifts were given to the students

of the local zilla parishad school. Bank officials were also invited to the programme to connect them with the self-help groups which required loans to start small ventures.

Inaugurating the event SP Pingle congratulated the Rotarians for engaging with the village women, and educating them about their rights and entitlements from the various government schemes that were available for them. “By doing so, you are boosting their morale and giving them confidence to face all issues and problems they meet in their daily lives.”

Warbhe added that the women were very happy to know that they will now be able to get finance from the banks and also other agricultural subsidies. The headmaster of the local school, children and their parents, panchayat officials and Rotarians participated in this project, which he is confident “will go a long way in empowering these women and creating a bright future for them and their families.”■



A women’s kabaddi match organised by the club at the event.



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RC Rourkela Royal offers critical care ambulance for neonates

Rasheeda Bhagat

With the implementation of its first global grant, the Rotary Club of Rourkela Royal, RI District 3261, has taken a big leap towards the objective of saving precious lives of infants, and making a dent in the abysmal numbers that the state of Odisha has when it comes to infant mortality.

“We were shocked when Dr P Lall, a leading paediatrician in Rourkela, who heads the special paediatric facility called Aastha Mother and Child Care Hospital, contacted us about two years ago and shared with us the dismal statistics about Odisha when it comes to infant mortality,” recalls past president of the club Ajay Agarwal. The statistics shared by Dr Lall stated that Odisha has one of the poorest records in India and is near the bottom of the pile when it comes to IMR (Infant Mortality Rate) at 37/1,000 live births which is the third highest in India. The national average IMR in India at present is 22/1,000 live births.

“Dr Lall explained to us that about 60 to 70 per cent of these deaths fall in the neonatal period (first four weeks). Many such infants who are either preterm babies, or suffer from birth asphyxia and certain congenital and other conditions requiring quick surgical intervention, need effective

and urgent transport to well-equipped and specialised paediatric centres where qualified doctors can save these precious lives,” says Agarwal.

But the main problem is that such specialised centres providing critical and life-saving care to such babies are very few and in select cities only. Hence critically-ill babies require good transport over long distances in specially equipped ambulances. “The available ambulances were woefully inadequate to meet this need both in terms of equipment and skilled manpower. He stressed the need for not only good transport with specialised equipment but also effective care by trained persons enroute to a specialised centre, and sought our help to get such an ambulance.”

We gave the application in Aug-Sep 2023, and got the approval by December! My experience has been that the RI staff is so meticulous and if you do things properly, and follow all the rules and guidelines, the approval hardly takes any time..

Ajay Agarwal
Project Chairman



Once the paediatrician shared the heartbreaking statistics with the Rotarians that nearly 44 per cent of the neonates who finally reach a well-equipped paediatric facility in ordinary vans or other vehicles, reach such centres either dead or having developed severe complications that result in long term morbidity, the dye was cast. “The doctor told us that he was pained to note that most babies came from long distances to his hospital either lifeless or in a very



TRF Trustee Vice Chair Bharat Pandya (second from R) with (from R) RC Rourkela Royal past president Ajay Agarwal, DG Manjit Singh Arora, RID 3012 PDG Ashok Aggarwal, club president Sudhir Lath, and DGND Alam Singh Ropra (far left) after inaugurating the ambulance.

sorry condition just because of poor means of transport and lack of timely care on the way.”

Being associated with this club’s members for other earlier projects as well, he urged the Rotarians to undertake the project to make available a state-of-the-art ambulance for the worthy cause of saving neonatal lives. “The cost (₹33 lakh) and complexity of the project was a challenge because not only was the capital cost high, there was also a

high running and maintenance cost involved, along with the need to have trained manpower on standby at all times in order to effectively operate the ambulance. But challenge is what excites Rotarians of RC Rourkela Royal the most,” he smiles.

Very soon, Ajay Agarwal, as the project chair, and his team decided to get such a special, well-equipped ambulance, through a global grant and some CSR funds. The project was aptly named *Ummeed* (hope). “According

to the detailed specifications given by Dr Lall, we decided to get a specialised vehicle with over a dozen equipment that can ensure the safe transportation of the infant from the birthplace to the hospitals with modern facilities. With this essential and godsend ambulance, we hope to prevent as many deaths and disabilities as possible that result from improper transport of neonates in non-equipped vehicles,” he says.

With DRFC Ranjit Saini helping them identify an international partner

Quick approval of GG

On his experience in getting the global grant of around ₹33 lakh for a modern, well-equipped state-of-the-art ambulance for neonates, approved in a “record time of a few months,” past president of RC Rourkela Royals and project chair of *Ummeed* Ajay Agarwal is all gratitude. I ask him this question about his experience in the backdrop of several Indian Rotarians complaining about delays in getting GGs approved.

Adds Agarwal, “I am happy to share that the approval came in the record time of a few months. We gave the application in Aug-Sep 2023, and got the approval by December! My experience has been that the RI staff is so meticulous and if you do things properly, and follow all the rules and guidelines, the approval hardly takes any time. But you have to follow the process, which I must point out, is so clear and user-friendly. Those who complain, are surely making mistakes because I found all the instructions to be crystal clear. The problem is that most of us don’t know what is to be done, when and how, and this is because nobody gives us practical training! What we get is theory all the time...” He advocates a structured and proper training process on how to apply for a global grant.

He, of course, has prior experience with global grant applications, having helped his wife Rashmi Agarwal, who was then the president of RC Rourkela Queens, to prepare a ₹26 lakh global grant application for a mobile eye clinic. “That was again done in a record time of about 7–8 months... we applied for the GG and handed over the van in the same year.”

He is now guiding a few more clubs in the district on how to apply for global grants, an immediate one being for a dialysis unit. ■



from Nepal — Rotary Club of Pashupati, RID 3292, Kathmandu — and corporates such as Kai International, Bhaskar Steel and Ferro Alloy coming on board, they applied for a global grant around September 2023.

With Dr Lall guiding them to order the specific medical equipment required, the project was completed in a record time of seven months, and on Feb 29, a fully equipped neonatal ambulance was put into service for the people of Rourkela and surrounding areas by Dilip Tirkey, Hockey India

president. The final challenge was where to place the ambulance so that anybody can use its service. Sushant Acharya, CEO of Hitech Medical College and Hospital, volunteered to take charge of the operation and maintenance of the ambulance, and also provide the services of trained personnel to operate it.

Inaugurating the ambulance at RID 3261’s district conference at Jharsuguda, TRF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya said that when a child is born, till 28 days, it is known as a



neonate, and this is a very critical stage in the survival and growth of an infant. “During its first 28 days, the chances of something going wrong and the infant dying are very high. While the worldwide neonatal mortality rate is 15 per 1,000 live births, in India this figure is 22, that of Odisha is alarmingly high at 37. When you consider this, this project is really meeting a critical need of Odisha and the local community, and I congratulate

While the worldwide neonatal mortality rate is 15 per 1,000 live births, in India this figure is 22, that of Odisha is alarmingly high at 37. When you consider this, this project is really meeting a critical need of Odisha and the local community.

Dr Bharat Pandya
TRF Trustee Vice Chair





Trustee vice-chair Dr Pandya inaugurating the ambulance at the district conference. PP Ajay Agarwal, PDG Ashok Aggarwal and club president Sudhir Lath cheer on.

you for providing this much needed ambulance to your local community.”

Agarwal thanks Kai International, Bhaskar Steel and Ferro Alloy for donating CSR funds to the tune of ₹20 lakh for this project, and DG Manjit Singh Arora. One of the directors of these companies, Suresh Agarwal, is a member of the executing club, and all its members, led by its president Sudhir Lath, Ajay Agarwal, secretary Rakesh Agarwal and treasurer Abhishek Patnaik also contributed.

“We are so proud that Rotary has provided this first-of-its-kind facility in our city and a much-needed service that will go a long way in saving lives of newborn babies. This is a feather in the cap of not only our club but also District 3261 and Rotary as a whole. As one of our team members, Suresh Agarwal, aptly put it, the breakeven of the project will be achieved as soon as even one life of a newborn is saved with the help of *Ummeed!*”

Helpline number for this special ambulance service: 90821 83896.

RC Delhi South Metropolitan, RID 3011, hosted a team of Rotarians from the US and North America who had arrived in India to participate in the polio NID programme at Ghasera, a village near Mewat, Haryana.

The team was led by PRID Brad Howards (RID 5170) who has been bringing polio warriors to India for the last several years. This year they administered polio drops to infants and children at the NID camps held on March 3–4 at the Haryana village. Around 300 children were given polio drops at the NID camps by the visiting team, said Shakuntala Raha, club member and manager (fund development), TRF, RI South Asia Office. ■

US Rotarians visit Haryana for Polio NID

Team Rotary News



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12. Clubs must **immediately** update us about any modification in membership status to enable us to deliver the magazine to the new members.
13. Clubs are liable to pay for the number of magazines we despatch according to the



list available with the Rotary News Trust.

14. Unpaid dues of the club will be shown as outstanding against the club. Any payment received subsequently will be adjusted against earlier dues.
15. Details of clubs with subscription arrears will be shared with RI and are liable for suspension.
16. We regularly verify our subscribers' list that clubs share with us with that of RI's data to detect missing subscribers.
17. If a member has not received the magazine for a month, inform us **immediately** so we can resolve the issue. Magazines are sent through concessional book post; so postal tracking is not possible. You may not receive your copy if your club has not passed on your subscription to us. So please check with your president or RNT for your enrolment in the subscribers' list.
18. There may be delivery issues in some areas. In such a situation clubs can opt and receive copies in bulk. Additional charges will be applicable.

Non-compliant clubs face termination by RI

Beginning July 1, 2022, the RI Board has included in its *Rotary Code of Policies* the termination of Rotary clubs that do not subscribe to a Rotary magazine. A quarterly report on non-compliant clubs is being sent to RI by our office, after notifying the respective club leaders and the DGs. These clubs are given a **90-day grace period** after which the defaulting club is placed under suspension by RI.

For clubs that stay suspended and are non-compliant for 180 days, RNT, after notifying RI, sends a reminder letter stating "the Board at its discretion can terminate this club."

Club presidents, please urge your members to subscribe to *Rotary News*, and get a full picture of Rotary activities in India. **RI recommends inclusion of information about mandatory subscription in your PETS/GETS curriculums.**

Kalam: A remarkable People's President

Rajendra Saboo

Dr Avul Pakir Jainulabdeen Abdul Kalam's life as a student was very challenging, filled with hardships and struggles. There was a time when he had to sell newspapers from door-to-door to support his family and for his education. He came from a very modest background and journeyed from Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, to the Rashtrapati Bhavan, New Delhi, and became the President of India. He was truly the People's President.

He contributed immensely to the development of the country both as a scientist and as a president. He was an exceptional teacher, an aerospace scientist and a staunch nationalist who was a great dreamer and visionary at the same time.

Kalam really caught the imagination of the children and the young. He was convinced that children were our future and we had to ignite their minds and after becoming the President of India, the first thing he did was addressing 50,000 children.

I met Dr Kalam in March 2000, when the American President Bill Clinton visited Hyderabad for an important event under the polio eradication programme. Since I was involved deeply in Rotary's prime project PolioPlus, I, along with Deepak Kapur and some other Rotarians, also went to attend the event. After his address, Clinton greeted us and enquired about the status of polio. We followed him to the Mahavir Trust Hospital, where he administered

PRIP Rajendra Saboo with former President of India Dr APJ Abdul Kalam during his visit to the Bhavan Vidyalaya in Chandigarh.





From L: Vinita, spouse of PRID Sushil Gupta; PRIP Saboo; Mary, spouse of PRIP Glen Estess; PRIP Carlo Ravizza; Dr Kalam; PRIP Glen Estess; PRID Sushil Gupta; PRID Sudharshan Agarwal and PRIP Kalyan Banerjee at the Rashtrapathi Bhavan.

A People's President, a great son of India and a role model for the youth, Dr Abdul Kalam set a remarkable example for generations of Indians.

polio drops to children and saw the lightweight calipers for polio-stricken children developed by Dr Kalam in 1993. That was where I met Kalam for the first time.

In August 2004, I had the honour to meet him again at the Rashtrapati Bhavan with the then RI President Glenn Estess and his wife Mary, then PRID Kalyan Banerjee and PRID Sudarshan Agarwal who was then the Governor of Uttarakhand. The next day, President Kalam was the chief guest at the International PolioPlus Summit at Vigyan Bhavan, where he spoke movingly about the eradication of polio to save the children of the world. Also present were Union Health Minister Anbumani Ramadoss, Aishwarya Rai, who was the brand ambassador for polio, President Glenn Estess, PRIP Carlo Ravizza.

In October 2005, at the HN Bahuguna University, Garhwal,



Dr Kalam with PRID Agarwal and PRIP Saboo at the HN Bahuguna University, Garhwal. Usha Saboo is seen second from right.



Dr Kalam bestows the Padma Shri Award on PRIP Saboo in 2006.

President Kalam came as the chief guest invited by then Governor of Uttarakhand Sudarshan Agarwal. I received an honorary doctorate degree from him and we had a detailed interaction. In March 2006, I received the Padma Shri Award from President Kalam where we talked about the polio status in India. This gave me inspiration to do even more for polio. Again, in March 2007, I received the D Litt degree from President Kalam.

In November 2008, he was the chief guest for the Children’s Day event at the Bhavan Vidyalaya in Chandigarh, which completed its 25 years. The Bhavanites had the rare opportunity of meeting one of the most influential figures of India in this century. Addressing the students, he said, “India is not far from becoming a superpower and its greatest asset, the youth, will lead it on the path of glory”.

An ex-student of Bhavan Vidyalaya, Prabhman met Dr Kalam in 2015 on a flight. He was delighted to hear Dr Kalam recall his visit to the school. During the conversation, Dr Kalam told him that he would revisit the school. But that was not to be as he passed away in July 2015.

My wife Usha and I were privileged to have interacted with the great humanitarian Dr Kalam several times on polio-myelitis, children’s education and other social causes.

Dr Kalam said, “Ultimately, education in its real sense is the pursuit of truth. It is an endless journey through knowledge and enlightenment.” He headed the Pokhran-II nuclear tests, was associated with India’s space and missile development programmes, and hence called the *Missile Man*.

A People’s President, a great son of India and a role model for the youth, he set a remarkable example for generations of Indians.

The writer is a past president of Rotary International

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RIPE Stephanie in India



Above: RI President Elect Stephanie Urchick being given a warm welcome in Bengaluru. Also present in the picture: RIDN KP Nagesh, PDG Suresh Hari and DG V Srinivas Murthy.

Right: RIPE Stephanie at the Mother House of the Missionaries of Charity, Kolkata, along with (2nd from L) Simran Gupta, RI Directors Anirudha Roychowdhury, Raju Subramanian, DGE Krishnendu Gupta and Anirudha Guha, past president, RC Calcutta Metro South.

Below: RIPE Stephanie presents Hero Award to Usha Vishwakarma, chief managing trustee, Red Brigade, Lucknow. Also seen are (from L) PDGs Sandeep Narang (RID 3250), Debasish Mishra (RID 3262), RIDs Subramanian, Roychowdhury, PRIP Shekhar Mehta, PRID Mahesh Kotbagi, PDG Rajani Mukerji and PRID Kamal Sanghvi.





PDG Suresh Hari, RID Subramanian, RIPE Stephanie and RIDN Nagesh with Zone 7 district leaders after a luncheon meet.



From L: RID 3191 DGN BR Sridhar, RID 3192 DGE NS Mahadeva Prasad, RID Subramanian, RIPE Stephanie, RIDN Nagesh, DGE Satish Madhavan and PDG Suresh Hari.

Left: RIPE Stephanie, RID Subramanian and RIDN Nagesh with RC Bangalore South president Ramachandra, RID 3191 DG Udaykumar Bhaskara, club's past president Kumaraswamy and his wife Sowmya.



RIPE Stephanie with RID Subramanian (L) and RIDN Nagesh.

RIPE Stephanie with DGND Ravishankar Dakoju, his wife Paola and event chairman PDG Suresh Hari.



RIPE Stephanie launches the *Laksha Kalpavriksha* (distributing 1 lakh coconut saplings by RIDs 3191 and 3192 over five years) in the presence of beneficiaries. Also seen (from L): DGE Satish Madhavan, DGs Udaykumar Bhaskara and Srinivas Murthy, DGE Mahadeva Prasad, DGND Dakoju, RID Subramanian, Rtn Shivakumar, RIDN Nagesh and DGN Sridhar.

School projects make an impact

V Muthukumaran



RC Coimbatore Vadavalli president Ramesh Subramaniam coaches students on spoken English.

Students who feel diffident to talk and read in English are identified and trained for one hour on Mondays at the MSSD Higher Secondary School for the last three years by RC Coimbatore Vadavalli, RID 3201. “Each year we conduct spoken English classes for around 50–55 students of Class 9. This ongoing project would have benefitted 170 teenagers so far; they now speak the language with confidence. They can also read English dailies and magazines,” says Ramesh Subramaniam, club president.

He coaches students in a novel manner by taking up a topic of current interest or relevant social issue each week and encourages the students to speak on that issue in a lucid style. “Once a student develops the skill to read and speak

English, their interest is further kindled to expand their knowledge that will enable them to choose a bright career of their choice,” he explains.

The club has built a 100-seater dining hall for students to partake noon meals at the Corporation High School, Ramalingam Colony, with a CSR grant of ₹25 lakh from CG-VAK Software and Exports. This first CSR project of the club titled *Kalvi Solai* (education garden) also involved the installation of a science lab, apart from the renovation of a computer lab and library with new furniture to enhance the learning process in a cozy ambience, he says. A cycle stand was also built on the school premises for the students’ benefit.

Following an invite by the school principal, “we found that

around 200 students take noon meals on an open ground in hot summer and during rains. As they were exposed to heat and dust, it poses health risk for them,” recalls Subramaniam. DG TR Vijayakumar inaugurated the sprightly-lit new dining hall and the other facilities, in the presence of Coimbatore Corporation commissioner Sivaguru Prabhakaran and CG-VAK Exports MD Ganapathy Suresh.

The club also conducted a one-day RYLA for 550 students of PSBB Millennium School in the city. PDG AV Pathy, DGN Chella K Ragavendran, Dr Nancy Kurian, Rajkumar, Suresh Kunnath and Francis Xavier addressed the students on topics such as goal-setting, cybersecurity and time management. “We are thankful

to Rtn Henry Amalraj and the Interact Club of PSBB Millennium School who were instrumental in organising the RYLA. District RYLA chairman Antony Johnson had arranged the sessions with expert speakers who motivated the students,” says the club president.

Recently, lunch was provided once a month to 50 differently-abled children at the WVS Special School, Kaundampalayam, for eight months with contribution from club members. With 28 members, the nine-year-old club will be inaugurating an auditorium at the MSSD School shortly, its second CSR project worth ₹30 lakh, thanks to CG-VAK Exports.

Para TT tournament

For the first time in RID 3201, the club hosted a multidistrict Para Table Tennis Tournament for wheelchair-bound sportsmen at Vadavalli. “At the end of the two-day sports meet, prizes worth ₹12,000 were given to the



DG TR Vijayakumar inaugurates a renovated computer lab at the Corporation High School, to his left is club president Ramesh Subramaniam.

first three winners. We had 50 para paddlers from five revenue districts who participated with enthusiasm, and given the great

feedback the event received, we want to make it an annual sports meet, a sort of signature project for us,” adds Subramaniam. ■

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Changing lives with English-speaking capability

Rasheeda Bhagat

In the underbelly of India's most glittering metro, Mumbai city, there are tens of thousands of bright, intelligent and ambitious teenagers from underprivileged families, who manage to get into reasonably decent schools offering education in Marathi, Hindi or Gujarati. They have an excellent

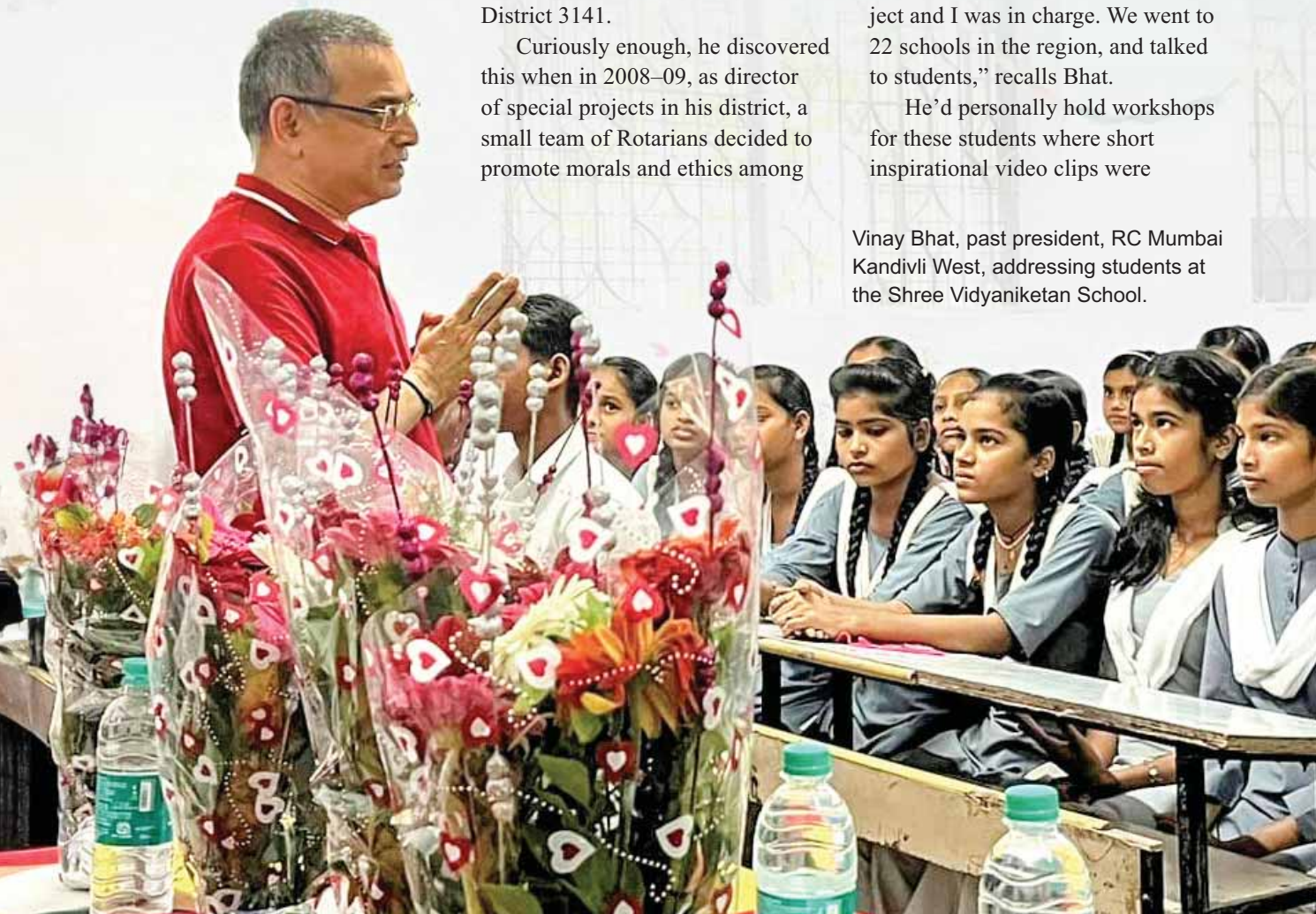
academic record till they pass Class 10. "But when it comes to going to college (Class 11 and 12), many of them are reluctant to go in for higher education because they lack the confidence to interact with other students in English, of which they have little knowledge," says Vinay Bhat, past president of the Rotary Club of Mumbai Kandivli West, RI District 3141.

Curiously enough, he discovered this when in 2008–09, as director of special projects in his district, a small team of Rotarians decided to promote morals and ethics among

students in schools attended by children from lower middle class families. These schools offered education in either Marathi or Hindi medium. "We printed beautiful notebooks which had very small inspirational stories of famous people, who achieved greatness because they stuck to their values and ethics. Various people sponsored this project and I was in charge. We went to 22 schools in the region, and talked to students," recalls Bhat.

He'd personally hold workshops for these students where short inspirational video clips were

Vinay Bhat, past president, RC Mumbai Kandivli West, addressing students at the Shree Vidyaniketan School.



shown of great people. The idea was to train young minds to focus on what they would like to become as adults.

After a year of doing this project, when he interacted with the principals of these schools, “they described to us how even the brightest of their students face difficulty when it comes to English, and many of them literally drop out from the education system because of their fear of English. He said that quite a few of them absolutely refuse to study further because they do not want to face any embarrassment in front of their peers or professors because they can’t speak English,” says Bhat. Those brave enough to venture into Class 11, soon face the frustration of their grades plummeting because they do not know English.

He explains that in the Kandivali area there is a sizable population living in slum areas of Laljipada,



Club president Prithika Samani (L) and Reema Wahi, director, Literacy committee, with the winners of the grand finale elocution competition.

Bunder Pakhadi, Charkop, Sainagar, Poisar etc and there are over 20 to 30 schools giving education in Marathi, Hindi and Gujarati. These schools, aided by the BMC and the state government, cater to

over 20,000 children. The teachers’ salaries are paid by the government, and many of the schools do not have even a proper concrete building. Most of the children of these vernacular schools quit their education after Class 10 for the primary reason that college education is in English.



When Bhat learnt that even the most brilliant students who pass with flying colours in their Class 10 exams, scoring nearly 90 per cent, refuse to go to college because of their English deficiency, “I thought why not organise an English-speaking course with the help of specific training agencies to give these students some skill in spoken English.” This was the genesis of what was to become the club’s signature project for 14 years.

Adds Bhavin Toprani, another past president of this large club with 94 members, and PR director for 2023–24, “We chose to conduct these spoken English classes when

the students are in Class 9, because in Class 10, they have to prepare for their Board exams, and do not have much time for extra activities.”

The team identified the BN Institute which conducts classes in spoken English, and in the first year this was done in five schools identified by the Rotarians. In 2011–12, when Bhat became the club president, “I took this up as my main project; my board said you have to raise the money, and at that time it cost only around ₹30,000 per school, so I raised the funds by asking my friends, clients, etc to donate.”

These classes worked so well in improving the confidence level of bright youngsters, that president after president of the club continued with the project which, in essence is also a personality development project, as it was literally transforming lives. For the first 10–11 years



A participant speaks in English with confidence at the elocution competition.



Books and notebooks distributed to students during the launch of the project in a school.



A self defence workshop in progress.

the club managed to raise the money required — now it costs ₹50,000 per school. But for the last three years the BNI Foundation has come forward to sponsor the entire project asking the Rotarians to focus on the operational aspect of the project, and volunteering to put in all the money required.

The results have been excellent, and the club has received thank you letters from principals of schools, detailing stories of “students trained in spoken English by us, who have gone on to become doctors and other

professionals, and some of them have even gone overseas for higher education,” beams Bhat. It has also gone ahead to win many awards from the district.

When I express the hope that girls are also benefitting from this project, Bhat delights me with the disclosure that “the majority of the beneficiaries of this flagship project of our club are girls. The reason is

very simple; the psychology in families with limited money is to send the boys to English medium schools while the girls go to the vernacular schools! So in all Marathi/Hindi medium schools, the larger majority of the students are girls. And we find that girls are very sincere, focused and hard-working and once they get the additional benefit of knowledge in spoken English, they do very well in higher studies,” says Bhat.

This longstanding project of RC Mumbai Kandivli West had a setback during Covid times for obvious reasons — closure of schools, and only four batches could be done that year. But now it has bounced back, and last year, 15 batches of students from 12 schools were trained.

Now, as ‘thank you’ letters are pouring in from happy principals, the BNI Foundation wants to take it across India as the CSR venture of the corporate BNI India, which is a physical networking platform that organises networking between budding entrepreneurs. “Then these entrepreneurs support and promote each other by giving references for actual business opportunities. They

The club has received ‘thank you’ letters from principals detailing success stories of students who have become doctors and other professionals, with some going overseas for higher education.

Vinay Bhat
past president
RC Mumbai Kandivli West



School students, along with Rotarians, after a self defence training session.

want to expand its outreach to more deserving youngsters in a greater area.”

The grand finale of this project was held recently in Mumbai with an elocution competition conducted by club member Reema Wahi and her team. “We are grateful to past president Vinay Bhat for starting this project, which all the presidents of our club have taken forward. More than

7,000 students have benefited till now from it. This year we conducted it for 750 students from 15 vernacular schools which are attended by children from lower socioeconomic background. Rtn Hemu Suvarna, national head of the BNI Foundation, attended the event. We are grateful to Sandip Shah, director of the foundation, and his team for their constant support,” adds Toprani.

Another significant project of the club is teaching young boys and girls the art of self-defence. Club president Prithika Samani and its youth director Raghunath Prabhu organised self-defence sessions for Interactors and Rotaractors. The sessions were conducted by eminent trainers who are national champions and black belts in karate. Different techniques were taught to nearly 100 students followed by practice sessions.

In yet another project done this year by the club, a state-of-the-art CT scan equipment was donated and installed at the KHM Hospital in Mumbai. The entire cost of ₹1.2 crore was given by IPCA Laboratories as a CSR grant and the diagnostic machine was inaugurated by IPCA Laboratory’s MD AK Jain and RID 3141 governor Arun Bhargava in the presence of RI director Lena Mjerskaug (Zones 17 and 18) from Norway. ■



Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Tata Power marks Autism Awareness Month



Tata Power's Mumbai headquarters was lit in blue in April (Autism Awareness Month), showing solidarity with the autism spectrum disorder (ASD) communities. Collaborating with NIEPID, Tata Power has launched a digital Neurodiversity Care platform for early identification of ASD and its therapy access.

Stationery kits donated to Sri Lankan School



Students with their stationery kits.

RC Kalyan, RID 3142, recently entered into a sister club agreement with RC Uva Hills, RID 3220, Sri Lanka. The two clubs jointly distributed stationery kits to students at the Tamil Vidyalaya school in Spring Valley, Badulla.

Cycles and notebooks for students



DG Swati Herkal, along with club members, after giving bicycles to a school.

DG Swati Herkal gave 25 bicycles costing ₹1.32 lakh sponsored by RC Wai, RID 3132, to a school to add to its bicycle bank used to provide cycles to girl students. Notebooks worth ₹48,000, also sponsored by the club, were distributed to 2,000 students from 24 schools.

RID 3060 trains 16,000 people in CPR



A CPR demonstration to help students understand the procedure.

Rotary clubs of RID 3060 celebrated Rotary's 119th anniversary by training 16,147 people to administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to save people who had suffered a sudden cardiac arrest. Fifty mannequins were sent to various clubs to help them provide hands-on training to people. ■

RAHAT medical camp in MP does 5,000 surgeries

Jaishree

The look of relief on the parents' face when they saw their son cured of a congenital disorder at the camp was our most cherished gift," says PDG Dhiran Datta, chairman of the RAHAT medical mission hosted by RC Jhabua, RID 3040, for a week in February, at Jhabua in Madhya Pradesh. The 12-year-old boy was suffering from a condition where his right arm was stuck to his cheek, and fingers intertwined with his mouth.

"A year after his birth we had taken him to a couple of sadhus who said that he was cursed. We had accepted his condition until now. These divine men (Rotarians) have now saved our son and no words are enough to convey our thanks to them," said the mother, with tears rolling down her cheeks, recalls Datta.

Two months before the scheduled medical camp, he had visited the tribal village near Jhabua and came across the family. He took a picture of the boy

and sent it to the PGIMER Hospital, Chandigarh, seeking medical opinion. "The plastic surgeon said that he can treat the boy and so we got the family to the camp," he says. The corrective surgery performed during the medical camp gifted the child a new lease of life, freeing him from the physical and emotional burden he had been carrying since birth.

Jhabua is surrounded by Adivasi hamlets where medical help is rare. "In most of these villages,



PDG Dhiran Datta carrying an elderly woman for diagnosis.



MP Governor Gangu Bhai Patel interacting with RID 3250 PDG Dr R Bharat at the camp. RID 3040 DG Ritu Grover is seen behind the governor.



Above: DGN Sushil Malhotra managing the participants at the campsite.

Left: PDG Datta takes measurements for fitting an artificial limb for a physically-challenged person.



DG Ritu encourages a man to use his newly fitted LN-4 prosthetic arm.

the locals do not go to any doctor at all. These places are steeped in superstitious beliefs so much so that the villagers attribute their diseases and disorders to the wrath of the gods or their ‘past karma’ and visit indigenous healers,” he adds.

One of the women visitors to the medical camp had suffered an infection because of which her chin and neck got stuck together. “A healer had ‘treated’ her by torching the area, and she came to the camp with severe burn injuries.” She too was successfully treated by the cosmetic surgeon from PGIMER at the camp.

Datta sites another instance where a gynaecologist removed a 7.6kg-tumour from a woman’s uterus. “She was wrongly informed by a seer that she was carrying a malformed foetus!”

One early morning Datta and his team, out on a walk, found an elderly woman

abandoned by her family the previous night at the campsite entrance. She was carried into the camp where she was diagnosed with a liver and kidney disorder. She is now undergoing treatment at the Aurobindo Hospital in Indore.

The RAHAT camp treated over one lakh people with various ailments and those who needed extended treatment were admitted at the Aurobindo hospital. "Their treatment cost is borne by Rotarians and other welfare trusts in the district," says the mission chairman. The total cost worked out to ₹1 crore which was met by the district Rotarians. The state government and the district collector also contributed to the cause. MP Governor Gangu Bhai Patel inaugurated the medical camp in the presence of Women and Child Welfare minister Nirmala Bhuria. DG Ritu Grover was present at the inaugural event.

Nineteen OTs at four government and various private hospitals across

The villages surrounding Jhabua are steeped in superstitious beliefs and the people attribute their diseases and disorders to the wrath of the gods or their 'past karma' and visit indigenous healers.

the town were used to perform the surgeries. Rotarians from RID 3080 coordinated in getting the doctors and surgeons for the camp. Fourteen doctors from Chandigarh, Raipur, Nagpur and Jhabua, and two Rotarian doctors treated patients at the camp. Mammography, cervical cancer and pathology vans were used to screen

people for cancer, BP, ECG, diabetes etc. Datta says that of the 70 per cent women screened, 34 per cent had cancer symptoms and 23 women were admitted at the Aurobindo hospital for treatment.

The Inner Wheel Club of Jhabua, the Bohra Samaj and other social groups also pitched in with contributions for the project. The Rotaractors and NCC cadets helped in the smooth administration of the camp. Food, snacks, water and beverages were distributed to patients and caretakers all through the week. Gynaecological issues and mineral deficiency were predominant in women, while men battled cardiac ailments, high BP and diabetes. A lethal combination of poverty, illiteracy and lack of medical amenities plague the region, says Datta.

The earlier medical mission, four years ago, in the same venue had served 40,000 villagers. ■

Cancer detection vehicles donated to Tata Hospital

Team Rotary News

RC Dombivli Midtown, RID 3142, through a CSR grant of ₹35 lakh from Bharat Petroleum Corporation has donated a 25-seater bus and a Mahindra Bolero to the Tata Memorial Centre (TMC) in Khopoli, an industrial city in the Raigad district of Maharashtra.

While the Bolero will carry 6–7 doctors and support staff to rural



PDG Balkrishna Inamdar with members of RC Dombivli Midtown after handing over the two vehicles to the Tata Memorial Centre, Khopoli.

areas around Khopoli and Khalapur, a small town, to hold cancer detection camps, the bus will transport people with cancer symptoms from their villages, along with their caretakers, to major hospitals for further tests and treatment.

The formal handing over of the vehicles was held in March 2024 at the TMC, Kharghar, in Navi

Mumbai, in the presence of hospital director Dr Rajesh Dixit, PDG Dr Balkrishna Inamdar, district secretary Manoj Patil, AG Shailesh Gupte, and RC Navi Mumbai Sunrise president Shekhar Chilana.

Around 80,000 people are expected to be screened for cancer over a period of five years through these two vehicles. ■

Meet your Governors



Sethu Shiv Sankar

Doctor

RC Calicut East, RID 3204

Strengthen Rotaract

A Rotarian since 2005, Sethu Shiv Sankar was initially drawn into Rotary by the inspiring service projects and motivational speeches at club meetings. He believes in bridging the age gap within the clubs “by actively recruiting younger members passionate about service.”

He is concerned about the declining number of Rotaract clubs in his district. “With Rotaract clubs predominantly college-based and community-focused, the imposition of RI dues has led to a drop in numbers, leaving only 23 Rotaract clubs in the district.” He feels that sponsor clubs should offer financial support.

“Clubs from rural regions are going to be game changers for Rotary in India and we must involve them in global grants. Around five clubs from rural regions in my district have participated in GGs and their work is outstanding. They want to do more and we must encourage them,” he says.

In terms of DEI, his focus is on “increasing the representation of women within Rotary.” His target for TRF contribution is set at \$200,000 and he believes he will be able to reach \$150,000 by the end of his term.

Kiran Zehra



SP Bagaria

Mica powder manufacturing

RC Giridih, RID 3250

Global grant for Public Image

SP Bagaria joined Rotary in 1995 on the recommendation of his friend Prakash Musaddi. He recalls an incident when his niece received a wedding proposal from Port Blair. Curious about the family, he reached out to a fellow Rotarian in Port Blair for more information. It turned out that the Rotarian was the father of the prospective groom. “Now, a decade later, she is happily married with two children, thanks in part to the Rotary connection,” he smiles.

Emphasising on the significance of GGs, he says, “through a global grant, funds can be significantly multiplied, allowing a contribution of ₹10 lakh to grow into a crore of rupees or more and boost a project’s impact tenfold.”

Currently his district PDGs are discussing CSR partnerships with various companies. “But there is a lack of awareness about Rotary in our district. A GG focused on public image would help enhance our PR in the region,” he recommends.

The DEI concept is being actively promoted in the district. “Although a club in Jamshedpur has welcomed transgender members, it will take time for members to become comfortable with the concept,” he says.

His district has contributed \$90,000 to TRF.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Rotary gifts a human milk bank in Aurangabad & Tirupati

Rasheeda Bhagat

When *Amrut Dhara*, a global grant project conceived and executed by members of RC Aurangabad West, RID 3132, to set up a modern, well-equipped human milk bank, was finally inaugurated at the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit (ICU) of the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Government Medical College and Hospital in the city, it proved the tenacity of this bunch of Rotarians led by the club's past

president Hemant Landge. The project proposal had come to the club way back in 2018. Putting together a huge sum of \$58,000 required, and then navigating through the challenges of the unprecedented Covid pandemic, during which medical services were not only overstretched but their priorities had also shifted, were no mean tasks. But team *Amrut Dhara*, led by project chair Landge, stayed focused on what they had to do to see this work through.

Tracing its inception Landge says, "Everybody knows that mother's milk is a boon to a newborn baby, and in ancient times this was the norm. But in so many cases an infant is deprived of its own mother's milk and the next best is human milk that is securely collected and properly stored in a modern, well equipped milk bank in a hospital."

In 2018, when Aurangabad's famous child specialist Dr Rajendra Khadke approached their club



DG Swati Herkal with project chair Hemant Landge after inaugurating the human milk bank at the Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar Government Medical College and Hospital, Aurangabad.



RID 3191 DG Udaykumar Bhaskara (centre, in blue vest) at the inaugural of the Rotary Human Milk Bank set up by RC Tirupati at the Government Maternity Hospital, Tirupati.

through its then president Makarand Khadke, saying that the neonatal ICU of the hospital urgently required a human milk bank, as many premature babies and other infants with medical complications

In 2019, around 19,000 deliveries were performed at this government hospital — the number today is 21,000 deliveries a year — and of these nearly 4,000 infants ended up at the NICU after various medical complications and needed breast milk.

required breast milk, the Rotarians were immediately interested. Their community needs assessment done at this ICU gave them some vital statistics. In 2019, around 19,000 deliveries were performed at this government hospital — the number today is 21,000 deliveries a year — and of these nearly 4,000 infants ended up at the neonatal unit’s ICU after various medical complications and needed breast milk. Their mothers could either not feed these babies or the babies could not take the milk from their mothers, being very weak to do so.

The doctors at this neonatal unit had no other option but to give these tiny and ailing infants either powder milk or other unsafe, unprocessed milk, posing a huge health risk to the babies. “To ensure safe and processed milk to such babies a human milk bank was required urgently. We understood that this hospital

constantly required a large supply of human milk through a sophisticated and well-equipped human milk bank,” says Landge.

The Rotarians started getting quotations for the equipment required and estimated a total project cost of \$58,000. The serving district governor provided \$7,000 from the DDF and a hunt was next launched for an international partner. In 2015 the club had hosted a Rotary Friendship Exchange team, which was led by Madeline King from RC Calgary, Canada, RI District 5360. She was approached to partner with the Aurangabad club for this project, but this couldn’t be done as they had no funds. “But came the next Rotary year, and funds were then available. They themselves contacted us and agreed to contribute \$10,000 for this project,” he adds.

An MoU was then signed with the government hospital; meanwhile

one of the past presidents of the club got in touch with RC James River, Richmond, US, and the club agreed to contribute another \$2,000. With local businessmen and industrialists agreeing to give ₹8 lakh, “we raised \$36,340 and went in for a GG under the Rotary focus area of Maternal and Child Health and TRF sanctioned an amount of \$21,660, with the application being approved rather quickly.”

But with Covid blues, “some of the funds were delayed, and when the two peaks of the pandemic hit India, this major government hospital in Aurangabad was under immense pressure to deal with Covid-related complications. We also lost a few near and dear ones during this period and the project planning and timeline collapsed completely.”

But then you can't keep a good project down! Fortune smiled on this project with the neonatal ICU getting a Kangaroo Mother Care Ward sponsored through a CSR initiative. The Rotarians decided to put up their milk bank in this ward, and in September

Last month, about three litres of human milk was collected and this can be stored for six months. The doctors have assured us that through this human milk bank child mortality rate of this region will be significantly reduced.

Hemant Landge
past president
RC Aurangabad West



2023, the project was inaugurated by RID 3132 DG Swati Herkal.

Landge added that the Rotarians are carefully monitoring the working of this milk bank to ensure that this critical need of the community is being properly addressed. On how lactating mothers are motivated to donate milk, he says, “There is a set of very dedicated doctors working at the neonatal ICU in this hospital and they convince women who give birth here to donate milk. Last month, about three litres of human milk was collected, and this can be stored for six months. The doctors have assured us that through this human milk bank, newborn babies requiring critical medical care will get more effective treatment and results, and it will also significantly help to reduce the child mortality rate of this region.”

He thanked the project co-chair Dr Rupali Ashtaputre and HoD of the neonatal ICU Dr LS Deshmukh for the successful completion of the project.

A human milk bank in Tirupati

Yet another Rotary human milk bank was established in the southern region by the Rotary Club of

Tirupati, RID 3191, at the Government Maternity Hospital in this temple city, where between 40 to 60 babies are delivered every month. It was inaugurated by the district governor Udaykumar Bhaskara, and “will go a long way in ensuring that so many infants who cannot get their mothers’ milk for various reasons, will get human milk from our milk bank, and go on to become healthy children,” said project chair T Damadaram.

Club president K V Phani Raja Kumar said this blood bank was made possible thanks to help from many individuals and organisations. Project co-chair Hemachander Magam said this milk bank, “the first-of-its-kind in Andhra Pradesh,” was established through a global grant of ₹35 lakh in partnership with RC Greentown, Malaysia, RID 3300.

This 104-member club, which has already put up a crematorium, “that cremated 2,386 persons during the Covid pandemic,” is next planning a palliative care unit for elderly people, “many of whom are left behind by their relatives to spend their last days in this temple city,” said Magam. ■

District Wise TRF Contribution as on March 2024

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution	
India						
2981	39,229	1,210	1,000	250	41,690	
2982	35,274	812	24,085	18,644	78,816	
3000	89,817	1,890	12,313	183,789	287,810	
3011	196,206	27,725	52,080	1,015,411	1,291,422	
3012	16,861	50	0	428,546	445,458	
3020	116,787	56,971	39,747	50,025	263,530	
3030	96,618	27,788	12,609	217,759	354,774	
3040	5,293	268	0	42,880	48,441	
3053	29,017	1,200	0	66,313	96,530	
3055	100,963	2,711	30	6,228	109,933	
3056	33,730	125	0	0	33,855	
3060	108,839	9,615	7,851	467,604	593,909	
3070	6,958	393	0	0	7,351	
3080	95,548	24,701	1,500	39,966	161,715	
3090	49,348	2,108	19,000	26,809	97,265	
3100	102,711	2,787	25,301	50,233	181,032	
3110	11,785	30	0	108,129	119,944	
3120	37,820	131	0	5,101	43,052	
3131	499,094	13,401	108,098	1,103,471	1,724,064	
3132	103,433	4,858	10,000	51,523	169,815	
3141	394,418	40,169	105,085	1,859,754	2,399,425	
3142	272,367	113,904	14,500	128,603	529,374	
3150	59,454	32,224	160,423	126,801	378,902	
3160	15,349	1,347	0	3,432	20,128	
3170	104,679	32,634	12,700	114,431	264,444	
3181	112,358	2,357	1,000	820	116,535	
3182	59,387	4,630	25,000	0	89,017	
3191	86,216	13,021	60,976	591,032	751,245	
3192	115,801	16,923	0	153,578	286,302	
3201	186,363	52,210	45,684	1,284,042	1,568,299	
3203	21,403	21,567	11,220	15,550	69,740	
3204	18,967	2,695	0	27,424	49,086	
3211	61,370	4,236	27,325	99,549	192,480	
3212	78,170	26,158	2,000	117,627	223,956	
3231	4,474	3,397	314	0	8,185	
3232	62,589	19,089	21,535	1,349,137	1,452,349	
3240	108,093	15,438	34,000	98,834	256,366	
3250	39,210	3,681	26	37,367	80,285	
3261	28,706	4,766	0	36,954	70,426	
3262	47,414	5,763	1,000	15,416	69,593	
3291	166,352	3,483	119,646	2,625	292,106	
3220	Sri Lanka	48,919	4,305	0	5,863	59,086
3271	Pakistan	15,750	82,553	0	20,402	118,706
*3272	Pakistan	4,342	385	0	25	4,752
*3281	Bangladesh	80,569	2,105	3,000	264,728	350,403
*3282	Bangladesh	90,726	4,982	1,000	9,116	105,824
3292	Nepal	166,966	23,253	13,000	335,870	539,088
63	(former 3272)	3,025	50	0	0	3,075
64	(former 3281)	26,500	400	1,000	1,124	29,023
65	(former 3282)	3,922	200	0	9,000	13,122

* Undistricted

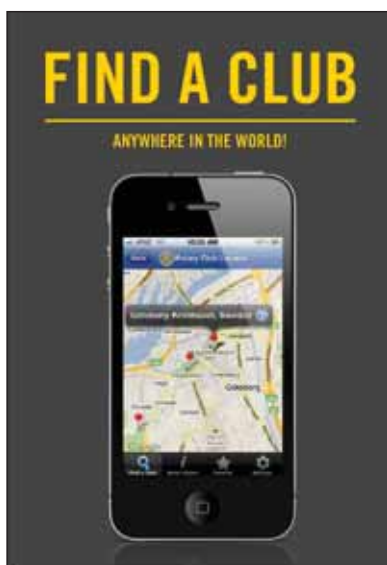
Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, AoF and World Fund.

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



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CSR projects in schools, hospital & villages

Team Rotary News

In a major fillip to classroom and sanitation facilities at the Government Primary School in Aralumallige village in the Doddaballapur taluk, a part of Bengaluru rural district, RC Bangalore Lakeside, RID 3191, joined hands with ITC Filtrona to build two classroom blocks, two toilet blocks and a mini science centre through a CSR grant project of ₹32 lakh.

While the primary aim of this Happy School project was to upgrade the infrastructure and other facilities to make learning a joyful experience for rural students, “the STEM Lab will empower children with basic concepts

of science, technology, engineering and math. The science centre is designed to make teaching simpler, interesting and accessible,” said Kashinath Prabhu, project chair. The Rotary India Literacy Mission is one of the project partners.

Block education officer Sayeeda Anees and the school management have thanked Rotary for identifying this rural school and taking up such a major construction. DG Udaykumar Bhaskara and ITC Filtrona CEO Surajit Ghosh jointly inaugurated the new facilities in the presence of club president Veeresh Naidu, district education officials, village leaders and school faculty.

Gift-A-Life

Another CSR grant project was completed under the *Gift-A-Life* banner at the Sri Jayadeva Institute of Cardiovascular Sciences and Research in which Altisource Business Solutions pitched in with ₹60.1 lakh to fund 86 heart surgeries (₹30.1 lakh) and an anaesthesia workstation for the operation theatre (₹30 lakh). The Needy Heart Foundation at the hospital has partnered with the club.

Jayadeva Hospital director Dr K S Ravindranath expressed his happiness over the project at an informal event at the hospital premises. “We owe a

A STEM lab set up by RC Bangalore Lakeside at the Government Primary School in Doddaballapur taluk.



special thanks to Veena, Shivakumar and Nandu from Jayadeva Hospital for working closely with us over the last five months, providing us all the support in executing this healthcare project,” said Prabhu.

A drinking water kiosk was set up at the Government Higher Primary School, Bangarappa Nagar, near Rajarajeshwari Nagar in the city, in collaboration with Cigna Health Solutions India, RC Bengaluru South Samarpane and Maithri Aquatech, the technology partner. It is an ‘Atmospheric Water Generator (AWG),’ that is, pure drinking water is generated from air at the kiosk which has a capacity to produce 250 litres per day, said Prabhu. “We plan to install over 100 such AWG kiosks in government schools and colleges in partnership with our corporate and NGO partners.”

The corporate partner, ITC Filtrona also funded the setting up of 46 solar street-lights in six villages at Majarahosahalli panchayat of the Doddaballapur taluk under its CSR grant. ■



An atmospheric water generator being inaugurated by DG Udaykumar Bhaskara at a government school. Project chair Kashinath Prabhu is seen standing behind him.



Gordon McNally
President
Rotary International

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Points To Note

- In both the modes, the contribution credit is assigned to individual members. However, 80G receipt is generated only in the remitter's name. (Club leader in case of online and Club's Trust/Club in case of offline mode)
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Jaffna's scars and beauty

Kiran Zehra



As the plane lands at Jaffna's Palaly airport, you feel excited with a sobering awareness of the not-so-distant ethnic war and strife that had plagued this small town in the northern province of Sri Lanka. Even today, one side of the airport road is guarded by soldiers, juxtaposed with abandoned buildings, bullet-riddled structures, and undulating green fields guarded with barbed wires and

warning boards of landmines... all signs of the terrible civil war that had torn asunder the social fabric of this once beautiful peninsula of northern Lanka. A bitter, cruel war between the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the Sinhalese Army that lasted for nearly three decades from 1983 to 2009.

"That temple you are looking at is new. It was built post-war," says our tour guide Sunmugalingam

Thillai Nadesan (hired through www.jaffnatours.net), pointing to a Hindu temple with a colourful *gopuram* (pyramidal tower) on the outskirts of the city. A Sri Lankan Tamil who lost his father at the age of three during the civil war, he assures us that "as you get closer to the city, it's a different sight... fancy hotels, busy bazaars, colourful roadside stalls. You'll even spot vintage cars and a few luxury vehicles too," he

The presence of the military with their armoured vehicles and their omnipresent troops littered across Jaffna is a reminder of the final phase of the war in which Tamil rebels were annihilated in 2009.

smiles. So, has the economic crisis that gripped the island nation in 2019 crippled Jaffna too, I ask him. “We have been living in a state of poverty since the civil war; so for us in this region, the economic crisis wasn’t a big deal. But of course, the southern part was badly affected.”

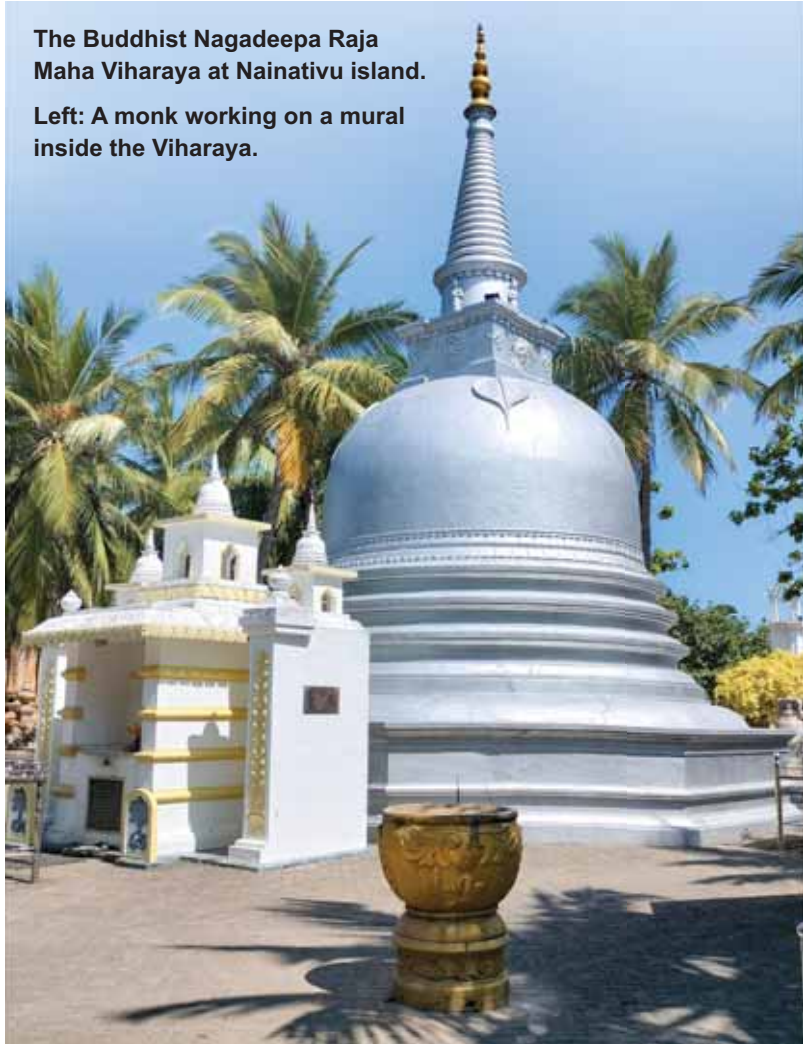
After checking into our hotel, we lost no time to get to Valvettithurai, the birthplace of LTTE chief Vellupillai Prabhakaran, where a stunning

coastline stretches towards east to Point Pedro. Enjoy a leisurely stroll along the narrow white sand beach nestled between a coral reef and rows of abandoned homes. The presence of the military with their armoured vehicles and their omnipresent troops littered across Jaffna is a reminder of the final phase of the war in which Tamil rebels were annihilated in 2009. But despite the violent past, the beauty of this coastal town is stunning. You



The Buddhist Nagadeepa Raja Maha Viharaya at Nainativu island.

Left: A monk working on a mural inside the Viharaya.



The Nallur Kandaswamy temple.

Right: Jeyapriya crafting a palmyra leaf hat.



can stand in a ruined doorway and admire fishermen casting their nets in the turquoise sea or laying out their fish to dry. On the day of our visit, the sun was intense, and the fishermen were enjoying a Coca-Cola break after pulling out a fishing net. We must have been staring at them drinking the cold drink because one fisherman kindly offered us a glass, which was gratefully accepted.

In Karaitivu, a small village enroute to the casuarina beach, Jeyapriya (20) and Kanthasami (67), were patiently intertwining palm leaves to make hats and mats. Here the locals sell a variety of palmyra crafts that fetch extra income for their families. They receive training and support from the Palmyrah Development Board, Sri Lanka, and that “has helped us in honing

our weaving skills, gain financial independence and business planning,” says Kanthasami. Inside his thatched hut-cum-workspace, he has on display hats, baskets, mats, and storage boxes that he has made. He has worked as a palmyra weaver for over 30 years but is now considering retirement “due to poor health.” In his raspy voice, he tells us about the coveted artisan award he had won pointing to a citation plaque on the wall.

Unlike in India, there are no paid or special darshan privileges at this temple. The temple authorities uphold the centuries-old traditions and regulations, which apply to all visitors regardless of their status.

The road to the casuarina beach is dotted by palmyra trees and estuaries, presenting a scenic postcard image. It dawned on us that these trees hold far more significance than mere scenic beauty, as they are integral to the cultural and economic fabric of the local community. At the beach, the waves don’t crash but caress the white sands gently. Food stalls line the shore, offering local delicacies. Water sports are available for a fee that may be prohibitive for some.

At the Nallur Kandaswamy temple in Jaffna, it’s customary for men to remove their shirts as a token of reverence. The temple’s inner sanctum bears architectural similarity to the Guruvayur temple of Kerala. Unlike in India, there are no paid or special darshan privileges at this temple. Nadesan says “the temple

A local ferry at Kurikadduwan Jetty.



authorities uphold the centuries-old traditions and regulations, which apply to all visitors regardless of their status.”

Another thing about Jaffna is that there are no street hawkers chasing or harassing tourists to buy stuff. The roadside vendors are also very polite. For instance, at the Keerimalai Pond, where you can see locals perform rituals and take a dip in the sacred water believed to have healing properties, a gooseberry seller was polite when we declined to buy from her. She even willingly posed for a picture afterward and gave us her WhatsApp number to receive the pictures we clicked together.

Outside Jaffna Fort, you may get a chance to watch a man with his monkey and two snakes staging an acrobatic show. He skilfully holds both snakes in each hand while the monkey dances to entertain the audience and collect money from it. Later, he invites the visitors to hold the snakes, which scares them all away.

Yet again you witness the ruins of the civil war as you step inside the fort. Originally built by the Portuguese in 1618 and later expanded by the Dutch, the fort has played a significant role in military defence and trade. Its coral bricks are riddled with bullet holes and the ruins of the church inside the fort are really chilling. But the sunset from the fort is breathtaking.

Jaffna cuisine bears resemblance to that of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, yet it boasts bold and fiery flavours. Some of the *sambols* and curries are heavily spiced with black pepper, cumin and coriander.

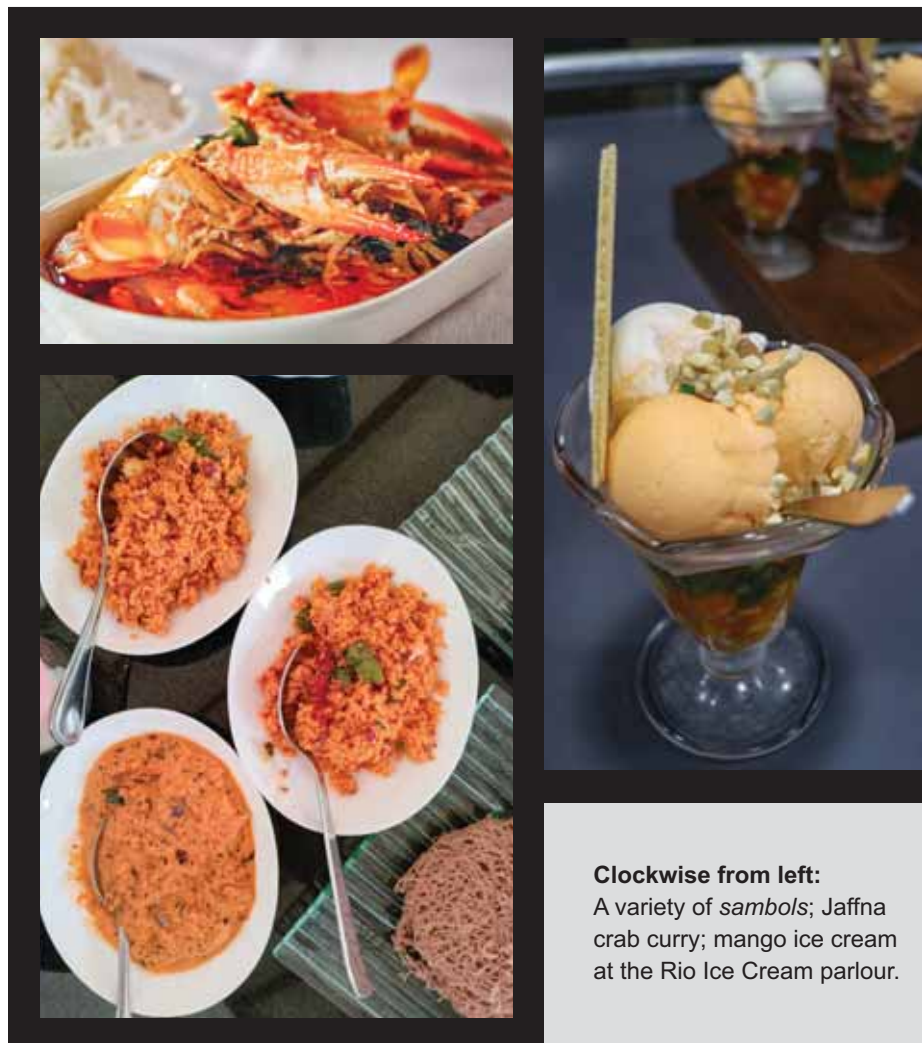
Parts of the Jaffna Library, reconstructed after it was burned down in 1981, remain inaccessible to visitors. The destruction of over 97,000 volumes of priceless Tamil literature and historical documents sparked outrage and ethnic tension between the Sinhalese and Tamils. The Mantri Manai, a significant royal landmark, is another site worth visiting in Jaffna.

Tiny beautiful Nainativu

Out of town and away from the shoreline, the tiny island of Nainativu lures Sri Lankan pilgrims and foreigners alike. Accessible via a local ferry from Kurikadduwan Jetty,

journeying over the turquoise sea, this island is home to two coastal temples: the Hindu Naga Pooshani Amman Kovil and the Buddhist Nagadeepa Raja Maha Viharaya.

The highlight of our visit to Nainativu was meeting a Buddhist monk at the Viharaya working on a large mural depicting the Buddha in a king’s court. Curious, we inquired about the time needed to complete it, to which he responded with a smile. To our surprise, he showed us a video on his phone, revealing his craftsmanship in creating the 40 feet-tall Buddha statue standing on the temple premises. He invited us to add clay to the mural he was creating.



Clockwise from left:
A variety of *sambols*; Jaffna crab curry; mango ice cream at the Rio Ice Cream parlour.

Fishermen with their fresh catch at a coastal fishing village in Point Pedro.



Flavours of Jaffna

Despite the war and poverty, “our local cuisine has stood the test of time. The *kilangu roti* and *yarl kottu parotta* are our comfort food,” says Nadesan as he hands us a *kilangu roti* to try at a roadside stall. This snack has a spicy potato filling wrapped in a wheat chapati and toasted on all sides, reminiscent of a samosa but with a healthier twist, as it’s free from *maida* and excess oil.

Jaffna cuisine bears resemblance to that of Tamil Nadu and Kerala, yet it boasts bold and fiery flavours. Some of the *sambols* (grated coconut chutney) and curries are heavily spiced with black pepper, cumin and coriander. Signature delicacies such as the spicy Jaffna crab curry and the tangy mango curry “are our culinary ambassadors, embodying our cultural heritage and gastronomic legacy,” says our guide proudly and they are a must-try.



Children enjoying a dip in the Keerimalai Pond.

If you are interested in a typical South Indian meal then head to the Malayan Café, a vegetarian restaurant in the heart of Jaffna. It has vintage interiors and its menu is written on blackboard. Note: You have to clear your own table and throw your banana leaf inside a garbage chute once you finish the meal.

Whether it was our guide Nadesan, our tuk-tuk (autorickshaw)

driver, or even Google, they would all recommend going to Rio Ice Cream. The sundaes here are amazing, and the portion substantial enough to skip dinner. Apart from the regular vanilla and chocolate flavours, try their dry fruit sundae — you’ll come back for a second one.

Pictures by Kiran Zehra
Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

Eco-friendly stoves make women happy

V Muthukumar



RAC Panvel Elite president Samruddhi Munot (2nd from right) and her team giving a demo of a biomass stove to a tribal woman.

All the 10 tribal families at Sindalachiwadi village in Raigad district of Maharashtra are happy that they don't have to suffer a daily ordeal while preparing meals in their mud huts. With their new biomass, smokeless stoves donated by RAC Panvel Elite, RID 3131, "cooking has become easy and painless for us. Also, the cooking time is reduced by around 40–50 minutes. With mud *chullahs* we were exposed to excessive smoke, suffered from frequent cough and eye irritation," says Pallavi (35). Also, that *chullah* had to be fed with firewood from tree branches, and this resulted in shrinking green cover in their village.

Rotaractors led by their club president Samruddhi Munot hosted a one-day Garba dance and music event at the

Sindhi Panchayat Hall, Panvel, during the Navaratri festival to raise funds for their service projects. "We raised around ₹75,000 out of our Garba programme, and used ₹35,000 for the smokeless stove project. We gave a demonstration to each beneficiary at her home on how to use the stove that does not need either electricity or battery to run it," explains Samruddhi. First, a couple of coal briquettes are pushed into the side funnel of the stove, and they are lighted. Then small, dry twigs are pushed in, which will result in instant flame on top. "We can cook one dish at a time, and any type of vessel of different sizes can be placed on top of the stove," she says.

Now 45-year-old Kunda has got more spare time to do "other household chores and look after my children better. I am also thinking of taking up

a part-time job at home to supplement our monthly income." Apart from improving the air quality, the biomass device called Panval Rocket Stove (PRS-v5) is eco-friendly and sustainable in the long run, and is thus ideal and convenient for rural housewives.

Chartered in 2019, this Rotaract club is going to take up a mega tree plantation drive in five government schools shortly. "Over 1,000 saplings of diverse varieties will be planted on the school premises; and each tree will be taken care of by a student." At a recent medical camp held at the Jain Hall, 200 patients were screened by a team of 12 doctors led by Dr Nilesh Banthia, a neurologist, from the Neo Clinic and Eco Centre, Panvel. To help thalassaemia patients being treated at the MGM Hospital, the Rotaractors

We raised around ₹75,000 out of our Garba programme, and used ₹35,000 for the smokeless stove project. We gave a demonstration to each beneficiary at their houses.

Samruddhi Munot
president, RAC Panvel Elite

collected over 50 units of blood at a blood donation camp.

Fundraisers

Rotaractors hold fundraisers like Garba dance, Diwali Milan and other fun programmes during festivals to mobilise funds for service projects.



Club president Samruddhi registers a patient during a medical camp at the Jain Hall, Panvel.



At a blood donation camp along with Ritesh Munot, board member and past president, RC Panvel Elite.

“We have an annual club fee of ₹2,300 per head, of which ₹300 goes to the district fund, ₹785 to RI dues and the rest is used for projects. We pay a token amount of ₹1,000 per annum to our district as multimedia charges,” says Samruddhi.

With a headcount of 26, “our club is being mentored by Ritesh Munot, board member and past president, RC Panvel Elite. He gives us fresh ideas, motivates and guides us on procuring resource material for service projects,” she explains. They also take up online campaign and crowdfunding to mobilise funds. “Recently five stray dogs got afflicted with jaundice. We took up an online campaign, raised funds and treated the canines successfully.”

A final year Law student, Samruddhi says, “my five-year journey in Rotaract is eventful as I’ve learnt many new things.” She is doing internship in a private law firm, and “I will become a Rotarian after 3–4 years once I establish myself in my career,” she smiles. ■

Graffiti art highlights social issues in Bengaluru

Team Rotary News



An artwork focussing on crimes against women.

RI District 3191, in association with the Bengaluru Police, City Armed Reserve (CAR) - South Division, helped paint graffiti on the walls of the Adugodi Police Station facing the Hosur Road in the city. The street art project named ‘Graffiti for Hope’ draws attention to three major social issues — women’s safety, drug abuse and cybercrime.

Professional graffiti artists Sayam from Kolkata, Taresh from Mumbai and Rohan from Bengaluru created some

amazing artwork on the walls which captured the attention of the passersby. “Even as they were painting on the wall, standing on the footpath under the scorching sun, several people stopped to take pictures, talked to the artists, and even offered them water and soft drinks,” said Nivedita Dutt, a member of the district’s cultural committee, who spearheaded the project. This busy, popular route stretches to the Electronic City and is an important connecting road to Chennai.

The collage of pictures is so intense and compelling



An artist at work highlighting cyber crime.



An artwork on substance abuse.



that each image seems to convey its tale of agony, sharp and clear, she said. The Deputy Commissioner of Police (CAR) has also allotted the boundary wall of a school inside its office campus for the graffiti art.

Raman Gupta, Joint Commissioner of Police, Bengaluru, noted that the project was relevant and will initiate dialogue among the public as all the three issues are rapidly rising and people have to be sensitised.

DG Udaykumar Bhaskara appreciated the initiative and DGE Satish Madhavan is keen on expanding its scope in the coming Rotary year, said Nivedita. ■



Strategies to beat the summer heat

Preeti Mehra

How to keep your house cool naturally to counter warnings of an unprecedented rise in temperatures.

For those who live in tropical climes, the advent of summer is not a signal to bask in the sun and forget the blues of the winter. It serves as a reminder of the hot torrid months ahead when the rivers run dry, and people look heavenwards to rain clouds for deliverance from the heat. Of course, their hopes are a touch soured when the meteorological department predicts a hotter summer than previous years and the possibility of a delayed monsoon.

The weatherman has been warning us since March that Summer 2024 (April-June) will see mercury soaring to unexpected highs. In fact, the Indian Meteorological Department's director general, Mrutyunjay Mahapatra, is on record to say that most states will witness above-normal temperatures from April to June. Many other weather forecasters see heat wave conditions (temperatures 4-5 degrees Celsius above the seasonal average) in the three summer months with coastal areas registering high temperatures and humidity.

So, how does one stay cool in summer? I won't tire you with the cliched recommendation of drinking a lot of fluids, turning up the AC or running off to cooler destinations in the hills. Instead, I am sharing some information I have gathered about how to make the environment you live in cooler and heat resistant, not just this summer but in many summers to come.

Charity, they say, begins at home. So, what are the things you can do which give your house a green and cooler edge?

First and foremost, you must ensure that the house interiors are kept as cool as possible. For this the most important thing is to create cross ventilation across the house by keeping windows open with a good mosquito mesh that will keep out insects but bring in adequate air. If windows are opened in a manner that will create an

air funnel, it will help bring down the temperature by a few degrees.

Complement this cross ventilation with lightweight interior furniture. If it is of natural bamboo or compressed wood, it would give you that green edge. Your curtains must be of a light textile material and pastel shades that give an airy feeling to the indoors. It would be best to pack up your heavy carpets in the summer months and go for light 'throw' durries that are made of jute or earthy shades of thick cotton fibre.



If you unclutter your surroundings — remove your curios and heavy artefacts for the summer months and give the room a minimalistic look, that too helps to keep cool, while uncluttering the mind as well.

Remember the lighting in your home also generates unnecessary heat. Today, it is possible to replace all incandescent bulbs with LED or CFL bulbs. Though these are more expensive when you buy them, they last much longer and emit a cool white light that feels less hot. They are also energy efficient.

Plants too can play an amazing role in cooling down the house. I have seen people use the vertical garden concept in places that receive maximum sunlight in their homes, to great effect. Large potted plants with broad leaves too could be kept in a smart way to shut out the direct rays of the sun. All this requires a bit of researching, thinking and an eagerness not to succumb to energy guzzling and emission

generating equipment that is ruining the planet.

Many of those who are very conscious of going green and loathe using ACs extensively because of the energy they consume and their contribution to global warming, can use natural ways of keeping cool. In hot and dry conditions, a desert cooler which cools the air by evaporating water can be used. It is a simple device made up of a fan, a water tank, and a wet filter. The fan draws in hot air from the outside and passes it through the wet filter, cooling it and releasing cold air into the room. Such coolers consume less power than an AC but are not effective in humid climates. As for air conditioners, this column has in the past delved in detail why it is wiser to opt for machines with good energy efficiency ratings.

I know a friend who uses a table fan with a bowl of ice placed before it instead of a cooler. Kept in a strategic place near a window this can be very effective in cooling a room in hot dry conditions. When the ice melts and the water is no longer cool, it can be replaced with another bowl. The water can later be used for watering plants or for cleaning purposes. She calls it her “natural air conditioner.”

If you are building your own independent house, there are scores of methods through which you can ensure that it will be resilient to the hotter temperatures that are expected due to climate change in the future. The internet has scores of websites that suggest how you can go about it. I will list just a few here.

Before you start to build, please do study the topography very carefully. If the plot you have chosen has trees on it or you are planning to plant large trees, place them in such a way that they offer you natural cover, a canopy of sorts that can be very pleasant and will give you joy and shade for years to come. Depending on the weather of the

Create cross ventilation across the house by keeping windows open with a good mosquito mesh that will keep out insects but bring in adequate air. It will help bring down the temperature by a few degrees.

place you have chosen, do plan for the winter months as sunlight is enjoyable in the colder season.

Next, ascertain from which direction the wind blows in summer through your plot of land. This will help in planning which side your house should face, along with all the entrances, doors and windows. A house with natural cross ventilation and sufficient light coming in helps you save energy cost.

How you plan your roof is also very important. Of course, it must gel with the surrounding areas and the other houses in the region, but it must also be such that it helps you keep cool in the most uncomfortable summer months.

According to experts it is best to build the roof out of reflective material and paint as these absorb less heat, making the insides of the house cooler. They also suggest materials like stone, brick or concrete as these have a capacity to store the heat and prevent its transfer to the inside of the house.

But it would be best to engage an architect who is reputed for her/ his eco-friendly design skills. That can transform your future world.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



Bike for the big burn

Bharat & Shalan Savur

Do we consume food — or does fast food consume us? This might seem like serving paranoia on a platter, but all this business buzz around ultra-processed food (UPF) causes brain-fade or brain fuzz. Your resistance caves in to the hounding TV commercial and newspaper ads and advertorials. Welcome to the club that believes “Dieting is easy. I have done it a hundred times.”

Carlos Monteiro, a nutrition and health expert at Brazil’s University of Sao Paulo is a pioneer and leader amongst them. Back in 2009, Monteiro maintained, “Ultra-processed foods are formulations of substances derived from foods. They contain little or no whole foods and are typically enhanced with colours, flavours, emulsifiers and other cosmetic additives.”

In 2019, (the year of the Covid pandemic and perhaps the reason his experiment didn’t get the exposure it deserved), Monteiro backed his theory with practice. And established what nutrition and health experts hold as the gold standard on the subject. He had held that “people who eat lots of UPFs have a higher risk of heart disease, cancer, asthma, depression and other illnesses.” His critics and the concerned MNCs (multi-national companies) dismissed this as ‘observational’ and vague. The burden of proof was non-existent in any case.

This experiment was the clincher. Twenty people were fed either ultra-processed or unprocessed food for two weeks, then the opposite for the next two weeks. Those eating UPFs gained an average of nearly a kilo,

while those on the unprocessed diet shed the same amount. Weight loss or gain occurs over a longer time-frame. Hence, the one kilo lost or gained in 30 days is dramatic and leaves no doubt that UPFs are neither fish nor fowl. Just plain foul. Our advice: Bunk that junk.

We are dieticians by default. My mother had suffered a stroke in her middle age (she lived half a life with her left side paralysed) and I was declared ‘hypertensive’ (high blood-pressure) around the age of 40. Heart specialist Dr Pillai prescribed a papad-free, pickle-free diet. And Shalan took the precaution one step further. She cooked the same food we had earlier, but with one simple yet significant change — without oil. That was a good 10 years before our *Fitness for Life* book was launched.

Almost the first question from press to public after the launch was, “How do you cook without oil?” First, by journalists who reviewed the book. And then by the readers who had just read it. We had struck oil.

Shantha, the head of the Dietetics department of the Catering College in Mumbai posed the same question, and requested a demonstration. We had done so in the past, but to accommodate 27 catering college students in our comparatively tiny kitchen was a first in every sense. But it was a big hit.

Mother Nature has provided us with a unique system of physiological internal plumbing. A system that both scientists and accountants would agree is the best in the world. The latter would apply the FILO (First In Last Out) method to account for the food and liquid you consume every day. Let’s navigate this system from

a nutritionist’s point of view. The stomach is the ‘inventory controller’ of the consumed food and fluid. And it follows the FILO method — as an inventory manager would put it. FILO is fundamental as a measure of holistic health.

Over 75 per cent of our body is fluid. Any effort, especially exercise, drains this element. A volume-weight loss is temporary at this stage. As fresh fluid/food soon fills in the blank/body bank.

Non-veg food is harder and heavier to digest. Man has neither the required carnivorous teeth nor acidic juices to naturally digest meat. Hence, it takes around 36 hours to digest and eliminate it from the body. So please limit this pleasure



to, may be, two meals a week. Avoid red meat — fish and chicken are a better choice. And observe a balanced diet.

Moreover, keep a three-hour gap between a non-veg meal and exercise. Vegetarians can commence after two hours, but they too need to watch their diet. Traditional vegetarian food lacks the protein required. Add soya and paneer to compensate.

Finally, veg or non-veg, you require a minimum of two litres of fluid just to get you going in normal conditions. Add one or more litres of fluid at any time — exercise and meal time included. Liquor and coffee are excluded as both dehydrate.

Cycling as an exercise You are now ready to straddle the saddle. But which horse (read cycle) should you ride? Roads, in most metros, are too ‘car-crowded’, pot-holed and downright dangerous. So the regular cycle is out,

but you can go for a stationary exercise cycle with a comfortable seat.

If you don’t have a standard stationary cycle and prefer one, buy it online; Amazon has the Strauss Stayfit for ₹8,500. We discovered this while browsing the Net for this column. Unfortunately, the seat is inadequate because it does not sufficiently protect your spine and can trigger backpain. Our own mini-cycle is manufactured no more. So that’s out. Yet, Amazon has a combo that apparently fits the bill (₹1,300 for the PowerMax Fitness mini-cycle and ₹1,484 for the camping folding chair made of alloy steel.) For a combined price of ₹2,784, this combo deal is a steal. Check out the bargain. It’s a ‘soft pedal’ and a perfect fit for your special cosy corner. Your comfortable seat to the ozone zone. For the folding chair will support both spine and body. Figuratively speaking, you can ride this up to sunset!

Keep your pedals nice and loose. The aim is speed, not resistance. Prepare yourself to cycle at 80 revolutions (revs) per minute. One rev is when say, your left knee reaches apex point. Then the second follows the same pattern. Count up to 80 revs in 60 seconds.

Going for the burn means just that. The only catch is that the body experiences mainly water loss for the first 10 minutes. Fat burning occurs after that. Hence, the ideal cycling time is a minimum of 20 minutes for a five-day fitness schedule. And 35 minutes for a three-day routine. We recommend the former.

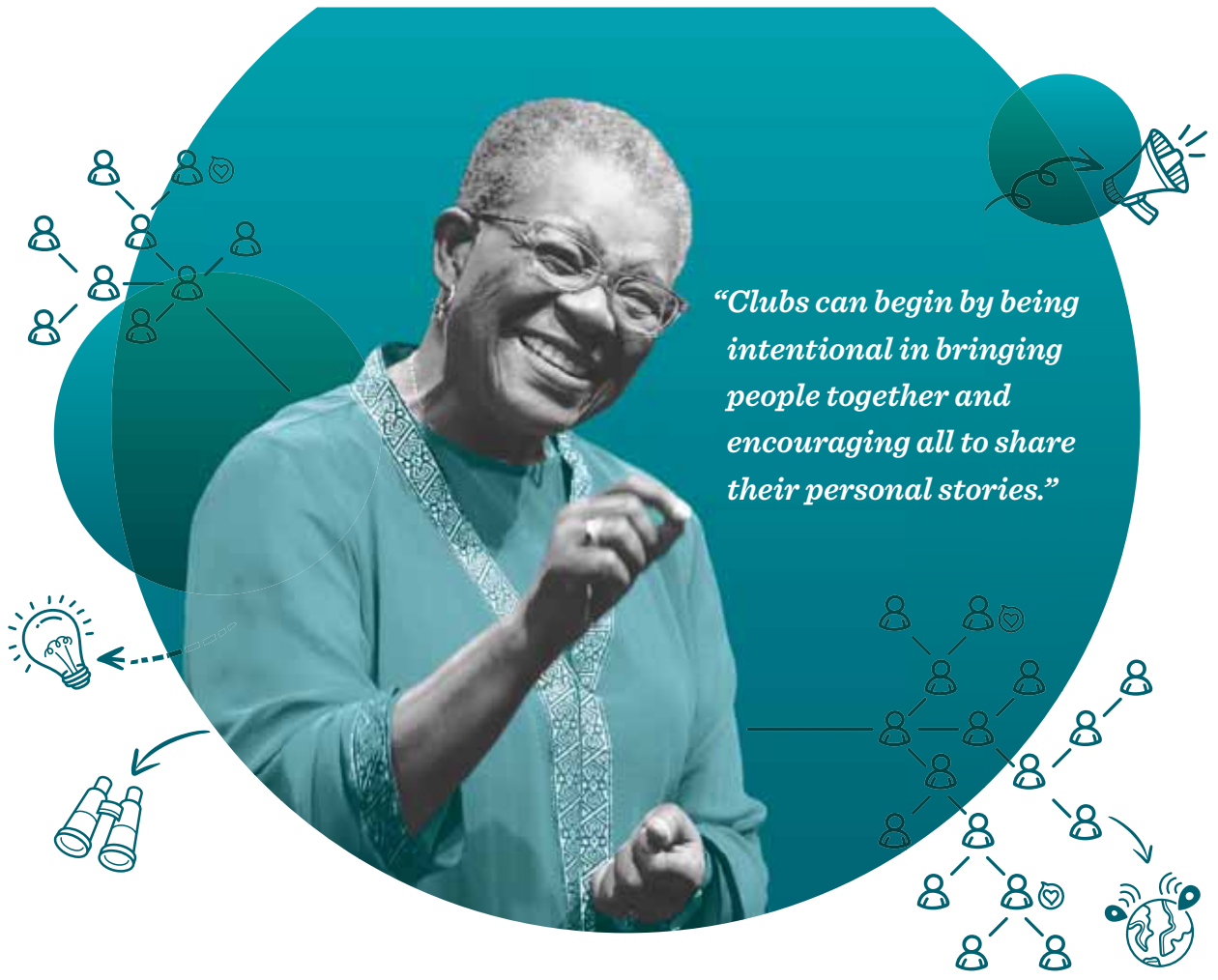
Listen to music, watch TV, or get a like-minded person to go ‘double seat’ on your ride! As we do in our *Fitness for Life* classes. Time then flies faster. And you are astride the ozone zone — the happy hormones activated within you by cycling. This also tones and strengthens your leg and feet muscles. But cycling does not address flexibility and overall muscle strengthening. We’ll take that up later.

The good news is that cycling is a complete cardio-vascular-respiratory exercise. Hence, you don’t need any other exercise to achieve the aerobic health and fitness effect. This holds true across generations and genders.

Stick to your schedule and observe our dietary directions. You could lose between three to five kg after three months. But don’t despair if you are not on target. You are bound to have lost at least a kg in this time span. Just extend your literal lifeline. Put it in perspective. You’ve gained weight over your lifetime. A three-month fitness period may not suffice. Yet, you’ve earned brownie points. And as they say, well begun is half done.

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





“Clubs can begin by being intentional in bringing people together and encouraging all to share their personal stories.”

The **ROTARY ACTION PLAN**
**EXPANDING
OUR REACH**

WITH ANDRÉ HADLEY MARRIA

André Hadley Marria is governor of District 6900 and a member of the Rotary Club of Thomasville, Georgia, USA. She's a founding mentor of Spark Thomasville, a programme for local entrepreneurs from underrepresented communities.



Q: How do you think about expanding Rotary's reach both globally and locally?

ANDRÉ: Expanding our reach and promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) mean that we need to embrace all the talents and skills that we have, and we need to acknowledge that we've not always done that in Rotary.

When I was asked in 2020 to work with Rotary's diversity, equity, and inclusion initiative, I had a keen awareness that until I and others were ready to take a personal inventory of our own internal biases, we could not implement change. I started working with individuals in a small group of clubs and said we need to look at ourselves and see whether we're really inclusive in the work that we're doing. We used a variety of methods to measure our attitudes and beliefs and took training to build our skills to engage with and facilitate difficult conversations.

Q: What can clubs do to begin expanding their reach? Where do they start?

ANDRÉ: Clubs can begin by being intentional in bringing people together and encouraging all to share their personal stories. And by being progressive in our thinking as we look at the talents of individuals that we want to be a part of our club. If a club has difficulty making change, that hinders growth and our appeal to new, younger people, especially if we don't adapt to how our members and participants want to engage with Rotary. If they are service oriented and outcome driven, we should broaden our reach to include those individuals who want to get work done. Clubs also need to address the needs of the community, ensuring that the members and leaders reflect the community they serve.

Q: How did the partnership between Spark Thomasville and your Rotary club help expand your club's reach?

ANDRÉ: We expanded our reach through collaboration with the local chamber of commerce, which supported our mentorship initiative with Spark. Our members were asked

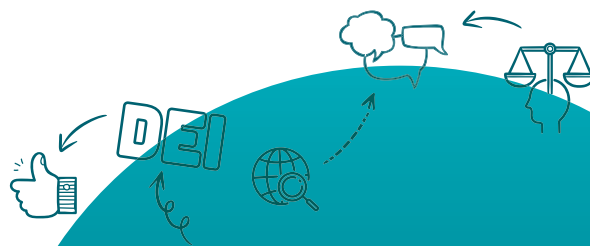
to serve as mentors, and it strengthened our partnership with the chamber as both organisations provided mentors to Spark. Participating in Spark allowed our Rotary club to meet other community leaders who could learn what we do.

Q: How can this approach be applied to other Rotary clubs?

ANDRÉ: Become a part of the community at large, know where to find businesses to connect with and other organisations, and find the real voices of the community. It's up to Rotary members to get these leaders involved, by being authentic, intentional, and willing to share their own stories, inspiring others to do likewise. In Thomasville, one real voice was the Thomas County Family Connection, made up of social service, grassroots, healthcare, civic, and judicial agencies that serve families and children. Find those organisations, and any Rotary or Rotaract club can expand its reach.

Q: If there's one thing you could tell Rotary members about expanding our reach, what would it be?

ANDRÉ: We have to expand beyond our traditional way of partnering. We're going to have to look at our relationships and continue to do our work a different kind of way. You make sure that you do something differently so you can give people an opportunity to have a voice.



Learn what your club can do at
rotary.org/actionplan

Rotary 



Wordsworld

The Word from Down Under



Sandhya Rao

What's cooking in
the Aussie pot?
A look at some dishes.

After a recent stint of travel, I realised once more how important it is for bookstores to focus attention on local authors, especially if identities are not instantly recognisable. Then again, a Chinese-sounding name could belong to Singapore, Taiwan, China, Malaysia... 'Mohsin Hamid' could be from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, the UK... On a visit to Australia recently, I looked desperately for Aussie writers at airport bookshops, but they were lost among the Jojo Moyes, Sophie Kinsellas, Stephen Kings. There were many books by

Liane Moriarty, for instance, but I discovered only much later that she was Australian! Richard Flanagan I knew, but Kate Grenville I didn't. Markus Zusak, yes, but Jane Harper, no. My lack of information, true, no excuses there, but I am sure there are many who are not necessarily bookworms but are interested in picking up books by local authors. Or at least knowing who they are. So, this is my plea to bookstores: please address this issue, in whatever way works for you.

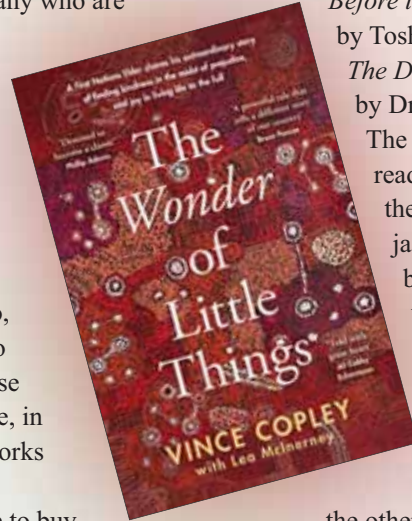
I did manage to buy four books — FOUR! — apart from the one that had travelled from Chennai. This last was *Prophet Song* by Paul Lynch, a Booker prizewinner and a slow, haunting read. Set in Ireland, it's a dark, dystopian novel, uniquely different. For one, it has no paragraphs, and thoughts flow in a continuum. It calls for patient and slow reading. Yet, most members of our book club managed not to be deterred by this because the writing and the ideas the writing contains are so compelling. *Prophet Song* is the story of a family feeling the consequences of the father being taken away by the forces of a fascist government at a time when Ireland is literally falling apart because of the ruling party's tyranny. As the mother, Eilish, strives to get herself and her family out of this nightmare, the readers feel a sense of dread and déjà vu. As one reviewer wrote, "The genius of this novel is that it makes the

impossible possible." That is a terrifying insight.

The quest for books of Australian origin continued, somewhat sporadically, although the first two picks were of novelists from the general neighbourhood:

Before the Coffee Gets Cold by Toshikazu Kawaguchi and *The Doctor of Hiroshima* by Dr Michihiko Hachiya.

The first I haven't yet read, but am haunted by the first line on the back jacket: 'If you could go back, who would you want to meet?' Hmm, who would that be? Do read about this book in one of the upcoming columns. Meanwhile, about



the other book. It is based on accounts recorded by a doctor in Hiroshima when the first atom bomb was dropped on it that fateful day, August 6, 1945. Hachiya writes: "The hour was early; the morning still, warm, and beautiful. Shimmering leaves, reflecting sunlight from a cloudless sky, made a pleasant contrast with shadows in my garden as I gazed absently through wide-flung doors opening to the south. ... Suddenly, a strong flash of light startled me — and then another. ... I remember vividly how a stone lantern in the garden became brilliantly lit and I debated whether this light was caused by a magnesium flare or sparks from a passing trolley."

Badly injured, Dr Hachiya makes his way to his hospital which soon becomes a harbour of sorts for the injured and the dying. His diary entries unravel the details of how they coped, both hospital staff and the people of Hiroshima, through dedication and hard work

and bewilderment, and how this small band of brave souls dealt with unimaginable destruction and loss. The language is straightforward, there's nothing flowery or poetic expressed about the pain of either physical wounds or innumerable bereavements — events are recorded as they happened and as the people dealt with the unimaginable. The most remarkable thing is that while there is horror, there appears to be no articulation of hatred.

Sydney airport threw up 'Ozzie' books, one with the giveaway title, *Outback*. Where but in Australia do you have the outback?! This quick read by Patricia Wolf finds Detective Sergeant Lucas Walker, on leave in his hometown Caloodie to spend time with his dying grandmother, unofficially having to handle a case involving two missing German backpackers, Berndt and Rita. Set against the drug trade in the region, the matter draws more heat when Rita's sister Barbara, a detective herself in Berlin, lands up to look for her sibling. Missing persons, murder, mystery all combine with a good dose of outback atmosphere and family relationships to make the book a worthy representative of Australian crime fiction.

But the book that really fascinates is *The Wonder of Little Things* by Vince Copley, written with his friend, Lee McInerney. Copley was a champion footballer and respected coach, and was committed to improving the lives of his people. The design of the cover clearly establishes the book's Aboriginal

connections with its fine-dotted design. We are familiar with White Australia's uncomfortable relationship with the Aboriginals, the original inhabitants of that vast continent, and indeed, they were largely invisible in the small parts of Sydney and Cairns that we visited. Copley's story, based on his experiences growing up nontraditional Aboriginal, is not a litany of woes; it is, as the title suggests, a true account of "hardship, courage and optimism, told without self-pity". Laconic and gently humorous by turns, Copley opens our eyes to ways of living that privileged folk anywhere in the world could never imagine, even as it helps us connect the dots with the lives of indigenous people everywhere.

I did not realise that the Aboriginals of Australia did not constitute one single mass of people; they comprise several different tribes and groups and include the Torres Strait Islander peoples. White Australia saw them through their own eyes.

As Copley writes, they were 'classified' into categories: "The 'full bloods' were the 'real Aboriginals'. These were the Aboriginal people who still walked around wearing loincloths and carrying spears and eating witchetty

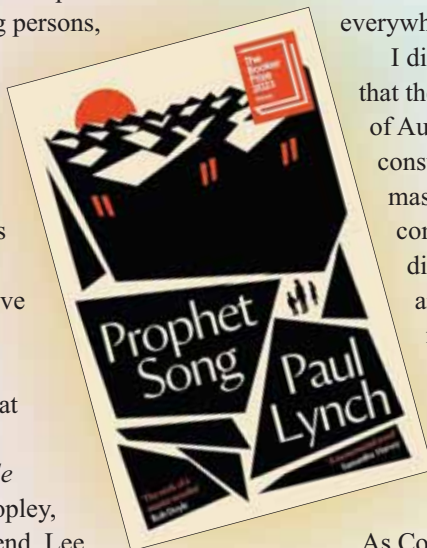
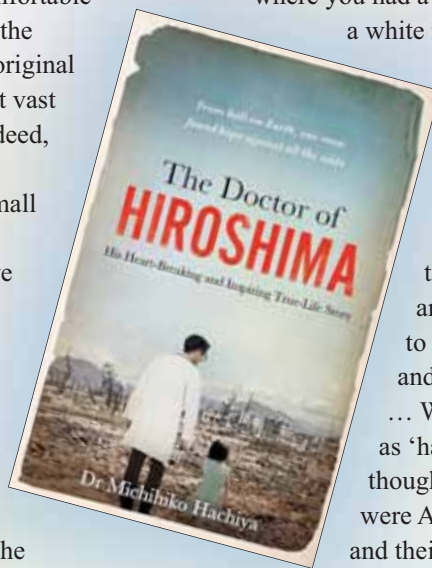
grubs — things like that. Another category they had were 'half-caste', where you had a white father or a white mother. They

saw that as the half-educated situation. In their minds you were a little bit more capable than the 'full bloods' and you'd be able to live in a house and look after it.

... We were classed as 'half-castes', even though my mum and dad were Aboriginal people and their parents were Aboriginal people. People would say to us, "Oh, you're part Aboriginal." And we'd say, "Yeah, well which part?"

There's a disarming simplicity about the writing and Copley's views of the world. For instance, when he was chosen for the state team while at school, he says of his coach/headmaster: 'I couldn't repay him for everything by being a brainy person because I wasn't, but I could repay him every time I went on the football field.' He believes nothing should stop blackfellas and whitefellas from putting their arms around each other if they are friends: 'One's white, one's black, but you don't see the skin colour — all you see is a friend.' When people ask Copley why he isn't angry, he says: 'What's the good of being angry?' He'd rather not waste his time on a negative emotion. Instead, he pins his faith on young people to ask the right questions. What follows, then, is: Is the world ready for hard questions?

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist



RC Nagapattinam — RID 2981



The phase-II of microforest project was inaugurated at the Government ITI in the presence of PDG Ramesh Babu, DGE Bhaskaran and DGN Leoni Xavier.

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — RID 3012



More than 100 people were examined at a health camp held at the Jain Mandir with the support of Dharamshila Narayana Super Speciality Hospital.

RC Madurai Sangamam — RID 3000



Around 100 students of Class 10 facing public exams at the Government High School, Virakanoor, attended a motivation session by Rtn Senthil Kumar.

RC Nashik Airport — RID 3030



The club, along with Delta Finochem, constructed a toilet block for boys and girls at the Zilla Parischad School at Winchur Dalvi. The project cost ₹7.5 lakh.

RC Faridabad Aravalli — RID 3011



Over 400 students at the MEC Convent School got their health parameters checked through various tests at a health camp.

RC Jaipur Pink City — RID 3056



Tricycles were gifted to four disabled persons to enable them to be mobile and venture out to earn their livelihood.

RC Surat East — RID 3060



Uniforms, school bags and sanitary pads were distributed to school girls, and health check-up camp was held in two tribal villages near Surat.

RC Kanpur North — RID 3110



Blankets were distributed to homeless people, children in an NGO and domestic helpers under *Project Aao Khushiya Bante* (spread happiness).

RC Shimla Midtown — RID 3080



Room heaters were donated to 10 beneficiaries including shop boys, health workers, cobblers and newspaper delivery boys.

Rotary E-Club Solapur Elite — RID 3132



Around 130 women including police personnel were screened at a breast cancer detection camp held with RC Jalna Midtown and FPAI.

RC Moradabad — RID 3100



Stationery items and snacks are being distributed to children at slum areas in the city every week. The project is led by club president Sharmitabh Sinha.

RC Smart City Navi Mumbai — RID 3142



Around 100 women were present at a session on breast cancer awareness conducted by Dr Aswini at the Don Bosco School, Nerul in Navi Mumbai.

RC Vita City — RID 3170



Over 400 students from Class 1–4 were examined at a dental check-up camp. Dental kits were distributed to them

Rotary E-Club Metro Dynamix — RID 3201



A smart board (₹1.3 lakh) inaugurated by DG TR Vijayakumar at the Corporation Primary School, Koundampalayam, will benefit 300 students.

RC Central Mysore — RID 3181



Blankets were distributed to 100 street dwellers to protect them against wintery nights.

RC Tellicerry — RID 3204



A wheelchair sponsored by Sharmila, wife of AG CP Krishna Kumar, was donated to a palliative care patient at her residence at Dharmadam.

RC Chikmagalur Coffee Land — RID 3182



A crematorium was renovated (₹8.5 lakh) with two new kilns, firewood storage shelter, water facility and a clean-up drive of the premises.

RC Tiruvalla — RID 3211



DG G Sumithran handed over three dialysis units and oximeters (GG: ₹25 lakh) donated by the club, along with RC Cupertino, US, to the Tiruvalla Medical Mission Hospital.

RC Sivakasi Central — RID 3212



Over 65 patients were screened at an eye camp held with the support of Sankara Eye Hospital. Sixteen of them underwent cataract surgery.

RC Raipur — RID 3261



Toy-based learning was taught by Lion Madhu Yadav Virat at the Government Primary School, Budhapara. Nutritionists gave tips to children.

RC Vaniyambadi — RID 3231



At the 256th monthly eye check-up camp at the Gandhinagar School, around 120 people were screened, among them 90 were selected for surgery.

RC Bhubaneswar Meadows — RID 3262



Mayor Sulochana Das, along with DG Jayashree Mohanty, flagged off a filaria awareness rath, at the Capital Hospital.

RC Patna Kankarbagh — RID 3250



Fifty cataract surgeries were done by Dr Rakesh Kumar, club member, at the Netra Nidan Eye Hospital. Blankets were given to all.

RC North Calcutta — RID 3291



Fifty girls were trained in a nursing course organised along with the Rotary Vocational Service Trust and conducted by the St John Ambulance.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



**TCA Srinivasa
Raghavan**

Get ready for summer madness



Summer is here, more or less. The next 100 days will be hot and hotter. I live in North India where — as I think an Englishman wrote in the 18th century — it gets so hot that when stray dogs chase each other, they prefer to walk. I have vivid memories of the North Indian summers in the 1950s and 1960s. They were extraordinarily cruel. Then came the afforestation programmes surrounding Delhi with lakhs of trees. That changed things. Thus, before the trees grew fully, there used to be very massive dust storms. The Arabic word for them is *khamsin*. There would be hot winds that would gust at about 100kmph, fully laden with billions of tonnes of dust. The entire sky would turn black-brown and the sun would vanish behind the swirling muck.

But often these storms would come at night. As was the custom those days, when there were no cooling devices, everyone slept in the open. The worst storms would be upon us in under a minute and everyone had to scramble indoors shouting “aandhi, aandhi”. The next morning everything would be under at least an inch of dust. And then, unless the storm was accompanied by a thunderstorm — you know, the good old western disturbances that the Met Department loves to blame for everything — the dust would trap the heat as effectively as the fog traps the pollution now. Life would be hell

for a few days after that. Even the dogs would stop chasing each other.

Back then, no one except the rajahs and maharajahs were rich enough to escape to the hills. There were no resorts, no hotels, no cottages for renting, nothing. You just stayed put wherever you were and at least for me there was no worse place than Gwalior. It’s situated in a massive bowl of volcanic stone. Because my father was posted there, I spent several summers in Gwalior. Luckily, there were no dust storms but the heat raining down during the day — and radiating up during the night — was unbelievable. I once saw a parrot drop dead from a tree. Seriously. Things are much better now, of course, because of the proliferation of cooling devices. The hills are also full of places where people can go and spend a few days.

For some reason we, Madrassis, think summer is a good time to get married — when the temperature is hovering in the upper 30s and the humidity is above 70. The men wear just a *veshti*. But the brides, oh the poor ones, are in silks and gold jewellery.

I never go because I know that when I return home the closed house will be like a furnace which takes at least six hours to cool even with all the ACs running full blast. The heated-up walls take even longer. The only good thing about the North Indian summer is that it kills the mosquitoes and drives the cockroaches and other bugs into dark areas. For about two months therefore there is peace of mind.

The South is different. For some reason that I have never been able to fathom, we, Madrassis, think summer is a good time to get married. April and May are the preferred months, when the temperature is hovering in the upper 30s and the humidity is above 70. The men, being men, wear just a *veshti*. But the brides, oh the poor ones, are in silks and gold jewellery. And the rituals can stretch for a couple of hours. Imagine what happens if the auspicious hour is after 9am. Everyone looks like a boiled potato.

Once, when my sister got married, I spent two months in Chennai in May and June because the wedding had to be postponed. A freak cyclone had hit Andhra and my would-be brother-in-law got stranded on a train for three days. Oh, and just for the record, in case you are wondering, I got married in August. In Bhopal. At 6am. It was like being in Switzerland.

That, as it turned out, was the best day of our marriage. ■

Rotary

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DONATE EYES

Eye donation is a noble act that can bring light into the lives of those who are visually impaired. Corneal blindness is a significant global health issue, affecting millions of people worldwide.



The process of eye donation begins with the decision of the donor to pledge their eyes for donation. This can be done during one's lifetime by registering with eye banks or expressing the intention to donate to family members. It's crucial to discuss this decision with family members to ensure that their wishes are respected after their passing.

Eye donation is a selfless act that embodies the spirit of generosity and compassion. By donating their eyes, individuals can leave behind a lasting legacy of hope and transformation, bringing the gift of sight to those in darkness. It's a profound way to make a difference in the lives of others, even beyond one's own lifetime.

Virudhunagar Idhayam Rajendran Trust has initiated Eye Donation activity in association with Rotary Virudhunagar Idhayam and V. Dhanasamy Parimala Devi Eye Donation Trust along with the help of Tirunelveli Dr. Agarwal's Eye Bank, in the towns of Virudhunagar, Sivakasi and Aruppukottai. Thanks to Virudhunagar Hindu Nadars Uravinmurai.

LEKSHA @ 10 May 2024, Rotary-2

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