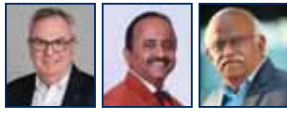




# Rotary News

**INDIA**  
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**CREATE HOPE  
in the WORLD**



**Rotary**  
A Project by  
Rotary Club of Virudhunagar  
District - 3212



# Project Punch is now a National Project

## Project Punch- Spoken English Programme For Student Teachers

### A 3-Day Spoken English Programme



**Programmes in  
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language are the  
limits of my  
world"*

**Ludwig Wittgenstein**

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are trained and  
motivated to  
speak in English  
fluently and  
flawlessly.



## PROJECT PUNCH



### What is Project Punch?

Project Punch is a 3-day Spoken English Training Programme by Rotary Club of Virudhunagar for student teachers (B.Ed. students) to improve their Communicative English and Public Speaking skills.

Project Punch is now a National Project. We serve beyond RID 3212 and Tamil Nadu. Recently, our team of Trainers travelled to Maharashtra and delivered 2 programmes of Project Punch to the students and the teachers of Eklaya adivasi bhatakya vimukta jati-jamati va magasvargiya sevabhavi sanstha, Manchi Hill (Maharashtra).

**IDHAYAM**  
PROMISE OF HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

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## Celebrating Rotaract & Peace

I was delighted to see the beautiful photo of RI President Gordon McNally and other senior Rotarians with Rotaractors and Interactors during his Sri Lanka visit as the cover photo in the March issue. In his message, he explained that 1,800 peace fellows are contributing to peace-building in the world and that they are engaged in more than 140 countries. The Editor's note is a fitting tribute to the tallest of our lawyers, the late Fali Nariman, and the *Binaca Geet Mala* fame Ameen Sayani of Radio Ceylon who will surely be remembered by so many of his avid fans.



RID Anirudha Roychowdhury has focused on WASH programmes to create healthier communities. TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin relates WASH and Rotaract in his message and his vice-chair Bharat Pandya has rightly said TRF is an investment for future generations. Article *Sri Lankan Rotarians combat cancer* is informative. Glad to hear the German student likes Kerala a lot. The tributes to life and works of Nariman and Ameen Sayani are a joy to read.

The obit piece "Age had dimmed neither the vigour nor intensity of Fali Nariman," by Sriram Panchu is a fitting tribute to the almost 'infallible' lawyer. I believe the one regret he had in his career as a jurist was representing Union Carbide in the Bhopal gas tragedy case of 1984. Congrats on featuring the 'two gentle giants' who passed away recently.

*Reginald Wesley*  
RC Mysore West — D 3181

Good issue! Plenty of reading material on various subjects in addition to Rotary projects and activities. The *Wordsworld* column by Sandhya Rao provided good read. The name of publisher and price of the books reviewed would be helpful.

Looking forward to more articles on a wide variety of books in *Rotary News*.

*Radheshyam Modi*  
RC Akola — D 3030

### An exemplary train man

With confidence, love for the people, colleagues and the organisation you work for, achieving anything is possible as exemplified by Vande Bharat train designer Sudhanshu Mani.

As GM of ICF-Chennai, his angst for producing an advanced Indian train put Vande Bharat on the rails. His approach and work ethic were the secrets of his success. In a government undertaking, he extracted work from the few self-motivated persons available by patting them and

All pictures are colourful too. Kudos to the *Rotary News* team for their dedication and hard work.

*Philip Mulappone MT*  
RC Trivandrum  
Suburban — D 3211

RI President McNally's message showed how Rotary is creating a generation of leaders through the Rotary Peace Fellowships. The *Editor's Note* paid an apt tribute to Fali Nariman, the eminent lawyer, and Ameen Sayani, the delightful anchor of the *Binaca Geetmala* show on Radio Ceylon. RI Director Roychowdhury turned the spotlight on rainwater harvesting, river restoration and pond excavation. These projects should be taken up by Bengaluru Rotarians to solve the grim water scarcity in their city. As suggested by TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin, they can apply for global grants to take up water and sanitation projects.

*KMK Murthy*  
RC Secunderabad — D 3150

punished non-performers. He trusted officers and gave them responsibilities to get things done and also reduced corruption.

The sacking of a sexual offender gave confidence to the women workers and many of them came forward to prove their mettle. In 2018 just before his retirement, Train 18 between Varanasi and Delhi was flagged off by PM Narendra Modi.

Now there are 45 trains. The appreciation from passengers and people of all walks of life is phenomenal as it is a purely indigenous venture — built in India for Indians by Indians. We Indians are proud of you, Sudhanshu Mani.

*VRT Dorairaja*  
RC Tiruchirapalli — D 3000

## LETTERS

I fully agree with the words in the article “Vande Bharat architect tells its story” that the term technology transfer is an oxymoron. Always, it is a particular individual’s contribution that plays a role in triggering a great achievement or invention, say, a space project or a big railway project. It was Sudhanshu Mani’s passion which made possible India’s indigenously built high speed train.

I like Mani’s words “You have to love what you do. Love your colleagues.” He exudes a positive approach when he says “Look at the large palette of colours; you can choose the hues of your liking,” that too in a government working setup. He further says that in so many organisations, good ideas and good people are always available but they are not given a chance. He emphasises the need to trust, empower people and delegate the right tasks to them. We should hail the brave man Sudhanshu Mani.

*M Palaniappan  
RC Madurai West — D 3000*

As soon as I receive the magazine, the first two articles I read are the *Editor’s Note* of Rasheeda Bhagat and the humorous *LBW* column by TCA Srinivasa Raghavan. The editor’s brief coverage of important events is balanced, informative and inspirational. It gives an insight into the rest of the content of the magazine. Raghavan’s sense of humour is sophisticated, and he looks into the humorous side of daily life incidents. This is always a good beginning to read the other articles in the magazine.

*H R Seetharam, RC Bangalore  
Indiranagar — D 3192*

I felt happy reading the article *A Rotary Mithai Mission for our soldiers* (Feb issue) as RC Chandigarh

is sending sweet boxes since 2017 as Diwali gifts to our jawans guarding our hostile borders. As a retired soldier, I am not only immensely grateful, but I also believe that all retired and serving soldiers must feel proud and joyful that Rotary is reaching out to our Army personnel every Diwali with boxes of sweets.

This gesture is a morale boost for soldiers on duty at tough conditions under freezing temperatures and at altitudes above 20,000 feet. This should serve as motivation for other Rotary clubs to do similar projects for our soldiers who sacrifice their lives for the nation. I am pleased to learn that the club is planning to extend this project by sending Diwali sweets to the Air Force and Navy personnel from this year. Godspeed to the club.

*Col (retd) Vijaykumar  
RC Alleppey Greater — D 3211*

It has been very rightly said by Soumitra Chakraborty of RC Kolkata Universe at the last issue that a hard copy of *Rotary News* is always attractive, readable, with the pictures being very inspiring.

It is good to read about the RI rules that Rotary clubs not subscribing to any Rotary magazine are liable to be terminated. I believe that making the

magazine mandatory will enable clubs as well as their members to remain updated every month on what is happening around the Rotary world.

*Piyush Doshi, RC Belur — D 3291*

### Rotary enriched my life

I have been a member of RC Shillong for long and will turn 86 soon. I have seen many ups and down in my club, and have vivid memory of *Rotary News* in its nascent days; a few pages with very few Rotary articles. So, I used to subscribe *The Rotarian* which had very little Rotary projects in India. It carried mostly the articles about Rotary in other countries.

Now, the Rotary movement in India has spread far and wide and contributes big to TRF. With the upgraded *Rotary News*, I now read both Rotary articles and projects being done in India and overseas. I can’t attend club meetings, but keep myself updated through our club magazine.

However, I try to attend important meetings and will continue to be a Rotarian till the end of my life. Rotary has enriched my values, enhanced my knowledge and has taught me many things which I will cherish forever.

*S L Singhania  
RC Shillong — D 3240*

**On the cover:** Women district governors — standing, from L: B C Geetha (RID 3182), Ritu Grover (RID 3040), Swati Herkal (RID 3132), Manjoo Phadke (RID 3131). Seated, from L: Anandtha Jothi (RID 3000), Asha Venugopal (RID 3030) and Jayashree Mohanty (RID 3262).

**Picture** by Rasheeda Bhagat.

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

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*WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.*



Kevin Serna

## The change within

These are times that cry out for peace. The Middle East is in its most volatile condition in years. The war in Ukraine is the largest in Europe since World War II, and there are armed conflicts in Sudan and parts of Central Africa. Nearly every continent is experiencing a major armed conflict.

Rotary has a vital role to play in advancing the cause of peace — I often say Rotary needs to work toward peace as aggressively as those who wish to wage war. It's the spirit found in our vision statement: "Together, we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves."

We must never lose track of that last call — that to bring about change in the world, we need to foster change within.

It is up to us to model peacebuilding behaviour among each other. We can do better than questioning the motives of one another and jumping to the harshest possible explanation. After hearing words that might strain or offend us, we have an opportunity to ask, with compassion and curiosity, the intent of those offending words. And then we have another opportunity to repair the breach.

If we wish to be a beacon to the world, let us start by being so to one another. Let's help each other find greater understanding and productive

alternatives to words that cause hurt and distrust. And let's stick to our principles, but never doubt the sincerity of each other to end conflicts, not inflame them.

I'm reminded of a speech that US Senator Robert Kennedy made on April 4, 1968, that dreadful day when the Rev Martin Luther King Jr was assassinated. Kennedy was in Indianapolis speaking to an audience in a predominantly African American neighbourhood where people had yet to learn that Dr King had been killed.

He shared the terrible news. He honoured Dr King for all he had done for the cause of justice and peace. And then he connected with the fuming, grieving crowd by saying: "For those of you who are Black and are tempted to be filled with hatred and distrust at the injustice of such an act, against all white people, I can only say that I feel in my own heart the same kind of feeling. I had a member of my family killed." It was the first time he had spoken publicly about President John F Kennedy's assassination. And while many American cities exploded in violence that night, Indianapolis did not.

It is in times of crisis and despair that we need empathy most of all. Empathy is the most powerful tool of peace, and it is vital if we are to take the first brave, humble steps to *Create Hope in the World*.

**Gordon McNally**

President, Rotary International

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## Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,902

Rotaract clubs : 10,734

Interact clubs : 15,449

RCCs : 13,362

Rotary members : 1,177,787

Rotaract members: 177,145

Interact members : 355,327

*As on March 19, 2024*

## Membership Summary

As on March 1, 2024

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	6,021	6.01	73	503	34	254
2982	85	3,815	6.08	43	898	95	183
3000	141	5,999	12.07	121	1,797	255	216
3011	137	5,140	30.04	89	2,432	157	38
3012	167	4,189	24.59	77	1,116	100	61
3020	81	4,758	7.55	46	844	121	351
3030	101	5,748	16.60	51	824	521	385
3040	111	2,430	14.65	41	807	79	213
3053	72	2,900	16.62	27	414	42	131
3055	76	3,044	12.48	70	1,084	75	377
3056	87	3,771	24.40	34	462	105	201
3060	103	5,172	15.89	68	2,235	63	144
3070	119	3,281	15.82	49	590	52	63
3080	108	4,282	12.52	63	1,862	173	124
3090	125	2,676	6.09	21	379	194	166
3100	112	2,230	10.81	13	58	36	151
3110	139	3,799	11.35	18	127	51	109
3120	89	3,647	15.68	45	570	28	55
3131	141	5,662	31.46	124	2,981	265	149
3132	92	3,768	13.93	44	650	126	212
3141	115	6,324	27.69	140	5,766	176	228
3142	107	3,863	21.25	64	2,300	117	96
3150	109	4,327	13.59	156	2,008	114	130
3160	80	2,653	8.82	32	258	95	82
3170	151	6,691	15.18	125	1,958	199	180
3181	87	3,686	10.58	44	479	94	121
3182	86	3,700	10.59	48	250	107	103
3191	93	3,521	18.38	91	3,118	152	35
3192	83	3,461	21.29	86	2,347	145	40
3201	176	6,802	9.91	139	2,624	104	94
3203	95	4,944	7.26	50	941	189	39
3204	78	2,549	6.94	24	237	17	13
3211	161	5,214	8.44	9	97	20	135
3212	124	4,672	11.37	97	3,727	168	153
3231	96	3,445	6.82	39	515	48	417
3232	188	6,323	20.86	129	4,843	158	101
3240	104	3,544	17.07	47	792	69	231
3250	107	4,142	22.19	71	990	66	191
3261	99	3,368	22.68	25	260	32	45
3262	115	3,783	15.65	78	772	645	286
3291	145	3,858	26.08			74	746
<b>India Total</b>	<b>4,625</b>	<b>173,202</b>		<b>2,611</b>	<b>54,915</b>	<b>5,361</b>	<b>7,049</b>
3220	69	1,971	16.64	97	4,103	84	77
3271	110	1,524	21.39	194	2,076	333	28
0063 (3272)	132	1,416	17.73	97	1,243	26	49
0064 (3281)	332	7,364	17.72	249	1,772	144	213
0065 (3282)	179	3,545	9.82	179	1,341	30	49
3292	155	5,502	18.76	185	5,385	126	135
<b>S Asia Total</b>	<b>5,602</b>	<b>194,524</b>	<b>15.79</b>	<b>3,612</b>	<b>70,835</b>	<b>6,104</b>	<b>7,600</b>

Source: RI South Asia Office

## Editor's Note



# The gender challenge... for the haves and have-nots...

**A**s the cover story of this issue focuses on the record-making seven women governors in our zones this Rotary year, as yet another International Women's Day rolled by in March, let's try and find some answers for a couple of critical questions. Are working conditions getting any better for women? One of the best sources to find some information is the "glass ceiling index" done by the iconic magazine *The Economist* every year. And what about countries, such as Afghanistan, where forget working in an office, a little girl can't even attend school?

Each year, to mark International Women's Day, *The Economist's* research team crunches the numbers on ten indicators — from labour force participation and salaries to paid parental leave and political representation — for 29 members of the OECD (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development). The magazine defines this group as "a club of mostly rich countries"; and expectedly it includes countries such as US, Japan, Germany,

Iceland, Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark, France, Turkey and South Korea. Sorry, despite the many pats we keep giving ourselves on the back in recent years, India is not on that list.

Returning to the Glass Ceiling Index, the magazine article admits that since they began this exercise in 2013, "the pace of change has been glacial, but in most places, things are at least moving in the right direction." Coming to the chart comparing women's professional opportunities with those of men, Iceland continues to top the list for the second year. No prizes for guessing... and we have seen this in political leadership too... the Nordic countries have always given their women a level playing field and whether it is in the political, business or educational arenas, Nordic women have always scored high. And again, no surprise, at the bottom of the glass index of these countries are South Korea, Japan and Turkey. To their credit, Australia and Poland had made great progress — both up by five spots compared to last year.

You'd think education was a key factor in one's professional

and economic development. Yes, and no. In so many countries, more women, than men, graduate from universities, and yet they make up a lower share of the workforce, and this is true of this glass ceiling index too, being "most notable in Turkey, Greece and Italy, where less than two-thirds of adult women are employed." The result is a slower climb on the corporate ladder; "in the OECD women earn around 12 per cent less than men," found the survey. But the good news was that in this group, 33 per cent women had made it as directors on the boards of companies, for the very first time.

By the way, in November 2022, the European Parliament formally adopted the new EU law on gender balance mandating that by 2026, corporate boards would compulsorily need to have 40 per cent women among the non-executive directors or 33 per cent among all directors in companies. Our data on this aspect is dismal. It took a decade... 10 whole years... after the implementation of the Companies Act 2013, which mandates at least one woman director on company boards in India, for the Nifty-500 companies



to have at least one woman director on the company's board. And this compliance too came only after several reminders from those in power! If you look at the percentage of women directors, there is only one woman director in five on the boards of Nifty 500.

**B**ut leaving aside the privileged part of the world, let us look at the situation of women in conflict-torn zones such as Gaza, Afghanistan, or Ukraine. For lack of space, let us just look at one aspect — women journalists in Afghanistan, where radio networks, supported mainly by the western world, are the only medium of employment for trained female journalists.

In Afghanistan, where radio is the main source of information for a larger part of the population, particularly women, through an EU-funded project, UNESCO is supporting 28 regional and

It took 10 whole years after the implementation of the Companies Act 2013, which mandates at least one woman director on company boards in India, for the Nifty-500 companies to have at least one woman director on the company's board.

local radio stations. *Muska Radio*, a local community radio, is one of them and provides job opportunities to women journalists in Helmand province in the south of Afghanistan, one of the most restrictive places for women journalists in the country. From 2008, this independent radio station is dedicated to serving a female audience and their families. It has had a bumpy ride thanks to the country's regressive policies on women's education and employment, but has struggled on heroically nevertheless, disappearing for a while, but re-emerging, like a phoenix!

*Radio Begum* is another feisty network that has turned out to be a lifeline of hope for girls who have been banned from school. It provides educational material, on-air-schooling, mental health support and financial literacy classes to Afghan women and girls. This radio has reached an astounding audience of around 5.9 million in 19 provinces, 63 per cent being women and girls.

According to a UNICEF report, "with Afghan girls having been out of school for over two years, women being banned from working in many sectors, and often being confined to the house, the psychological impact and trauma on an entire generation is increasingly felt." Following the ban on women working for NGOs and the UN, *Radio Begum* recorded an increase in the call-in programmes providing psychosocial advice first by 33 per

cent and later by 156 per cent, as a result of the antenna extensions. Said a recent UN women's survey: "Their psychological programming is the most listened show of the station — a sad testament to the mental health crises facing women in Afghanistan, with 90 per cent stating their mental health was bad or very bad."

Let's end with the story of Fatima, a 15-year-old girl blind since birth, and a beneficiary of the Informal Education Classes aired by *Radio Begum*. With no access to a school in her province, she remained illiterate, and along with her elder brother, who is also blind, used to listen to Radio BBC before *Radio Begum* started its broadcasts. But once she discovered this radio, she never misses a programme, and feels included in the community after talking to the presenters of *Radio Begum* because they are all girls!

Her ambition: to become a radio presenter someday! But right now, she is soaking up all the information she gets on authors, poets, different health issues as well as psychological issues through the radio. She says she might never get a chance to attend a blind school or learn how to write but being able to get educated through the radio is a great asset for her, for which she is grateful.



**Rasheeda Bhagat**

# Breakouts tailored for you



Attendees at the Imagine Our Rotaract Journey breakout session at the 2023 convention.

**A**t the Rotary International Convention main stage, you feel Rotary's sweeping influence while cheering with thousands of fellow members. And when you shift to smaller breakout sessions, that's where you get to do the in-depth work of digging into focused topics that interest you.

Choosing among dozens of sessions in Singapore, you'll take away bold ideas about how to improve your club experience, your community, and the world.

You can learn ways to combine the strengths of Rotarians and Rotaractors, solve any challenges with recruiting and keeping members, and boost mental well-being — for yourself and the people around you.

Maybe you want to run a carbon-neutral club or event, collaborate with partners like Habitat for Humanity, pull in experts for project advice, or

regrow Interact membership. There are breakouts that address each of those.

Get tips to make new projects and longtime initiatives even more successful and grow a lifelong love of Rotary among your club's members. These are just some of the themes up for discussion: measuring results to show impact, building bridges among members of all ages, making the club you always wanted, and using artificial intelligence in Rotary.

Registration isn't required for the sessions May 27–29, but you can browse the full preliminary list on the convention website to plan how you'll be *Sharing Hope With the World*. There's even a session that fits perfectly with that theme: Spreading Global Kindness — Starting in Singapore.

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

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Magazine

## Director speak



Dear friends in Rotary,  
As April unfolds its vibrant colours and warmth, it's a reminder that time moves swiftly, especially within the dynamic world of Rotary. With fewer than 90 days remaining, in this Rotary year, it's natural to pause and reflect on the activities we initiated and the profound impact we've made. I've witnessed first-hand how our commitment transcends mere volunteering; it becomes woven into the fabric of our lives. We don't just set goals; we embody purpose.

Rotary International boasts a vast array of initiatives, which can sometimes feel overwhelming to keep track of. However, amidst this complexity, our regional magazine *Rotary News* stands out as a reliable source of information, shedding light on the remarkable efforts of our clubs and communities. I extend my sincere appreciation to the dedicated team behind this publication for consistently delivering engaging content. I encourage clubs to take advantage of this platform to share their success stories. Doing so not only allows us to celebrate our achievements but also motivates others to follow suit, promoting increased engagement within our clubs.

This month our focus on Maternal and Child Health underscores Rotary's profound commitment to nurturing the very foundation of our society.

As Margaret Mead eloquently stated, 'There is no greater insight into the future than recognising... when we save our children, we save ourselves'.

## Let's continue to drive positive change

Ensuring maternal health isn't just a moral imperative; it's a strategic investment in the future. By providing mothers with access to quality healthcare, safe delivery environments and ongoing support, we not only protect individual lives but also strengthen families and communities.

Recently, at *Disha*, which was hosted at the Leela Convention Centre in New Delhi, we embarked on a journey of setting ambitious goals for the year ahead. The event buzzed with an infectious energy and enthusiasm, creating an atmosphere that was truly magical. My heartfelt gratitude to Chairman PDG Sharat Jain and Secretary PDG Gurjeet Sekhon for their roles in ensuring a seamless experience for all attendees, from arrival to departure. Congratulations to the entire team behind *Disha* for their dedication and commitment in putting together such a magnificent event.

As summer releases its unforgiving heat across India, millions face the stark reality of water scarcity and merciless weather. Let us together take positive steps in our communities to save water and protect the environment. It's a time when even the smallest gestures can make a world of difference. Though we may be a minority in the vast population, our impact in doing good is mighty. Let's continue to be the driving force behind positive change, creating hope along the way. As we pass the torch to our incoming leaders, let's empower them to carry forward the transformative spirit of Rotary, both within our communities and ourselves. May the everlasting spirit of Rotary weave its magic, fostering goodness and virtue in all of us.

**Raju Subramanian**

RI Director, 2023–25

## To make change, just get started



For many, the Bahamas is a place to escape colder climates, relax on white sand beaches, and snorkel in clear, turquoise waters. For me, it's home. I grew up sailing on these waters and to this day, anytime I can, I am out on the water with family and friends. It's where my heart is.

The environmental threats my country is facing are real. Our coral reefs, vital for biodiversity, are in danger due to warming seas and pollution. Hurricanes and tropical storms seem to get more intense with each passing year. Rising sea levels pose an existential threat to the Bahamas, eroding our beautiful coastlines as saltwater intrudes on our precious and limited freshwater resources.

Late last year, I was fortunate to represent Rotary at COP28, the United Nations climate change convention in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The consensus coming out of the meeting was that progress on addressing climate change has been too slow. Participants said the world needs to pick up the pace to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, help communities become more resilient to climate change, and better support countries that are most vulnerable to it.

Rotary can be part of the solution.

As you know, protecting the environment is one of Rotary's areas of focus. Many clubs are active in their

communities with projects such as beach and roadside cleanups. With The Rotary Foundation, you can increase your impact by pooling resources with clubs and districts around the world. Foundation grants let you put the generous contributions of your fellow Rotary members to work to make the world better.

Imagine the possibilities. Perhaps Rotary districts in Canada and Australia could protect wetlands in New South Wales in Australia. Rotary leaders from Brazil, India, and Taiwan could lead grant projects to train farmers in the Indian state of Andhra Pradesh in sustainable agriculture. Rotary and Rotaract clubs from the Bahamas, South Africa and New York could work with their districts to help my country restore its natural resources, one reef or mangrove at a time.

The problems our environment faces seem overwhelming until you realise that many are fixable. There are so many ways to help through Rotary. Even if we don't lead a grant or volunteer on the project, we can all help protect the environment through our giving to the Foundation.

Rotary can't save the planet all by itself. But as our progress in ending polio proves, Rotary's impact is great when we put our vision for a better world in motion, and just get started.

**Barry Rassin**

TRF Trustee Chair

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## District Wise TRF Contribution as on February 2024

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution	
<b>India</b>						
2981	31,345	885	1,000	250	33,480	
2982	32,052	694	24,085	9,157	65,988	
3000	77,727	390	8,313	69,439	155,870	
3011	156,352	24,896	27,092	369,302	577,642	
3012	14,679	50	0	267,317	282,047	
3020	112,829	25,323	36,735	50,025	224,913	
3030	87,671	27,776	4,275	217,073	336,794	
3040	4,190	208	0	25	4,423	
3053	24,399	1,000	0	27,053	52,452	
3055	93,483	2,532	30	6,228	102,273	
3056	28,511	125	0	0	28,636	
3060	86,385	9,615	7,851	314,753	418,604	
3070	6,449	333	0	0	6,782	
3080	89,225	21,866	1,500	39,866	152,457	
3090	46,415	2,058	17,000	26,809	92,282	
3100	83,400	2,787	25,301	31,118	142,606	
3110	11,526	30	0	85,995	97,551	
3120	34,179	129	0	5,101	39,408	
3131	418,615	12,493	90,098	597,689	1,118,894	
3132	98,312	4,758	10,000	49,719	162,789	
3141	312,147	19,210	60,012	1,197,102	1,588,472	
3142	247,542	111,747	14,500	81,654	455,444	
3150	51,859	30,606	160,423	91,975	334,864	
3160	12,136	1,251	0	3,432	16,818	
3170	83,046	27,050	12,700	114,231	237,026	
3181	91,870	2,170	1,000	85	95,126	
3182	43,549	4,606	0	0	48,155	
3191	77,404	9,106	60,976	483,851	631,336	
3192	89,675	13,097	0	46,198	148,969	
3201	142,218	46,631	45,684	1,185,201	1,419,734	
3203	17,728	17,316	11,220	15,550	61,813	
3204	16,796	2,574	0	18,466	37,836	
3211	47,776	4,236	27,325	98,347	177,685	
3212	70,940	20,321	2,000	82,287	175,549	
3231	4,462	2,753	0	0	7,216	
3232	51,076	18,429	17,920	953,048	1,040,474	
3240	101,924	11,394	34,000	94,803	242,121	
3250	35,924	3,251	26	13,298	52,500	
3261	25,716	4,078	0	28,978	58,772	
3262	36,129	4,936	1,000	2,575	44,640	
3291	127,649	2,658	41,646	2,100	174,053	
3220	Sri Lanka	47,192	3,957	0	1,073	52,221
3271	Pakistan	15,650	72,553	0	20,402	108,606
*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	158,058	21,449	13,000	260,044	452,551
63	(former 3272)	3,025	25	0	0	3,050
64	(former 3281)	25,045	200	1,000	0	26,245
65	(former 3282)	3,797	200	0	9,000	12,997

\* Undistricted

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

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



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# Seven women governors break through the glass ceiling in India

**T**he Rotary year 2023–24 has been a record-making year for women in Rotary in India, with as many as seven women managing to break the glass ceiling, and attaining the important post of district governor. Nine months into their term at their districts' helm, *Rotary News* caught up with them to get a feel of their experience in their leadership roles, delve a little into their background, explore their achievements, and get views and opinions on subjects as diverse as gender in Rotary and the positive and negative aspects of Rotary in India.

**J**ayashree Mohanty, DG, RID 3262, is a postgraduate in International Business and an IT entrepreneur, who co-founded Luminous Infoways. She joined Rotary in 2008 after accompanying her husband to an invitation meeting of RC Bhubaneswar in 2008. “We liked the members and the bonhomie so much that both of us joined Rotary together on the same day as the club’s first Rotarian couple,” she says.

On the challenges she has faced in her journey to this leadership position, Jayashree says, “The rough patch of the election for the first woman DG of the district was the first challenge; the second was to create exemplary leadership and



Rasheeda Bhagat

channel the members’ curiosity into a very fulfilling Rotary year.”

She has been lucky enough to get the “highest regard for their DG with total support and acceptance of female leadership. The club leaders are called *Bahubali* presidents as each Rotary club has taken on bigger projects this year and they take great pride in my presence in their programmes and service projects. I find that many enterprising women have

come forward to be presidents and secretaries in their Rotary clubs.”

On her special projects, Jayashree says, “There are several initiatives to be proud of. The Samman centres (private places for nursing mothers) and the Asha Mental Health Centre with access to both online and offline counselling, inaugurated by RI President Gordon McNally recently give us maximum pride.” Large water bodies benefitting 10,000 families in Rayagada, Odisha, have

From L: DGs Swati Herkal (RID 3132), R Anandtha Jothi (RID 3000), Asha Venugopal (RID 3030), Ritu Grover (RID 3040), Manjoo Phadke (RID 3131), B C Geetha (RID 3182) and Jayashree Mohanty (RID 3262).



been inaugurated; the Rotary for Elimination of Filaria project done in partnership with the health department of Odisha has been a great success benefitting 38,000 people in six districts.

Her journey in Rotary has given Jayashree “a total sense of fulfilment. It has created a special space for me in every sphere, personal, professional and the industrial ecosystem. My opinions are sought on each significant issue and taken

My Rotary journey has given a total sense of fulfilment. It has created a special space in personal, professional and the industrial ecosystem. My opinions are sought on significant issues and taken very seriously by my business associates, family and friends.

**Jayashree Mohanty**

very seriously by my business associates, family and friends.”

Also, the many projects the district’s Rotarians have taken up in collaboration with the government, have resulted in a stronger public image for Rotary. “On my request, Odisha chief minister Naveen Patnaik had a long meeting with RI President Gordon during his visit to Bhubaneswar, where the CM acknowledged the contributions of Rotary and expressed his eagerness to collaborate,” she adds.

**M**anjoo Phadke, DG of RID 3131, and recipient of the prestigious Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award, is a management graduate, corporate consultant and trainer, and is engaged in vocational education in association with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences that works for underprivileged students.

She joined Rotary in 2003 as a charter member of RC Pune Deccan Gymkhana when her boss took her to attend one of the first meetings of the club. “She left later on but I continued. That is destiny I suppose,” she says.

In her journey to become the district governor, Manjoo says she “didn’t face much challenge since I decided to contest on the insistence of many Rotarians from my district. I had worked at the ground level and had a huge connect with all the clubs in the district.” When she put her hat in the ring, out of the 138 clubs in the district then, “I knew at least 4–5 Rotarians from each club and had worked closely with almost 95 per cent of the clubs one way or the other!



## Cracking the glass ceiling

So is the glass ceiling finally cracking in Rotary, and what's the position in India, I ask the women governors. On accepting women leaders in Rotary in India, Jayashree Mohanty thinks India is very accepting of women's leadership and the "glass ceiling in the world has been broken already with our leaders Jennifer Jones and Stephanie Urchick. I think our Rotarians believe that women have capability and deserve the highest positions."

But Anandtha Jothi offers a different view. She feels that "India is still lagging behind in accepting women as leaders, compared to other countries." She feels that women themselves will have to make a push for leadership positions despite the many challenges they face, as she herself has done. "But if they come forward passionately they will certainly reach new heights."

Swati Herkal, on the other hand, believes that "the glass ceiling in Rotary is gradually cracking, especially in India where there is a growing acceptance of women's leadership. While challenges still exist, the progress made in recent years, including the election of two women RI presidents, is a positive sign of change."

Manjoo Phadke has her own take on this issue. "I am not aware about the Rotary scene outside India, but in my district, most people are okay with having a

woman governor." In the corporate world, she says, there is bound to be gender bias, and people with their "own ideas about what a woman must do and what she must not do. Stereotyping is a huge hindrance to development of women's leadership. Yes, I do get a few experiences of this sort but not to the level that hampers my work."

BC Geetha agrees that "the glass ceiling in Rotary is gradually cracking, and this progress is particularly noticeable in countries like India where there is greater acceptance of women's leadership within the organisation. There seem to be more openness to embracing women in leadership roles, which signifies change and a move towards greater gender equality within Rotary."

On whether more doors will open for women in India to reach leadership positions, Manjoo says, "This remains to be seen; I do not have any experience of how higher leadership operates at the national level in India but things will unfold sooner or later and I will be able to take things in my stride." Her staunch belief is that if you keep doing good work, things fall in place. "So I am going to enjoy every bit





of my journey from here onwards without worrying too much!"

Ritu Grover feels that "definitely many more doors are open here to accept women as leaders in Rotary. I believe that if you have confidence and perseverance, you can achieve any status that you aspire for without any gender bias."

**O**n the special or unique qualities that women bring to the table, Jayashree says, "Women leaders are more hardworking, compassionate and facilitate learning. Also, they are more selfless and committed to Rotary."

Swati feels women leaders bring "unique characteristics such as empathy, collaboration and resilience to the table, which enrich the overall leadership landscape."

Asha underscores the point "this is the era for women in and out of Rotary. Rotary too is very accepting of women leaders. I'm happy that I'm part of the district leadership during these exciting times."

Anandtha believes that women leaders are more compassionate and can provide unique service for the betterment of our communities. "I believe women leaders can definitely solve many problems and crises in the world. I only hope that in accordance with this year's International Women's Day theme, which said invest in women and accelerate progress, Rotary does the same!"

Women leaders are more hardworking, compassionate and are natural learning

facilitators. Also, they are more selfless and committed to Rotary, says Jayashree.

The future, for women in Rotary and outside, looks really bright, agree the women governors. "The way most women leaders are performing and rapidly taking up various roles, I see all doors opening for women in the coming years," says Jayashree. She adds that in her district, "we have greatly enhanced women's leadership in Rotary, with 19 women club presidents and 15 assistant governors who have great opportunities to grow further."

Swathi too is bullish on greater leadership roles for women in Rotary in the future. "I see more doors opening for women leaders in Rotary in India. As the organisation continues to evolve and embrace diversity, women will play an increasingly significant role in shaping its direction and impact."

Geetha says women leaders "often bring unique qualities to the table, such as empathy, collaboration and a nurturing approach to leadership. These characteristics can contribute to more inclusive decision-making processes and foster a supportive environment within organisations like Rotary." She adds that women leaders often serve as role models for other women and girls, encouraging them to pursue their own leadership aspirations and break barriers in traditionally male-dominated fields.

Adds Manjoo, "Women have always been able to handle relationships with empathy, coupled with result orientation and this single skill helps them bring a lot of value to the table whether it's in Rotary or the corporate world." ■



But then, some senior leaders did try to use gender bias, spread wrong information and misguide others, making it a tough election.”

But ultimately, she adds, her connect with the ground level worked enabling her to counter all the “negative campaigning by senior leaders/Rotarians.” And once she was elected, there was no looking back for this feisty DG. The support from the district’s club leaders was huge. “I have a great batch of presidents, AGs, directors and district team members. Most Rotarians respect me for my work, dynamism, leadership and the fact that I never play a gender card to shy away from my duties and responsibilities. My teams work very closely with me and we are a happy bunch of people, laughing and enjoying while working hard for our district.”

She smiles as she shares feedback from the clubs: “They say they enjoy working with me since I don’t lose my cool and handle most situations with calm and composure.”

On the work she is most proud about, Manjoo says, “So much work has happened that it’s difficult to point to just one or two projects. But one thing I’m very happy about, and which is my brainchild, is setting up a very robust, transparent, ethical, audited and validated system of giving out Rotary CSR Awards. Over 65 corporates, many of whom were already working with us for their CSR projects, applied for this award, and we gave away 28 awards that were chosen by an independent eminent jury panel.”

Another mega and ambitious project is paediatric heart surgery; the district is planning for 1,000 such surgeries with a total outlay of ₹15 crore, funding is already

organised for 550 operations, with 300 surgeries already completed. Other notable projects include the Parikrama car rally, which she led from the front, and during which several service projects such as RYLAs, industrial visits, etc were completed; Rotary Kindhearts, an advanced version of a crowdfunding platform for Rotary clubs to raise funds for their projects in a transparent and ethical manner, and creating records in Foundation giving. Adds Manjoo, “Within 40 days of 2023–24, we became a cent per cent giving district, the first in our zones, and perhaps even in the world. And today we stand No1 in APF (Annual Polio Fund) collection in our region.”

**A** graduate in commerce and law, **BC Geetha**, RID 3182, is the founder president of the Karnataka Mahila Sahakara Bank based in Chikkamagaluru, Karnataka, which is engaged in the financial empowerment of farmers, women and other local citizens involved in trading and housing. She is also the director of the Kodagu Gramin Bank, vice-president of the District Central Cooperative Bank, Chikkamagaluru, and member of the All India Congress Committee.

She joined RC Balehonnur in 2000 and is at present the secretary of the Balehonnur Education Society founded a few decades ago by her father. “I have added higher



I had worked closely with almost 95 per cent of the clubs one way or the other! But then, some senior leaders did try to use gender bias, spread wrong information and misguide others, making it a tough election.

**Manjoo Phadke**



One challenge in reaching the DG’s position is that senior leaders have little acceptance of woman in a leadership position. Navigating the complexities of organisational politics within the district was another challenge.

**Swati Herkal**



I have faced not one or two but many challenges but they became my stepping stones and a strong motivation to reach this position.

**Anandtha Jothi**



I believe the district’s club leaders see me as a capable leader regardless of gender. My role as the second woman district governor of RID 3182 signifies progress towards gender neutrality and total acceptance.

**B C Geetha**

The rough patch of the elections for the first woman DG of the district was the first challenge; the second was to create an exemplary leadership and channel the members' curiosity into a very fulfilling Rotary year.

### Jayashree Mohanty



I had very supportive mentors who stood with me throughout my campaigning and election process. As happens in our elections, the opposite camp did do some negative politicking against me, but I fought the election and won!

### Asha Venugopal



Even though generally I had total support from those in my district who do find me competent, I do find a little intolerance for a 'woman' holding such a high post in the district!

### Ritu Grover



classes to this institution, which is the cornerstone of Balehonnur's literacy movement," she says. She was also the president of Inner Wheel Club of Balehonnur in 2008.

Of the many district projects done during her tenure, she particularly mentions soil conservation activities, road safety awareness programmes, value-based education to teachers, parents and children, and e-waste management activities. "I was also involved in an impactful project to provide drinking water to 25 government schools, especially in much-needed rural areas of our district." Costing ₹11.25 lakh, the project was done in collaboration with other organisations as part of their CSR activity, with the main objective being to provide clean drinking water in schools.

On acceptance from her district's club leaders, Geetha says club presidents "generally view me with a mix of respect, admiration and a bit of surprise given my gender. But overall, I believe they see me as a capable leader regardless of gender. My role as the second woman district governor of RID 3182 signifies progress towards gender neutrality and total acceptance."

At the personal level, adds Geetha, her Rotary achievements have given her "a profound sense of personal fulfilment. As a DG I've been able to make a meaningful impact in my

community and beyond, which is incredibly rewarding." And it has also enhanced her image within her family and friends who "see me as a trailblazer and a source of inspiration".

**A**nandtha Jothi, DG of RI District 3000, has graduated in English Literature, and a managing partner at Hotel Sree Baalaji Bhavan, and owner of the Style Chic Boutique in Dindigul. On what aspect of her work she enjoys the most, she smiles and says; "At the hotel, I enjoy watching our customers being happy with our food, accommodation and other related services. At the boutique shop, it is a pleasure to work with our beautiful dress collections."

She joined Rotary in 2003, after an introduction by family friend Kogila Jayaseelan, who is now serving as an assistant governor in her district.

Asked about the challenges she has faced in reaching this position, she says, "I have faced not one or two but many challenges but they became my stepping stones and a strong motivation to reach this position." However, once past the post, she has got nothing but "support and cooperation from the club presidents. They have accepted my leadership willingly and accept the guidance I give them, believing that this will help not only their local community, but also their personal goals."

Predictably, Anandtha ensured that this year her district's two most important projects were centred around women's welfare and empowerment. "This year, we have been building nearly 75 toilet

blocks (each with 10 toilet cubicles) in government and government-aided schools for girls. Also, 50 pink autos are being donated to destitute women.”

A project close to her heart was done soon after she took over her office — a large carnival for special children; “across our district’s 130 clubs, around 10,000 special children participated. Also we have inducted nearly 850 new members this year, chartered 17 new clubs and our RID 3000 is world no1 in membership growth.”

While she has enjoyed her entire Rotary journey, she has enjoyed most dealing with youngsters as the district’s RYLA chair and International RYLA chair. On what ails Rotary in India and what are its biggest assets, she says, “The membership in India is huge when compared to other countries, and we have a much higher involvement and participation

of members. The negatives are that often our Rotarians forget we came into Rotary only for friendship and to spread love and peace. Also, they get involved in conflict...”

**S**wati Herkal, DG of District 3132, has graduated in electronics and in management. An IT consultant, she is the MD of her own company and enjoys working with youngsters the most. She joined RC Wai in 2000 because “I had the desire to give back to the community.” The two major challenges she has faced in “reaching the DG’s position is that senior leaders have little acceptance of women in a leadership position. Navigating the complexities of organisational politics within the district was another challenge.”

She says that though there were initial doubts from club leaders because of “my gender, I believe I am generally viewed with respect and support by club presidents in my district, as I have diligently worked to gain their trust and show my leadership abilities.”

Swati says her “biggest achievement during the first nine months of my term as DG is increasing membership and engagement across clubs in the district.” A major initiative she is proud of is the establishment of 12 pan-district transformation projects designed to provide solutions to several socioeconomic issues confronting the community. “These projects include sustainable farming, women’s health clinics on wheels for early detection of cancer, reducing deaths of newborns, environmental initiatives, along with literacy, which is my favourite.”

Her engagement in Rotary, says Swati, has brought her “immense personal fulfilment, knowing that I



am making a difference in the lives of others. It has also enhanced my image within my family and friends, as they see me as a dedicated leader committed to serving the community.”

**A**sha Venugopal, DG, RID 3030, graduated in business management and proudly says, “At 46, I did my diploma in Journalism from Pune University, getting the second rank in the university.” A joint director

Women leaders bring unique characteristics such as empathy, collaboration and resilience to the table, which enrich the overall leadership landscape.

**Swati Herkal**



## Positives and negatives

**I**ask the women DGs to spell out both the positive and negative features of the way Rotary operates in India.

**Swati Herkal** says one positive is “our Rotarians’ strong sense of community service and the opportunity for networking and collaboration among members. Two negative features include bureaucratic inefficiencies and resistance to change in certain quarters.”

**Asha Venugopal** feels that a big positive is that as “we are very emotional people by nature and hence are always ready to pitch in at times of trouble and do the needful without being asked. On the negative aspects, she says, “Politicking is emerging in a big way which if not curbed soon can be very detrimental for the future of Rotary in India. Good governance with transparency and honesty is also lacking at times.”

**Jayashree Mohanty** says one positive aspect is that “Rotary teaches leadership in a unique way, which reflects in a Rotarian’s personal and public life. It converts acquaintances into lifelong friends and mentors with whom you grow both personally and professionally. This results in a combined opportunity for service and an identity to be proud of in the community.”

On the flip side, she adds, an adverse feature is “the addition of members without screening the background or purpose for which that person is joining Rotary. The other negative is personal egos that result in formation of groups within the clubs, resulting in disputes.”

**Anandtha Jothi** finds the biggest positives in Rotary in India

to be “our membership which is huge compared to other countries, and the active involvement and participation of members is much higher in India than in other countries.” But she is saddened by the fact that even though very active in Rotary, “people often forget the basic reason for which we join Rotary... for friendship and to spread love and peace. But quite often, Rotarians in India get involved in conflicts and become restless.”

The big positives that **BC Geetha** sees in the way Rotary operates in India are “strong community engagement and embracing diversity.” Elaborating, she says that Rotary clubs in India are often “deeply embedded within their communities, actively engaging in various service projects that address local needs such as education, healthcare and sanitation. This strong community engagement fosters meaningful impact and connection with the people they serve.”

The second positive, she says, is the clubs in India “embrace diversity in membership, welcoming individuals from different backgrounds, professions and age groups. This diversity enriches club activities and promotes a culture of inclusion and understanding.”

**Ritu Grover** finds one positive feature as the opportunity “to work with the whole district and being accepted as a leader.” The negative, she feels, is the direct connect that “Rotarians have to the RI directors and others and this can cause trouble sometime, and you have to waste your time clarifying things!” ■

in the Zenith Metaplast group of companies, she enjoys the “process of manufacturing, interacting with the staff and troubleshooting when problems crop up.” She is also a Reiki, Karuna and Magnified Healing practitioner and conducts workshops for controlling the mind.

On how she joined Rotary, Asha says she was a girl Guide in school and an NCC cadet in college and participated in many social cause-based projects, blood donation being one. “I wanted to give back further to the community and there was no better platform than RI to do so. Inspired by the service Rotarians do for the underprivileged, I joined RC Nasik Grapecity in 2010.”

On the challenges she faced in this journey, Asha smiles and says, “Our club was and is always supportive to women in leadership positions. Hence at the club level I never faced any animosity; instead, I was always encouraged to go up the ladder and take up challenges. That way I have always had the backing of my club members.”

In her bid to become a DG she had “very supportive mentors who stood with me throughout my campaigning and election process. As happens in our elections, the opposite camp did do some negative politicking against me, but I fought the election and won. So, I wasn’t nominated DG just because I was a

At the personal level, Rotary has given me a great sense of belonging and self-esteem and becoming a governor has enhanced my image in my family, friends and the larger community.

**Ritu Grover**

woman! Anyway, it was high time our district had a woman leader.”

She is happy that “all the clubs in my district have accepted me wholeheartedly, and the members go out of their way to make me comfortable; I’m treated like any DG without any gender bias. My biggest achievement is the acceptability I am getting from the past and future leadership of our district and the camaraderie we share is fantastic. The members know that they can call me anytime and their query or need will be addressed.”

The project she is most proud of having done include *Udaan* under which “we distributed 5,555 bicycles to rural children who had to walk miles to school every day. This was a dream my husband and I had envisaged, and we executed it with our CSR funds in collaboration with all the clubs of our district.”

On the personal front, says Asha, her engagement in Rotary “has definitely enhanced my position in the community. I meet and discuss Rotary with many stalwarts of our society, share the same platform with people in important positions in the administration, politics, etc. And being felicitated by many organisations is like a dream come true.”

**R**itu Grover, DG, RID 3040, is an MBA, and software programmer from Indore, where she was a “pioneer in setting up a women’s polytechnic in 1988.” Passionate about working for the “social upliftment of women and women’s empowerment,” she joined Rotary in 2006.

She admits that being a woman was her biggest challenge in becoming the district governor, but “my constant and consistent work made the Rotarians

The biggest positives in Rotary in India is our membership which is huge compared to other countries, and the active involvement and participation of members is much higher in India than elsewhere.

**Anandtha Jothi**

in the district realise that I could be potential leader of the district.” She often finds that her club’s members “have a different perception/perspective on several things before a meeting but after interacting with me they totally turn around to ‘our Didi!’”

Ritu says that even though generally she has had “total support from the ones who do find me competent, I do find a little intolerance for a ‘woman’ holding such a high post in the district!”

Of the projects done under her leadership in the district, she is most proud of the *Rahat* medical and surgical camp that was held in Jhabua in February-end/March beginning, which saw a registration of a whopping number of 97,000 patients. “What a satisfying experience that was as more than 450 volunteers worked at this camp.”

Another project she is happy about is the “fellowship trip the district team organised to Vaishno Devi and Amritsar, especially on my birthday, and around 100 members joined.”

At the personal level, Rotary has “given me a great sense of belonging and self-esteem and becoming a governor has enhanced my image in my family, friends and the larger community, even though they complain that they miss me as I can’t give them the time I did earlier!”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat  
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# Keep giving to TRF for a better world

V Muthukumaran



TRF Trustee Chair Barry Rassin being felicitated in Bengaluru. **From L:** PDG Suresh Hari, Event Chair Ravishankar Dakoju, TRF Trustee Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, DG Udaykumar Bhaskara (RID 3191), DRFC Suresh Ambli (3192), DG Srinivas Murthy (3192) and RIDN KP Nagesh.

**N**ever stop giving to The Rotary Foundation as “we are the number one humanitarian NGO in the world making a big difference to communities. For 15<sup>th</sup> year in a row, we’ve got four out of four-star rating from Charity Navigator (US), as we have kept our administrative cost to the bare minimum, much below other global NGOs, while creating impact with our service projects across the world,” said TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin.

Speaking at a meeting in Bengaluru hosted by RIDs 3191

and 3192, he said ending polio still remained the top priority of Rotary and now the “wild poliovirus is found only in Pakistan and Afghanistan, especially at their porous border.” The health minister of Pakistan and their Army generals are fully backing Rotary’s final push to eliminate polio from the world. “A huge number Pakistani troops are guarding our Rotary offices and last year alone 900,000 children were immunised in this region. While 12 children were afflicted with the virus in the two countries last year, so far no fresh cases of polio have been

reported in 2024,” he said. “But we can shift focus to the next priority only after the world is certified free from the polio virus.”

Talking about TRF’s Programs of Scale (PoS), he said, “We initiated it in Zambia three years ago with a funding of \$6 million (RI, Gates Foundation and World Vision contributed \$2 million each) which has reduced malaria in the African country by 90 per cent.” Following the success in Zambia, the Gates Foundation and World Vision were ready to give \$10 million to expand the programme to four more countries



in Africa. In Nigeria, PoS is helping fight infant and maternal mortality, and cervical cancer in Egypt.

For RI year 2023–24, TRF has a set a target of \$500 million in total donations, including \$150 million for the Annual Fund. “All the clubs must donate to Annual Fund, as half of it will come back to their district for service projects. Thus, you can leverage a part of your donation,” said Rassin. For polio eradication, TRF’s \$50 million will be matched by \$150 million by the Gates Foundation, taking the total to \$200 million. TRF is hopeful of netting \$60 million in cash and \$80 million in other commitments under Endowment Funds, “a part of which you will get back for your projects.”

During Covid times, TRF had approved 2,066 global grant projects worth \$39 million for pandemic-related projects from clubs across the world. “In the last five years, TRF has touched six million lives, hence we have to keep doing what we are doing, so that Rotary can reach maximum people, and change their lives for the better,” he explained. When he visited a rural school in Malawi, East Africa, which was transformed with new toilet blocks,

handpump, a drinking water unit and other sanitation and classroom facilities, “an 11-year-old boy saw the Rotary pin on me, and said Thank You with a broad smile. For he was told, that those wearing this pin are from Rotary who help to change our lives.” Earlier, before Rotary stepped in with the project, the school with 4,000 students and 38 teachers had no tables, benches, blackboards... nothing that is essential for a school.

Taiwan’s fire department got a new ambulance with Rotary funding, and since 2022 the vehicle has carried 7,000 patients to and from hospitals, “doubling the survival rate of heart patients they picked up, thanks to GG projects which supplied the ambulance with gadgets, and hospital equipment.”

Impressed with the multifarious work being done by Indian Rotarians, Rassin said, “you are making a difference to the world,” and urged them to keep giving to the Foundation in the years to come.

In his address, TRF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya said ‘hope’ and ‘opportunity’ are the two words to describe the work of the Foundation, “which is a window to

the outside world. About 50–60km from Mumbai, the financial capital of India, you will see pregnant women suffer due to non-availability of antenatal care; at other places in the country, issues like water scarcity, the anxiety of parents with blue babies, people who are either illiterate, sick or don’t have one square meal a day need help and TRF projects transform such lives.”

But without the generous support of Rotarians, TRF can’t grow and “those at the grassroots level must network and start giving, for we all know where our funds go and the change it brings to the world.”

Pandya urged RIDs 3191 and 3192 to attract CSR funds for TRF projects as it is mandatory for companies in India to plough back two per cent of their profits into CSR programmes. “Draft good, attractive projects and approach corporates, so that from the present \$2 million each, both RID 3191 and 3192 should aim for \$5 million worth of CSR projects routed through the Foundation,” he said.

Recalling his work as part of a medical mission to Zimbabwe in 2020, where he did seven surgeries, Pandya said, a 10-year-old boy’s



RI Districts 3191 and 3192 present cheques to TRF Trustee Chair Rassin. **From L:** RID 3191 secretary Ramesh Kumar, PDG Hari, DG Murthy, DRFC Ambli, TRF Trustee Vice-Chair Pandya, DG Bhaskara, RIDN Nagesh, DRFC Anil Gupta (3191), TRF - Principal Gifts director Harvey Newcomb III, PDGs Manjunath Shetty and HR Ananth.

stomach was pierced by a sharp object and his intestines were badly damaged. Living in a village at Mutare, a five-hour drive from Harare, “he was brought to the mission camp in septic shock and was slowly dying. We operated on him and I was not sure if he will survive or not. But after a couple of days, his fever was gone, he became conscious and his pulse was normal. His mother took my hand, and profusely expressed her gratitude for saving her son.” Hence, what is given to TRF is not just a donation, “but an investment for the future and the Foundation is a vehicle of choice to ensure a better future for all,” he added.

The event was held to celebrate the magnanimity of TRF donors and expand Rotary’s connect with the corporate world, said Ravishankar Dakoju, event chair and the ₹100

crore donor to TRF. “Rotary is a bridge that links the haves and have-nots. We need to involve the corporates for taking up big TRF projects,” he said.

RI director-nominee KP Nagesh said the US leads with over 500 AKS members, followed by India (200-plus), Korea and Taiwan, in that order. “We need more million-dollar (₹8 crore) donors like Ravishankar, and we have a target to identify at least 100 such donors in the next two years,” said Nagesh who was installed as the new president of the AKS Association of India (AAI) by Rassin. This post was held by Ravishankar for three years. He was reappointed as AAI ambassador. Since 2019, as an AKS celebrity he had helped induct 75 AKS members.

Newly-inducted AKS members Milind Deshpande and Velupathy (3192), and RIDN Nagesh (3191);

32 Major Donors; 42 End Polio Fellows; and 40 companies — Inflow Technologies (₹1.5 crore), Indic Electronics (₹40 lakh), Intel (₹40 lakh), Vishal Infrastructure (₹35 lakh), Titan Industries (₹32 lakh), KWK Resistors (₹28 lakh) etc — were honoured by Rassin. DGs Udaykumar Bhaskara (3191) and V Srinivas Murthy (3192) were felicitated.

DRFCs Anil Gupta (3191), Suresh Ambli (3192) and PDG Suresh Hari spoke. Two cheques totalling \$2.4 million as contribution from both the districts to TRF were presented to the trustee chair. Around 200 delegates from in and around Bengaluru attended the TRF meet. Before coming to Bengaluru, Rassin visited Kathmandu, Kolkata, Delhi and Pune, covering 13 RI districts in five days.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

## RID 3212 felicitates IPDG Muthu

Team Rotary News

**P**RIIP K R Ravindran, PRID C Basker, RIDN M Muruganandam and RID 3212 DG R Muthiah Pillai were present at an event in Madurai to felicitate RID 3212 IPDG VR Muthu for his inspirational leadership during his tenure in 2022–23. The event was organised by DGE Meerankhan Saleem, DGN J Dhinesh Babu and past assistant governor ‘Pioneer’ S Maheswaran.

Having contributed over \$520,000 to TRF and upscaling as an AKS Chair Circle member, IPDG Muthu inspired his team to contribute generously to TRF. The district had contributed \$861,634.50 to TRF during his tenure. PRIP Ravindran had tweeted: “Thousands have been impacted by his generosity, an AKS member with over \$500k contribution...”

“Last year, 2,286 Rotarians contributed to TRF, a large number for probably the first time in our district,” said DGN Babu. Maheswaran committed to becoming an AKS member at the event.

IPDG Muthu thanked the district Rotarians for their “unwavering support without which the achievements would not have been possible.” Past governors of RIDs 3212 and 3000 participated in the programme. ■



From L: PRID C Basker, DG R Muthiah Pillai, PRIP K R Ravindran, past AG ‘Pioneer’ Maheswaran, IPDG V R Muthu, RIDN M Muruganandam and DGN J Dhinesh Babu.



# 2025-27 RI Directors for zones 4,5,6 & 7



**RIDN M Muruganandham**

**RIDN K P Nagesh**

**R**I President Gordon McNally declared past district governors K P Nagesh (RID 3191) and M Muruganandam (RID 3000) as directors for 2025–27.

RIDN Nagesh will serve as director for zones 4 and 7 during 2025–27. A member of RC Bangalore Highgrounds, he served as DG during 2015–16 for the undivided Rotary district 3190. He was the

chair of the 2024 Rotary Zone Institute, RISE, held in Bengaluru.

RIDN Muruganandam will serve as director for Zones 5 and 6. He is a member of RC Bhel City Tiruchirapalli and served as DG during 2016–17. He was the chairman of the 2022 Zone Institute held in Chennai.

Both Nagesh and Muruganandam are Arch Klumph Society members. ■



## Rotary Flower Show in Coimbatore

### Team Rotary News

**S**ix Rotary clubs — RCs Coimbatore Town, Downtown, Uptown, Texcity, Centennial and Thondamuthur, RID 3201 — collaborated with the Tamil Nadu Agriculture University to organise a three-day Covai Flower Show at the 23-acre Botanical Gardens in Coimbatore. It was inaugurated by Agriculture minister M R K Panneerselvam and minister for



RID 3201 Rotarians with TNAU Vice Chancellor V Geethalakshmi (centre) and State Agriculture minister M R K Panneerselvam (on her left) at the flower show.

Urban Development S Muthuswamy. Over 4 lakh people visited the show, said project chairman C Nagaraj. The district’s impactful service projects were prominently displayed on giant LED screens across the garden. The district is planning to organise a similar show in January 2025, said event secretary A Godwin. DG T R

Vijayakumar presented the Rotary Vocational Excellence Award to the university vice chancellor V Geethalakshmi.

PDGs A V Pathy and Kuriachan and Rotarians from 650 clubs across the city supported the flower show which was “an impactful public image exercise,” he said. ■



TRF Chair Barry Rassin felicitates RRFC N Subramaniam and his spouse Lalitha for committing to be an AKS member this year. Also seen (from L) TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, RIPR Alisdair Seale, DG Jeetender Gupta and his spouse Deepti and Fiona Seale.

## TRF Chair's India Moments

**D**uring his recent visit to India, TRF trustee chair Barry Rassin visited Delhi, Pune, Bengaluru and Kolkata in India and Kathmandu in Nepal.

In Delhi, RID 3011, at the 'One in a Million' event, Rassin felicitated three new AKS members, including RRFC Dr N Subramanian, and Major Donors. He commended the 100 per cent contributing clubs in the district.

Rassin, along with TRF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya and RID 3131 DG Manjoo Phadke, visited the workshop at Belrise Industries in Pune where students

are being trained in welding skills. The district has undertaken this skill development project in collaboration with Belrise to equip youngsters with industrial skills and provide jobs to them on successful completion of the training. DG Manjoo was felicitated for bagging the Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award given by RI.

In Kolkata, the TRF chair addressed a multidistrict event convened by RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury. Five new AKS members and Major Donors from the participating districts were recognised at the event. ■





TRF Vice Chair Pandya with RID 3131 DG Manjoo Phadke and her spouse Vishwas. DG Manjoo is seen holding the Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award that was bestowed on her by RI.



TRF Chair Rassin, TRF Vice Chair Pandya and DG Manjoo with trainees and staff at the Belrise Industries, Pune. PDGs Deepak Shikarpur (right, back row) and Shailesh Palekar (behind DG Manjoo) are also seen.

# Empowering district leaders

Jaishree

No forming phantom clubs and no more tarnishing India's image through election disputes," said RI director and convener Raju Subramanian at the training and goal-setting meet, *Disha*, held in Delhi. Highlighting the numerous election-related complaints being sent to RI, he noted that despite doing so well in membership and being No 2 in Foundation-giving, "we are ruining our image globally. Our dirty politics is putting off new members. Sort out your issues within your district and do not escalate it to the RI headquarters." To discourage phantom clubs being formed for boosting votes, he explained that a pilot project is in place for the coming year which requires the DG, DGE and DGN to jointly sign the club membership form for formation of new clubs.

Frowning upon groupism and favouritism, the RI director said: "As

a DRFC, you must not refuse to sign for the Polio Fund when there is excess fund in your DDF, or the grant form just because you want the grant to go to the next year's governor who may be your favourite. It is irrelevant which group you are a part of. This is not ethical for our organisation. Do not discriminate. Posts are not for positions but meant to move our organisation forward."

*Disha* this year focused on recognising and implementing the Action Plan, and setting the 'three-year rolling goals', with the involvement of DGEs, DGNs and the DGNDs, to ensure better bonding and continuity among the district's leadership for the next three years. "The aim is to work together as a team



so that we can achieve much more than working alone as individuals," he said. Prior to the event, five-year data on membership and Foundation-giving was shared with the incoming governors and coordinators for them to work out their goals for the next three years ending June 2027.

"It is a sustainable goal; we are on track to achieve it," said Subramanian, and noted that "this annual feature of fixing goals is unique to our part of



RID Roychowdhury, Trustee Vice Chair Pandya, RIDN Nagesh, PRID A S Venkatesh, Disha Chair Jain and PDG Madhav Chandran.



**From R: Disha secretary Gurjeet Singh Sekhon, TRF Trustee Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, RIDs Anirudha Roychowdhury and Raju Subramanian, his spouse Vidhya, RIDN KP Nagesh, Disha Chair Sharat Jain and his spouse Ruchika at the inaugural of Disha.**

the world. Many countries may not be even aware that we have a programme like this every year where the DGEs meet with their DRFCs, DPICs and DRCs and set targets together.”

Speaking on the topic *Magic of Rotary*, RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury said, “Let’s prioritise initiatives that promote peace. Rotary’s magic lies in communities thriving in harmony, and its enduring strength lies in balancing continuity and change. Let’s take pride in Rotary’s legacy while we embrace change and continue what we do best — doing good in the world.”

**T**RF trustee vice-chair Bharat Pandya listed ten priorities of the Foundation with polio eradication topping the list. “We are closer than ever before in ending polio from the world. But there is so much lethargy among Rotarians for contributing to

the Polio Fund which is the backbone to continue prevention activities in the polio-endemic countries. The Polio Fund helps in attracting twice our contribution from the Gates Foundation. But if we go down on our funds, the world may see a surge in polio again,” he warned.

The other priorities he mentioned included promoting peace through the Peace Fellows programme and supporting Rotary Peace Centres, Programs of Scale, developing partnerships, promoting the Paul Harris Society, grants, Annual and Endowment Funds, and stewardship. He urged the Foundation coordinators to focus on CSR India grants, and increase the number of donors to TRF to 20 per cent. “Only six Indian districts are 100 per cent giving clubs and we have to work on getting more Rotary clubs to participate,” he said.

Pandya urged the delegates to help achieve the target of \$2.025 billion for the Endowment Fund by 2025 — \$1 billion in actual

contribution and \$1.025 billion in commitments. “Imagine the power TRF will have when we have \$1 billion actual contribution. The spendable earnings every year then will be at least \$50 million and we can do, not one, but five Programs of Scale.” He said that as of March 2024 TRF has received a combined total of \$1.651 billion in the Endowment Fund; “we are short by \$374 million from our goal.”

He suggested to the district leaders to bring back focus to *Project Positive Health* that was launched in 2019. “Today sugar and salt are killing people more than war and terrorism,” he said. Sixty per cent Indians die of lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, kidney or heart diseases and this can be overcome by regularly checking parameters related to blood sugar, BP and body-mass index. “There is nothing called ‘sudden’ heart attack; it requires years of preparation. NCDs are silent killers,” he observed and encouraged the district leaders to



RID Raju Subramanian (last row, centre) with district governors-elect.

plan health camps and awareness programmes in their region.

**P**RID AS Venkatesh, speaking on diversity, equity and inclusion, said that DEI does not stop with addressing gender equity. “You have

to be inclusive in all aspects without being discriminating. Your club should be accessible to a disabled or an aged person, and comfortable for all members. It should reflect the diversity of its community. Gender equity must be reflected in leadership positions, committees and in our clubs. Tune your mindset to include women at all levels.”

*DearMamma*, an app to educate women on breast cancer and manage breast health was introduced at the meet. The app guides the user through self-examination and helps set reminders. It is a project of The Dear Foundation, Switzerland.

PDG Sharat Jain organised the event as its chair; and PDG Gurjeet Sekhon was the event secretary.

Pictures by Jaishree

## RNT’s Executive Committee Members – 2024-25



Jaishree

**From L:** RID 3192 DGE Mahadev Prasad (chairman); RID 3000 DGE Raja Govindasamy (treasurer); RID 3261 DGE Akhil Mishra (secretary) and RID 3056 DGE Raakhi Gupta (advisor).



# Rotary upgrades neonatal ICU in Hyderabad

Team Rotary News

**N**ow doctors and paramedical staff at the Niloufer Hospital, Hyderabad, can have access to the latest medical equipment to save critically ill newborns at the neonatal ICU (NICU). This is thanks to RC Hyderabad Mavericks, RID 3150, revamping the facility through a global grant in partnership with RC Global Wizards and US clubs, RCs Simsbury-Granby, RID 7890; Livermore, 5170; and Westwood Village, RID 5280.

With the guidance of District Service Projects chair Suren Poruri and DRFC K Prabhakar, equipment worth ₹48 lakh was donated to the NICU to improve treatment facilities for newborns. One of the largest hospitals in Asia, the 1,200-bed hospital is renowned for providing quaternary care (advanced medical services) in obstetric, paediatrics and maternal fetal medicine. In a day, the hospital provides free OPD care to 1,000 children, 150 get admitted; and 700 critical newborns are treated at its NICU in a month.

Some of the high-tech equipment donated by Rotary include image scanning machines, pulse oximeters, multichannel monitors, T-Piece Resuscitators and phototherapy units. “The project was aimed at enhancing the capacity of NICU in treating high-risk deliveries through faster turnaround time, better monitoring of pre- and post-delivery neonatal care and efficient assessment of neonatal conditions,” said P Vanasri, president, RC Hyderabad Mavericks.

On an average, over 300 high-risk babies will benefit from the project every month, and over 2,500 infants in a year, she said. Doctors, nurses and technical staff at the NICU can work with greater efficiency to save the newborns, thanks to the upgraded facilities made possible through Rotary’s global grant, he added. ■



**Above:** The well-equipped NICU at the Niloufer Hospital, Hyderabad.

**Below:** An infant undergoing a scan at the NICU.



# Incoming club presidents in Sri Lanka prepare for positive impact

**Kiran Zehra**

**W**e are not living in a world draped in silk or bathed in sunshine; rather, it is etched with challenges that grow daily. Thanks to escalating tension in the Middle East, naked aggression in Ukraine, the blocking of trade routes, and disruption in global shipping, local economies are left devastated. Amidst these trials, as you step into your roles as club presidents, it won't be a cakewalk," said PRIP K R Ravindran, addressing over 50 presidents-elect from RID 3220 at the Presidents-Elect Training Seminar (PETS) in Jaffna, Sri Lanka.

PSM Charles, Governor of the Northern Province of Jaffna, was also present at the inaugural event.

Complimenting DGE Sushena Ranatunga for selecting Jaffna as the PETS destination and promoting it as "a safe and welcoming destination," Ravindran reminisced about his prior visit with PRIP Ray Klinginsmith in 2010, shortly after the war. "I like the idea of coming here, and since I'm already here, I've invited my university mates from India to join me for two more days in Jaffna. I hope they go back and share what they are missing and why they should come here."

He said that the club president's role "carries significant responsibility and plays a crucial role in addressing community needs and challenges. Every activity you undertake does not have to be monumental; focus on your members first. Promote camaraderie and support among them. Encourage socialisation and business networking within the club; your dentist, travel agent, lawyer, or doctor could all be fellow Rotarians."

Reflecting on Rotary's evolution, Ravindran highlighted RC San Francisco's focus on promoting business among club members in 1952-53.



Rezon David

From L: DG Jerome Rajendram, Jaffna Governor PSM Charles, PRIP K R Ravindran and DGE Sushena Ranatunga at the PETS.



PDG Pubudu de Zoysa (fourth from left) with the incoming women club presidents.

“Initially, there were practices such as tracking business transactions between members and rewarding them for doing business with each other. However, resistance to this insular approach grew over time, leading to a shift towards a broader focus on community and global service.”

Even when he became the RI president, “it was always family, business and Rotary. That’s what I urge you to do. As club presidents, you will probably learn more management skills, unlike any taught in universities. Because in a Rotary club, you can’t sack, force or jolt people. You just have to cajole them, influence them, and encourage them to do work.”

He recounted a personal story of attending an Interact club meeting where he overheard children admiring superficial aspects of his life like his tie and car, rather than focusing on his speech. Despite the realisation that children may sometimes admire individuals for the wrong reasons, he resolved to be a proper role model by embodying positive qualities and values for those who look up to him... “and that is the sort of pressure that Rotary puts on you. You realise very quickly that it’s very easy to make a

speech. But it’s a lot more difficult to live those words and walk that talk.”

Emphasising the inclusive and harmonious nature of Rotary, he said that Rotary transcends barriers of nationality, ethnicity and religion, fostering a sense of unity and shared purpose. “This is true at the club, district and international levels. Otherwise, can you imagine the Rotary world electing someone like me, from a small island, as the world president? Because we go beyond borders, we

don’t worry about white men, brown men, black men, rich countries or small countries.”

DG Jerome Rajendram spoke about the incoming presidents’ role in upholding the values and reputation of Rotary in Sri Lanka. He said, “Internationally, Sri Lanka is often recognised as the country of PRIP K R Ravindran. As incoming club presidents, I encourage you to continue the good reputation established by Ravindran and spread Rotary’s positive impact worldwide.”

**Club presidents participating in a karaoke activity.**





Last row, from left: PDGs S Muthu Palaniappan, A Sampath Kumar, DGND Kumar Sundaraj, PDG Krish Rajendran, Rtn Kirubahara Alakasantharam, DGE Sushena Ranatunga and his spouse Roshini along with the underprivileged children of Jaffna.

DGE Sushena Ranatunga urged his batch of presidents to “support district projects and make a significant impact through simple action.” To kickstart the year’s projects, he handed over stationery kits and a laptop to a staff member of the Uduvil Malvatthai RCTM School. Essential medicines were also handed over to a representative from

the Mannar District Hospital. “These gestures represent the beginning of our collective effort to bring about positive change in the country through Rotary initiatives,” he said. The DGE arranged lunch for children from less privileged families after the event.

ARRFC S Muthu Palaniappan (RID 3232) and PDG A Sampath

Kumar (RID 3231) were also present at the PETS. The event concluded with a graduation ceremony followed by a toast to the presidents-elect by PDG Krish Rajendran, and expressions of gratitude by Gamini Madanayake, district executive secretary 2024–25.

Pictures by Kiran Zehra



## A medical camp near Salem

Team Rotary News

Over 400 people benefited from a one-day medical camp organised by RC Elampillai, RID 2982, at Elampillai, a town near Salem, Tamil Nadu. The camp comprised diagnosis and treatment for eyes, ENT, varicose veins, and joint and



People being transported to the camp site for medical checkup.

shoulder. Cataract surgeries were performed for 200 people and physiotherapy sessions were scheduled for over 90 individuals with joint and shoulder issues, said club president Obuli Venkatesh.

This 18-month-old club also conducted a marathon to sensitise people about food wastage. Around 1,150 people of various ages participated in the 2, 5 and 10-km runs. DG S Raghavan flagged off the event. ■

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5. Those joining after July can pay for the remaining Rotary year at ₹40 an issue for print version and ₹35 for e-version.
6. Subscription account of the club with *Rotary News* is a running account and does not cease at the end of June every year.
7. Names of all members with their complete postal address including **PIN CODE, mobile number and email ID** must be sent along with the form and DD/cheque payable at par. Online transfers can be made through GPAY or netbanking. When you make an online payment share with us immediately by WhatsApp (9840078074) or email ([rotarynews@rosaonline.org](mailto:rotarynews@rosaonline.org)) the UTR number, your club name and amount paid. If this is not done your payment will not be updated

in our records and your club will show dues outstanding.

8. Language preference (**English, Hindi or Tamil**) should be stated alongside member's name.
9. Update the correct mailing address and contact details of your members **directly** to *Rotary News* every year to receive the magazine regularly. **RI does not share member details with us.**
10. Members should ensure their names are included in the subscribers' list their club sends us. If you've paid, but your name is not sent to us by your club, you will not get a copy of the magazine.
11. If you've not received your printed copy to which you had subscribed, check with your club president if your club has opted for e-version.
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

**B**eginning 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.**

# Beautifying anganwadis in Mysuru

Jaishree

**R**enovating run-down anganwadis is a major project of RC Mysore South East, RID 3181, for the last four decades. These days, if the government-run creches in the neighbouring

Ashokapuram and Vidyaranyapuram villages sport a spanking new look, it is thanks to the efforts of the club members. “Most of these anganwadis are poorly maintained and in bad shape — the doors and windows

are creaky and broken, the paint is non-existent and the buildings generally look gloomy. Right from the club’s inception, our members decided to transform these ramshackle buildings into warm, welcoming homes.



This is the least we can do for the little children who spend hours here when their parents, mostly construction or sanitation workers, are out on work,” says KN Muralidhara, president of this club which was chartered in 1983. He shares that all 64 members are involved hands-on in all the service projects being done by the club.

The walls in the two anganwadis sport various infographics to attract and engage young minds. Alphabets in English and Kannada, numbers,

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Right from the club’s inception, our members decided to transform these ramshackle buildings into warm, welcoming homes.

**KN Muralidhara**  
president  
RC Mysore South East

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images of fruits, vegetables and animals engage the attention of the children who are also taught rhymes and good habits by the two caretakers who manage the facilities. The club has equipped the anganwadis with colourful chairs, toys and mattresses. “There are 25 children in each of these anganwadis and they generally stay here from 9am to 3pm. Nutritious food and fruits are provided to them. We celebrate our special occasions by sponsoring groceries and fruits for





DG H R Keshav (second from R) with RC Mysore South East president K N Muralidhara (R) and club members at the newly built dining hall at the government school in Kadamanuganahalli village.

these facilities,” he says. The Rotarians spend around ₹1 lakh for the renovation of an anjanwadi.

The club has constructed a dining hall with a seating capacity of 200 students at the Government Higher Primary School, Kadamanuganahalli, a tribal village in Hunsur taluk,

Mysuru district. The children hail from the nearby Nagerhole forest area and this is the only school in the vicinity. “Earlier the students used to have their midday meals on the open ground with no protection from the sun or rain,” says the president. DG HR Keshav inaugurated the facility at the school.

The club has adopted the Bhailwan Basavayya School which educates 90 children annually. “We have upgraded the school infrastructure and provide uniforms, school bags, stationery to the children every year.”

Sewing machines were provided to 17 women from underprivileged families and tailoring classes are conducted for them. “We will upgrade the machines to motorised ones, and even provide them sophisticated machines with embroidery and other functions when these women become confident in pursuing the vocation,” he says.

The club is supporting the dialysis treatment for two economically disadvantaged patients at the Sigma Hospital in Mysuru. This has been an ongoing project for eight years now, says Muralidhara. Reviving water resources is another signature project of the club. Many water bodies around Mysuru and Mandya have been rejuvenated through the club’s efforts.



DG Keshav, club president Muralidhara and Rotarians after giving sewing machines to women.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



# Rotary eye care for villagers

## Team Rotary News

Chartered on Feb 19, 1974, RC Neemuch, RID 3040 (Madhya Pradesh), celebrated its golden jubilee where RI director Raju Subramanian dedicated an ophthalmology mobile clinic to Nethralaya, a local eyecare hospital, as part of Project *Aapka Chashma Aapke Dwar* (receive your spectacles at your doorstep). This global grant initiative, partnered with RC Memphis, RID 6800, and costing ₹41 lakh, will conduct eye screening camps and provide spectacles free of cost in remote rural regions of Madhya Pradesh.

Over the past five decades the club has undertaken numerous services including establishing a community centre, equipment bank, food centre for the poor, and a public rest house. “Apart from providing mobility aids for the disabled, and sponsoring corrective



RI Director Raju Subramanian with DG Ritu Grover (L), DGN Sushil Malhotra (R) and PDG Darshan Gandhi (fourth from R) at the inauguration of the mobile eye clinic.

surgeries, our club is actively promoting eye and organ donation through awareness camps,” says club member PDG Darshan Gandhi. ■

## From RI South Asia

### Give online on behalf of club members

**Wondering How To Donate On Behalf Of Members ?**

Explained below are the ways by which club/club leaders can donate on behalf of their members...

Online Mode	Offline Mode
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Club Leader logs in to his/her My Rotary account.</li><li>Select "Donate from members" option.</li><li>Enter the contribution amount for each member.</li><li>Complete the transaction by using your Credit/Debit card or Net Banking (Please do not use club/company account)</li><li>For a detailed step-by-step process, please refer to the link below the image.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Club collects cheques and contributions from individual members.</li><li>Send the consolidated Cheque/DD from Club's Trust/Club account to RI South Asia Office along with Club Trust's/Club PAN.</li><li>Don't forget to include list of members with their respective contribution amounts and membership ID.</li><li>Cheques for above listed contributions will only be <b>accepted till 5 PM on 31st May 2024</b> for current Rotary Year.</li></ul>

**Points To Note**

- In both the modes, the contribution credit is assigned to individual members. However, BOG 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)
- In online mode Club President, Club Foundation Chair, Membership Chair, Executive Secretary/Director, Secretary, and Treasurer have access to contribute on behalf on members.
- Please reconcile the list of individual contributions accompanying the cheque with the cheque amount before dispatch.

For any query please write to [risao@rotary.org](mailto:risao@rotary.org) or call us at 011-42260101-105

Detailed Step-by-step online process – [https://www.highroadsolution.com/file\\_uploader2/files/giveonlineonbehalfclubmembers.pdf](https://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/giveonlineonbehalfclubmembers.pdf)

Other available contribution channels – [https://www.highroadsolution.com/file\\_uploader2/files/rficontributionchannels.pdf](https://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/rficontributionchannels.pdf)

### Latest update on online giving to Named Endowment Funds

Improvements and changes have been made to Rotary's on-line giving options. Now, donors can make an online gift to an Established Named Endowment Fund. Here is a guide to make the donation:

After logging in to *My Rotary — Donate* page, the donor can enter an active Tracked Gift ID and then hit “search.”

If the gift is open to that donor, it will appear, and they can proceed with their donation. If the gift is not found or it's a limited gift they can't give to, then they will receive a message telling them to select another gift. For more information, refer: [http://www.highroadsolution.com/file\\_uploader2/files/named\\_funds\\_onlinegiving\\_flowchart.pdf](http://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/named_funds_onlinegiving_flowchart.pdf). ■

# A Republic Day celebration with a difference

Rasheeda Bhagat

**T**his year, the Rotary Club of Aurangabad, RID 3132, in collaboration with the SBOA (State Bank Officers Association) School's Interact club, decided to celebrate Republic Day with a different kind of initiative. Facilitating and motivating youngsters to conquer Maharashtra's tallest peak, the Kalsubai Peak, "standing tall at 5,400ft (1646m) in the Western Ghats. We undertook this initiative to spread awareness among youngsters on the importance

of physical activity and fitness, and also to reduce their 'screen time,' and foster a deeper connection with nature," says Poonam Deodas, a member of RC Solapur North and district chair for RI and *Rotary News*.

The project idea was given by Sarita Lonikar, the first woman president of this oldest Rotary club in Aurangabad (started 71 years back). "I wanted our youngsters to experience a different type of flag hoisting this Republic Day," she smiles.

A staff member of the SBOA Public School, which is a big school with a strength of 3,500 students,

Sarita is an avid trekker herself. It was her idea to start an Interact club in the school, sponsored by her Rotary club. It has about 60 members.

Accompanied by 50 youngsters, 25 of them from the school's Interact club, and the other 25 from other schools in Aurangabad, the expedition was led by the president herself and Pratap Handrale, associate secretary of the SBOA School.

**O**n the day of the expedition, the enthusiastic trekkers departed from Aurangabad at about 4.30am, taking a private bus to Nashik which is about 180km away and then reaching the village near Igatpuri, which is the base camp for trekking to the Kalsubai Peak. After a briefing session on safety measures and trekking guidelines, the ascent began under the guidance of the two experienced trekkers. At the



Members of Interact Club of SBOA School atop the Kalsubai Peak, Maharashtra.



Certificates being distributed to the participants for completing the trek.

moment, Sarita admits, she has not yet conquered any major peaks, having gone to Hanuman Tekri, Sai Tekri and other smaller places in and around Aurangabad. “But my ambition is to make it to the Mount Everest base camp,” she says.

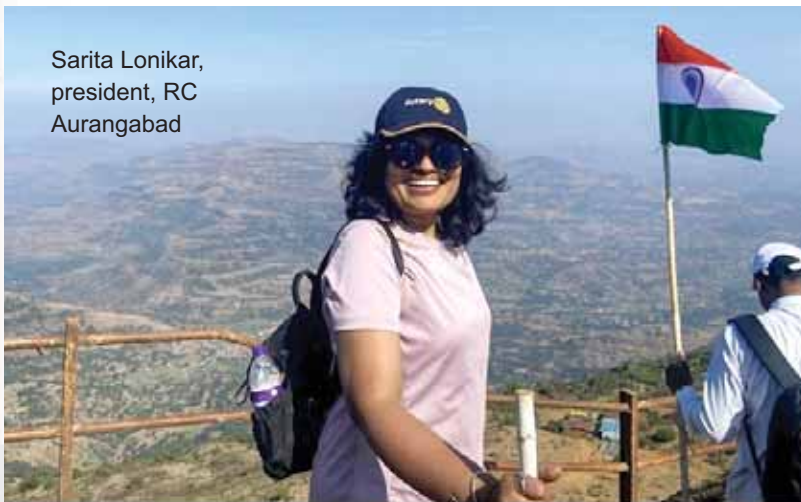
For the youngsters it was a day filled with fun activities. On their way to the peak, the group paused for a picnic lunch in the lush surroundings of this beautiful region. After three and a half hours, they reached the summit at around 2pm, where they were greeted by breathtaking panoramic

We undertook this initiative to spread awareness among youngsters on the importance of physical activity and fitness, and to reduce their ‘screen time,’ and foster a deeper connection with nature.

**Poonam Deodas**  
member, RC Solapur North

views. Here, they first hoisted the national flag and sang the national anthem in full gusto to celebrate Republic Day. Next, they put up the Rotary and Interact flags and banners in a bid to boost the organisation’s public image. “We spent over two hours here, taking pictures, selfies and having a fun time,” adds Sarita.

She says proudly that in this trekking group, priority was given to taking as many girls as possible. The NCC girls’ group was explored for this. She explains at the “SBOA School, even during admission,



Sarita Lonikar,  
president, RC  
Aurangabad



priority is given to girls, as we want to ensure that our girls get a sound education and can become economically empowered. I am so happy that over 60 per cent of our group was made up of girl trekkers.”

She joined Rotary about 10 years ago and is happy to be the first woman to lead the club; her focus is on membership, and she had already added 25 new members to the club, taking the total to 71, and her objective is to take the club’s strength to 100.

Certificates were awarded to all participants upon completion of the trek, acknowledging their achievement and commitment to physical fitness and conservation of mother nature. Another objective realised was convincing youngsters that fun can be had through physical activity, and away from screen time on phones and computers. The cost of taking each person for this trek was around ₹4,000, Sarita added. ■

## A dialysis centre to serve remote villages

### Team Rotary News

A three-bedded dialysis centre has been set up by RC Sathy, RID 3203, at the Riteesh Hospital in Sathyamangalam in Erode district, Tamil Nadu.

The ₹45 lakh-facility was set up with global grant support from RC Garki-Abuja, RID 9125, Nigeria, and TRF. It was inaugurated by SV Balasubramaniam, chairman, Bannari group of companies. “Impressed by the cause, he has committed to contribute ₹5 lakh every year to our club to do service projects for the community,” said project chairman Manickam Gunasekaran. The centre will be a boon for the people of surrounding villages who had to otherwise travel



SV Balasubramaniam, chairman, Bannari group of companies, inaugurating the dialysis centre. PDG K Shanmugasundaram is seen on the back row, third from left.

60km for treatment. PDGs B Elangkumaran, K Shanmugasundaram, A Karthikeyan and DGND K Boopathi attended the inaugural event.

Dialysis will be provided free to patients covered under government schemes and nominal charges will be levied for other patients. ■

# our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion



## The DEI Advisory Council is guiding Rotary on its journey to be a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive organization.

And as fellow Rotary members from clubs all around the world,  
we're here to help you on your journey too.

### CONTACT THE COUNCIL TO:

- ① Get support for making your club more welcoming and inclusive for all members
- ② Invite a council member to speak at a club or district event
- ③ Learn about DEI strategies your club can adopt

Email [dei@rotary.org](mailto:dei@rotary.org)  
today to get started!

# All about Mars, diversity and STEM

Kiran Zehra



Kiran Zehra

Swati Mohan, Guidance and Controls Operations Lead on the NASA Mars 2020 mission, addressing members of RC Madras East. Also seen are (from L): Alex Ave-Lallemant, chief of the Consular Section, US Embassy, RCME president Babu Krishnamoorthy and secretary Revathi Sanjeev.

On International Women's Day, Swati Mohan, an Indian-American aerospace engineer who was the Guidance and Controls Operations Lead on the NASA Mars 2020 mission, transported the Rotarians in the room to the red planet with her insight into space science, and the importance of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education for girls, at an interactive programme organised by RC Madras East, RID 3232, and the US Consulate General, Chennai. Alex Ave-Lallemant, chief of the Consular Section at the American Consulate, was also present at the event.

Rotarians in the audience broke into a cheer when Swati said that she was an Interactor in high school where "I first learned about community service and giving back. Initially, I thought it would strengthen my college application, but as I got

more involved, it began to become a memorable experience that shaped my outlook of the world."

One of the activities that her Interact club was involved in was tutoring girls in math at local elementary schools. From this experience, she realised that "they found math difficult, not because they lacked the knowledge, but simply because they lacked confidence. It's so easy for girls to lose confidence in their ability to do math and science, and that often happens at a very young age. So, if we want to encourage them to pursue STEM fields, we need to start early."

The demand for skilled individuals in STEM fields, she noted, "is increasing as the world relies more on digital technologies. Recognising this crucial need, many organisations are actively promoting interest in STEM education among today's youth. Our girls shouldn't be left behind."

She noted that when she started her career in space research, there were very few women in the field. Part of the reason for her speaking tour in India is that she wants to "pay it forward." Her role as the mission commentator for the landing of the Perseverance rover in February 2021, "gave me a platform. I was fortunate to be selected as a commentator. The pandemic made it challenging with a mask covering my face. However, the *bindi* on my forehead bestowed the identity of an Indian woman, sparking both support and dissent, especially within the Indian community globally. Immigrants, women of colour, and minorities must see role models who break barriers, particularly in fields lacking diverse representation. I aim to inspire young girls so that they too can succeed in these areas," Swati said.

Highlighting her NASA fellowship during her postgraduate programme,

which provided not only financial support but also a strong sense of community and peer support, she said, “That network of peers and mentors can help navigate the complexities of academia and career paths, particularly in male-dominated fields like aerospace.”

Swati disclosed that she was pregnant when she was assigned to be part of the Mars mission. Insecurity crept in as she wondered if she could continue with the mission or would be transferred. “Luckily, I had a female boss who shared her motherhood journey. Support from peers during tough times plays a crucial role in maintaining motivation and confidence,” she said.

Answering a question on the future of space exploration, she said, “Space exploration holds the promise of fostering world peace. As nations



Swati with schoolchildren.

collaborate on space missions, they nurture diplomatic relations and inspire unity.”

Earlier in the morning Swati shared her Mars mission experience with 200 school students. She spoke to them

about the choice of the Jezero crater for the Perseverance rover’s touchdown and highlighted the seven minutes of terror (a term used by NASA engineers to describe the entry, descent, and landing (EDL) phase of a Mars mission). ■



## Cotton bag making unit in a Maharashtrian village

### Team Rotary News



Women display the cotton bags stitched by them.

Rotary Club of Walhekarwadi, RID 3131, along with the Jijau Social Foundation, an NGO, has helped set up a cotton bag stitching unit called the Jijau Mahila Cotton Bag Gruh Udyog at Walhekarwadi near Pune, Maharashtra. Last year the club, jointly with VolveWorks India, had distributed one lakh cotton bags

to sensitise people against plastic pollution and encouraged them to replace polythene bags with such eco-friendly bags.

Initially 20 women have been identified to stitch and market these bags. They have been pursuing tailoring as a vocation but lacked the procuring and marketing skills for venturing into cotton bags. Workshops were conducted to educate them on where to procure the raw material, the different types of material available, identify target markets and transport the final product to the market. Initially the women stitched various bags, including fridge bags to store fruits and vegetables with the material provided to them by the club. “Going forward, we will support more women with sophisticated machines such as cutting and printing devices,” said club member Ganesh Bora. ■

# RC Jammu Stars helps autism clinic

Rasheeda Bhagat



RC Jammu Stars president Pooja Malhotra (L) and Vidushi Sharma, State Programme Coordinator of the NGO Children in India, at the Autism Clinic at the SMGS Hospital, Jammu.



**W**hen the Department of Paediatrics, in partnership with the NGO Children in India, recently started an Autism Clinic at the government SMGS Hospital in Jammu to offer a range of services to children with autism and their families, the Rotary Club of Jammu Stars, RI District 3070, happily pitched in with some colourful, modern play equipment that was required for training and therapy for these children.

This NGO works for the welfare and development of children with physical and mental challenges. Vidushi Sharma, state programme coordinator of the organisation, says that as in many parts of India, in Jammu and Kashmir too, schools for ordinary children are wary of giving admission to autistic and other children with learning and physical disabilities. “Ours is a private transformational organisation that is involved in working with children who are born with

defects or have development delays. Our main objective is to mainstream these children into ‘normal’ schools.”

Quizzed on how receptive the schools in J&K are to taking in special children, she shakes her head and says, “They are absolutely not willing to take such students. But we are working towards a scenario where the mainstream education environment in the state will be much more inclusive and gives every child a chance to attend school and get qualification and knowledge.”

Special schools do exist for such children, “but we don’t recommend special schools for children with autism and other learning problems because it is in the best interest of such children to go to normal schools which are inclusive.”

That is why, she adds, Children in India decided to open such a clinic at the hospital. On why choose a hospital for such a project, Vidushi quickly says, “Oh no, autism is not a disease, but it can be managed much better

and the child can be much more easily and completely integrated into mainstream education through early intervention and such support.”

**T**he Rotarians got excited when they were told that no such autism clinic exists in the entire J&K state and willingly donated play equipment costing over ₹35,000, said club president Pooja Malhotra. “We Rotarians know the importance of community collaboration in driving positive change, and what better project could give us the opportunity to do so than one for children. Our club members were happy to support this clinic and reaffirmed their commitment to supporting initiatives that promote inclusivity and well-being in any sphere.”

Vidushi adds that right now she has approached the Rotarians only for the play equipment. “Our services at the moment include early intervention



programmes, behavioural therapies, speech and language therapy, occupational therapy and counselling. The clinic's comprehensive approach aims to provide the necessary support for individuals with autism to thrive."

The main problem, Vidushi says, is early detection and speedy intervention. But in J&K too, as elsewhere in the country, parents are in a denial mode and refuse to admit that the delay of milestones as the child is growing up is an indication of some deficiency or difference. "If there is any instance of speech delay in a child, it's a red flag for autism. The same is true with behavioural issues, such as the child not making proper eye contact, not playing with other children, etc. But in so many cases, the parents don't seek help, saying no, no, my child is totally fine. They are hesitant to bring such children forward fearing what would others say... unfortunately there are stereotypes like somebody saying the child has become mentally disturbed. So we have formed parents' groups to deal with such issues."

But the good news is that in this newly opened clinic, already 60 children have been brought in. And now they will be put through special



Children with their parents and the staff at the clinic.

**Below:** Pooja and Vidushi with members of RC Jammu Stars at the clinic. Dr Dara Singh, medical superintendent of the hospital, is seen second from left.



activities; "to handle such children, we require an occupational therapist, speech therapist and psychologist. Though available they come only once or twice a week. We also need more play equipment for enhanced activities for children so that their energy can be better channelised. We seek Rotary's further support for all this," Vidushi adds.

She was grateful to Dr Dara Singh, medical superintendent of the hospital, for extending total support to set up this clinic "and ensure that all individuals with autism receive the specialised care they require."

Children in India has already signed an MoU with two other states — Nagaland and Uttarakhand — to start similar autism clinics. She says that their sister organisation Contact Cure India, which works with children having a club foot, has Rotary as their biggest donor, and Inner Wheel also supports it. ■

# Project Vignettes

## Team Rotary News

### Club helps replenish blood bank



A donor donating blood at the medical college campus.

In response to a critical shortage at the Jhalawar Medical College blood bank, RC Brij Nagar Jhalawar, RID 3056, organised a blood donation camp where 90 units of blood were collected. ■

### A cervical cancer elimination initiative



Students after receiving the vaccination, along with Rotarians.

RC Kharghar Midtown, RID 3131, as part of its cervical cancer vaccination drive inoculated 50 underprivileged girls between ages 9–14 at a zilla parishad school in Murbi village, Kharghar. The initiative aligns with WHO's goal to vaccinate 90 per cent of girls by age 15 and contributes to preventing an estimated 74 million new cases of cervical cancer. ■

### Dialysis equipment donated



DG TR Vijayakumar inaugurating the project.

RC Cochin, RID 3201, inaugurated its first CSR grant project in this year by donating dialysis equipment worth ₹23.61 lakh to the General Hospital, Ernakulam. The donation, including a dialysis machine, couches, monitors, and more, was made possible through a contribution from Herbal Isolates through the CV Jacob Foundation. ■

### Eye surgeries for the underprivileged



Club members with the patients after surgery.

Under a global grant with RC Taipei, RID 3481, Taiwan, RC Anakapalle, RID 3020, screened 36 patients at the Rotary Eye Hospital, Anakapalle, near Visakhapatnam for cataract surgeries. Seven patients were treated for cataract and post-care medicines were given to them. ■

# English coaching for rural students

Jaishree

Nearly 30,000 school students in rural Karnataka can confidently converse in English and comprehend simple sentences, all thanks to the *Remedial English* programme being conducted by RCs Bangalore Yelahanka and Bangalore West, RID 3192. The clubs undertook the first phase of the project during 2019–21 with global grant support from RC Austin, RID 5870. It was continued to the next phase in

2021, this time in partnership with RC Cupertino, RID 5170.

“In spite of the raging Covid pandemic in the first year (2019–20), we were able to impact 12,651 children, covering 208 schools, and 12,038 students in 200 schools in the second year. Taking classes in temple premises, under the tree, in the Panchayat building campus... we successfully engaged around 25,000 children in the most difficult times,” says PDG Rajendra Rai, a member of RC Bangalore West. The

project was continued through another GG with RC Cupertino to reach out to 1,500 students from across 50 government schools. It was completed recently and the students exhibited their newly acquired English proficiency to Gabriela Klein, TRF coordinator from the RI headquarters in Evanston, at an ‘English Fair’ during her visit to Bengaluru in February. “I was impressed by the teachers’ dedication to following the methodology and the children’s eagerness to



An English class in progress at a government school near Bengaluru.

excel in their English communications. Being able to see how Rotarians from different countries, teachers, parents, and partners worked together to make this programme a possibility was also a powerful experience,” she said. Children showcase all that they have learned at the ‘English Fair’ organised by the clubs after the completion of each course. They converse in English and skits are enacted.

On the implementation of the project, Rai said that the clubs have a tie-up with *Pratham*, an NGO that provided the educators, to identify and train one or two teachers from the participating schools in the new methodology of teaching English called ‘Teaching at the Right Level’. These teachers in turn will take classes for batches of 30 students for four hours a day for a month. “They cover basic English for students of Classes 5 and 6, and advanced English for students of Classes 6 and 7.”

The participants include children of labourers and small business owners such as manufacturers of wicks, incense sticks and baskets. “We want to reach out to more rural children. Being confident in English, they will



A class being conducted under a tree during the Covid pandemic.

aspire to become scientists, engineers and doctors. Gender disparity will also be addressed, since girls outnumber boys in rural schools, enabling them to have access to more opportunities and better quality of life,” says Rai.

The genesis of the programme began in 2007–08 when the two Rotary clubs, along with a Texas-based NGO *Pragathi* got together to promote over 10 literacy projects in government schools in Karnataka with matching

and global grant support. The first GG project, *Teach India*, launched in 2014 focused on teaching Kannada and Math, and set up libraries in around 400 rural schools. It benefitted 30,000 children in its two-year duration. “With the success of this project, we executed two more similar GG projects; this time we touched another 33,000 children,” he says. The fourth GG focused on teaching Math and creating a community library for a one-year period, benefitting 15,000 children.

All these literacy projects have helped more than one lakh school-children develop interest in academics, besides complementing the school curriculum. “The parents were enthusiastic during each of our projects and were happy to witness the transformation in their wards. When we did the *Remedial English* programme, we could see the joy in the parents as they heard their children speak fluently in English. They considered their children at par with their peers in private schools,” says Rai. He hopes that “the government replicates these initiatives and carries the project forward in the interest of the enthusiastic young learners.” ■



TRF coordinator Gabriela Klein from the RI headquarters interacting with a student at an English Fair. PDG Rajendra Rai is seen on her right.

# An eye hospital in West Bengal gets a new building

V Muthukumaran



In keeping with its legacy of providing eyecare to the poor and marginalised, RID 3291 has shifted its Joynagar Eye Hospital at South 24 Parganas district in West Bengal to a state-of-the-art building which will have initial capacity to perform 5,000 surgeries and examine 50,000 OPD patients a year. “We will double our performance in 2–3 years as the swanky, 10,000 sqft building will have an array of latest equipment to do intricate procedures to treat glaucoma, retinal diseases and modern Lasik eye surgeries,” says Vikram Tantia, member of RC Calcutta Chowringhee and a key executive of the project team.

Given the outpouring of patients including those referred by its 23 vision centres across villages and blocks, the old rented building was bursting at the seams, in spite of doing 30,000 OPD screenings and 3,500 surgeries a year, most of them routed through its outreach centres. What started as a modest vision centre at Mathurapur block in the Sundarbans in 2004, thanks to the initiative of RCC Human Development Centre (RCC HDC) sponsored by RC Central Calcutta, gradually expanded following a Rotary survey in 2007. The study called for its relocation to Joynagar, a small town which is a two-hour drive from Kolkata, and “our new rented building was close to the railway station and also well-linked by roads.

From Left: DRFC Sudip Mukherjee, RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, project mentor Binod Khaitan, DG Hiralal Yadav and PDG Rajani Mukerji.



**DG Hiralal Yadav inaugurates the new building of Joynagar Eye Hospital. Also seen are (from L) RID Roychowdhury, Trustee in-charge Sajid Hossain, DRFC Sudip Mukherjee, PDG Rajani Mukerji and RC Calcutta Chowrenghee president Meena Khemka.**

Seeing our good work, the landlord vacated from first floor and gave the space to us to expand our eyecare services,” recalls Binod Khaitan, project mentor. “From three days a week screening 10–15 patients in 2007 to 3,500 cataract surgeries and over 30,000 OPD visits in 2023, we have come a long way at the Joynagar Hospital. But with just 5,000 sqft in all, we had space constraint, and had to cope with surging patients throughout the year.” Cataract procedure was started in 2008.

A 28-member team including four consulting surgeons, 10 optometrists and 14 locally trained nurses manned the daily operations at the hospital. With the urgency to expand its service, a 10,000 sqft building was constructed at a cost of ₹1.5 crore (including land cost) in a joint project where in RCs Calcutta Chowrenghee, Calcutta Yuvis and RCC HDC, apart from other donors, pitched in with their contributions.

#### **A red-letter day**

On Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose’s birth anniversary, Jan 23, the hospital moved to its posh new building, just a km away from the old site, and was rechristened as ‘Joynagar Rotary Eye Hospital,’ the 12<sup>th</sup> such facility in RID 3291’s roster of eye hospitals. “The OPD on the ground floor (5,000 sqft) is fully operational since January getting 50–70 patients a day. Medical equipment (\$32,000) was made available on time through a global grant project between RCs Calcutta Chowrenghee and Singapore, RID 3310,” explains Tantia.

They are now waiting for licence to operate the OT room and the installation of OT equipment for which a global grant worth \$37,000 — between RCs Calcutta Yuvis and Guildford Wey, RID 1145, UK — was sanctioned in March. “If everything goes as planned, the OT room on the first floor (5,000 sqft) will be operational by April or the first week

of May. If you add the value of two GG projects with the building cost, our total cost including equipment will be around ₹4 crore with CSR grants chipping in with ₹30 lakh,” says Khaitan. His project team has applied for the name change of the hospital with the Trust Registration.

While the 80-year-old Binod Khaitan and his RCC team have been at the heart of the success story of the Joynagar hospital blossoming into a major ophthalmic care centre, “I am now keen to pass on the leadership mantle to the younger generation so that we can sustain the growth of the hospital without any let up in its multifaceted services,” smiles Khaitan. The new hospital building was inaugurated by RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury, along with DG Hiralal Yadav. DRFC Sudip Mukherjee, DGND Tapas Bhattacharya, PDGs Rajani Mukerji and Prabhir Chatterjee were also present. ■

# Beedi workers of Solapur

Vyankatesh Metan

Everyday life is a testament to strength and resilience for the women beedi workers of Solapur. These images capture the essence of their daily routine, the camaraderie among them, and their unwavering spirit in the face of adversity.

On an average each woman makes 1,000 beedis a day. The Maharashtra government has constructed the Beedi Gharkul, a low-cost housing society where most of the beedi workers reside with their families. Others live in one-room accommodations in the neighbourhood. There are banks in the vicinity from where the women collect their earnings. ■







*The contributor is a past district governor of RID 3132.*

# Meet your



**G Sumithran**  
*Cardiothoracic surgeon*  
*RC Karunagappally, RID 3211*

## Rotary contests woo youngsters

**Y**outh forums are active to make Rotary attractive to college students and young professionals. FIRE (family involved Rotary entertainment) is an art competition where prelim rounds are held at club level, before a grand district finale is held in January. Likewise, RISE — Rotary Involved Sports Entertainment — is organised to woo sports talent.

Sumithran hopes to add 700 new Rotarians and seven new clubs, so that membership crosses 6,000 by June-end. A dialysis centre (GG: \$68,000) was added to a palliative care facility in Thiruvananthapuram; “and 10 GG projects worth ₹5 crore are in the pipeline,” he says. *Project Sathrangi* (rainbow) has conducted 2,300 early detection-cum-awareness camps on disorders such as heart diseases, diabetes, renal problems, cancer etc. Mental health counselling is also given at these special camps. Financial support of ₹97 lakh was given to 90 patients under *Project Sathrangi*; and “we will reach out to 30 more patients, and 500 more *Sathrangi* camps will be held,” he adds.

Under *Project Sahayi* (support) crutches, callipers, walking and hearing aids worth over ₹2 crore were given to 800 disabled; and “such aids will be given to 100 more beneficiaries till June.” 1BHK houses (100 houses at ₹6 lakh each) are being given to homeless families under *Project Abhayam* (home). He aims to collect \$1 million for TRF. This surgeon has done 250 heart surgeries for Rotary projects after he joined it in 2006.



**Busireddy Shankar Reddy**  
*Warehousing*  
*RC Bhadrachalam, RID 3150*

## Club prez must sync with governor

**F**riendship, fellowship and social service drew Shankar Reddy to Rotary in 1994. “I was influenced by late PDG AV Achar as well as PDG Ravi Vadlamani, experts in conceiving mega service projects,” he says. He is focused on nurturing club leadership, as “I impress upon clubs to select their presidents-elect, nominee and designate, well in advance so that they can develop a rapport with their respective DGs, and fix long-term goals. This will also enable incoming presidents to take part in district events with clear targets in mind,” explains Reddy.

With an ambitious target of 20 per cent net membership growth, which comes to 800 members, he has inducted half this number already. At present, there are 4,370 Rotarians across 112 clubs in Telangana and two revenue districts of Andhra. A check dam (GG: \$500,000) at Vinukonda village in Palnadu district of Andhra will be inaugurated in May. “The watershed project will irrigate 150 acres of farmland, and boost rural income.” Medical equipment worth ₹1 crore was given to Niloufer Children’s Hospital and MNJ Cancer Hospital, both in Hyderabad, under two GG projects. His target for TRF-giving is \$600,000.

# Governors

V Muthukumaran



**Jayashree Mohanty**

*Software*

*Rotary E-Club of District 3262*

## A checklist to strengthen clubs

**T**he tech-savvy couple, Jayashree and her spouse Tanmay Mohanty, was invited to attend a Rotary club meeting in 2008. “We were impressed by the club’s deliberations and after reaching home, decided to join Rotary,” recalls Jayashree. She has drafted a checklist for her clubs on membership growth, retention and project activities. Each Rotarian has to put in least 20 volunteer hours.

With 4,000 members across 115 clubs, she has surpassed 10 per cent net growth, having added 400 new Rotarians. “I hope to induct 200 more by June-end. Out of the targeted 10 new clubs, five were formed already in unrepresented areas in Odisha,” she adds. *Project Samman* will set up seven privacy centres (₹3.75 lakh each) at bus stands for lactating women to feed their babies, get counselling and nutrition kits. The first two Samman Centres were set up in Cuttack and Bhubaneswar.

Her other notable projects include a mammography centre (GG: \$670,000) at Balasore and Rotary Diagnostic Centre (GG: \$450,000) near Bhubaneswar. “We got a GG approval for a paediatric ICU unit (GG: \$38,000) at the GH, Kalahandi.” For TRF-giving, she aims to collect \$275,000.



**S Sundararajan**

*Orthopaedic surgeon*

*RC Udumalpet Tejas, RID 3203*

## A new vision for Rotaract clubs

**R**otary must focus on mobilising youth power by concentrating on Rotaract and Interact clubs, says Sundararajan. “But a lot of our Rotaract clubs discontinued after the mandatory dues kicked in. Now, we have added 20 new Rotaract clubs taking the total number to 70 in our district and doubled the Interact clubs to 120,” he says.

With 4,950 Rotarians, including the newly inducted 100 members, another 150 will join Rotary; and three more clubs will be chartered, taking its count to 98. He is working on three GG projects — donating new equipment and furniture to GH, Kotagiri (₹35 lakh) and GH, Pollachi (₹45 lakh); and flagging off a science van (₹30 lakh) for school students.

Every Tuesday, 40 clubs are providing rich food and nutrition kits to pregnant women at the state antenatal check-up camps at the PHCs and government hospitals. Mother’s milk is donated to the human milk banks in Coimbatore, Tirupur, Erode and Pollachi for babies in the neonatal ICUs. His target for TRF is \$600,000. Having joined Rotary in 1991, he has taken part in 10 Rotary medical missions to Uganda, Nigeria, Uttar Pradesh (seven times) and Kashmir (Feb 2024).

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

# What Rotary clubs can do to help the **Environment**



Meenakshi Venkataraman





In April 2024, we will celebrate our first month highlighting Rotary environmental action. In 1990, PRIP Paulo VC Costa made the environment one of his primary causes, creating Preserve Planet Earth programme. In June 2020, the RI directors and Rotary Foundation Board unanimously approved the creation of Rotary's seventh area of focus — Protecting the Environment. In 2021, TRF began awarding environmental global grants. Clubs are at the heart of Rotarians' action to address climate change. To find effective projects, clubs can draw on a rapidly growing trove of expertise and technical assistance from Rotary Action Groups and TRF: the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG), Rotary Action Group for Endangered Species (RAGES), WASHRAG, and the TRF Cadre specialists in Environment, Water and Community Economic Development.

One question most clubs ask: What is the most impactful project our club can do to protect our environment? Asking this question has already put you on the right path. ESRAG's website ([www.esrag.org](http://www.esrag.org)) offers many project articles illustrating the success of clubs in reducing our consumption, avoiding single use plastics, saving water and planting trees.

Operation Pollination is an example of a versatile, high-impact biodiversity project. During her visit to India, PRIP Jennifer Jones was inspired to learn about Rotarians installing bee houses for solitary bees. Rotarians can lead the way to creating pollinator-friendly plantings on terraces, gardens, public parks, school yards and more. You can also contact your local Krishi Vigyan Kendras and fund livelihood options for women's groups to become beekeepers.

Sustainable farming is another great opportunity to reduce environmental harm, promote food security, and increase farmers' financial security. Examples include providing

solar-powered water pumps to replace ones that require diesel fuel. Similarly, the Agricultural Extension offices can also be a source of project ideas with your club carrying out soil testing for farmers, or teaching composting techniques, saving farmers money on fertiliser and restoring depleted soils.

**C**limate action not only prevents emissions but protects health by reducing deadly particulate air pollution from fossil fuels. Examples include helping low-income taxi drivers to access e-auto rickshaws — saving them the expense of fuel — and organising campaigns to increase urban tree cover to reduce perilous heat islands. An international campaign is going on right now to list the number of solar panels set up by Rotarians at their homes, offices or as projects.

For more ideas do consider attending the free ESRAG Seminars series on zoom every Wednesday evening

(7.30pm IST) for a 30-minute presentation on project ideas followed by discussion. Many Indian Rotarians attend, contributing to and enjoying interaction with a world audience of committed Rotarians. You can exchange ideas as well as network for project partners. You can also communicate projects you have carried out, letting us at ESRAG appreciate and showcase your club's success story on our website and social media.

**Opportunities to seize and pitfalls to avoid:** There are many ways that Indian Rotarians can promote quick solutions to some of India's biggest environmental challenges, but you have to design the solutions with your eyes open to common pitfalls that can make projects fail. Here are some of the opportunities and mistakes to avoid.

**Tree projects:** In environmental projects we need club commitment beyond a single Rotary year. We have seen signboards of Rotary plantations, and no trees, as clubs did not plan for maintenance and sustainability. Before

you decide to do a planting project, please ensure you have got all permits as well, and plan for maintenance three years down the line. All land is not wasteland for tree planting. Please contact your local forest department or send us an email at [esragsouthasia@esrag.org](mailto:esragsouthasia@esrag.org) to connect you.

**Air quality:** Every winter, crop stubble burning worsens air quality in the New Delhi region. But a large portion of the deadly particulate pollution comes from burning firewood in cookstoves. Diesel fuel for transportation is another source of greenhouse gas emissions and particulates that increase the burden of acute and chronic disease. Subsidies for LPG have to be overcome as an incentive. Your club can do a project creating awareness on clean cookstoves. A clean cookstove project using induction stoves powered by hydro energy is being carried out as a global grant in Nepal, RID 3292. Funding EV charging stations as a public image project for your Rotary club is also a great way forward.

**Members of RC Dharapuram, RID 3203, cleaning a water body.**



**Water quality:** 2023 was the hottest year in recorded history. Water crises build up in cities like Bengaluru.

On April 20 and 21, a Water Minga (<https://tinyurl.com/waterminga>) aims to create a Guinness Record of communities working across the world carrying out clean-up, desilting projects, awareness campaigns, or any project on any lake, wetland, river, stream or estuary. If you are doing a water project, register it on Rotary's Community Action For Fresh Water site.

RID 3203 has signed an MoU with the National River Conservation Directorate, Jal Shakti, Government of India, and WWF for the restoration of River Bhavani and RID 3232 for River Cooum.

These help clubs and local communities along the water bodies to organise clean-up, set up sewage treatment plants, maintain wetlands or restore mangroves at the mouths of the estuaries. 'Life to Rivers,' an initiative of RID 3240, is a locally focused global initiative for protecting, restoring and sustaining freshwater ecosystems



**Mangrove saplings being planted at the Vellar Estuary, Chidambaram, Tamil Nadu.**

and ecosystem services to contribute towards the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

The initiative aims to engage Rotary clubs and partners to raise awareness and take effective action to conserve and restore our streams and rivers in northeastern states. Through education, advocacy and hands-on conservation efforts, the movement aims to ensure that rivers continue to thrive and provide for future generations.

Under this initiative, clubs across the district have organised different activities like river cleaning drives, mass awareness rallies, walk for rivers, etc, to save the life-giving rivers in their region. Advocacy in RID 3291 has brought changes to the River

Adhiganga in Kolkata. Some clubs are exploring lake restoration, some want to set up community riverkeepers or restore watersheds. There are already clubs setting up check dams. These all come under the Rotary-UNEP programme. For any help in the CAFW (Community Action for Fresh Water) programme send an email to [cafw@rotary.org](mailto:cafw@rotary.org).

**Mangroves:** Mangroves act as a barrier to coastal flooding and can help to protect communities battered by increasingly intense cyclones in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Mangroves restoration in India is growing, starting with the completion of a pilot global grant in RID 2981 in





PDG Balaji Babu (third from R) and members of RC Mayiladuthurai in a pilot mangrove conservation and plantation project at the Vellar Estuary.

Chidambaram, with another grant in the pipeline to expand on its success.

In the Sundarbans, a different global grant from RID 3291 looks at nursery creation for mangrove palms which are now locally extinct, to stabilise bunds and create mangrove-based economic development projects. These projects promote institutional cooperation between districts, clubs, and other regional stakeholders. You can draw on TRF cadre and ESRAG expertise to create an impactful and sustainable project. If your club/district is not on the coast, you can still work on mangrove projects. Please connect with [project@esrag.org](mailto:project@esrag.org).

**Reducing plastic and other solid waste pollution:** Other global grants completed this Rotary year include a plastic waste collection for pollution abatement, recycling, reuse and employment generation in RID 3020. A global grant is taking shape on multilayer plastics — like biscuit and chocolate wrappers — in RID 3150 to consider an upskilling project for segregating and repurposing this waste material which would otherwise be incinerated. RID 3182 awarded a district grant to a project that turns waste

chicken feathers into packaging. There are other projects also in the pipeline. A global grant project in environment need not be daunting. You can also send in your enquiries for design and partnership help to [projects@esrag.org](mailto:projects@esrag.org).

**Promoting women's economic success:** In RID 3212, we have projects promoting women's environmental entrepreneurship using marine resources.

**Document your impact:** Measuring a project's impact brings hope and builds momentum. Clubs need to collect and report data yearly to show this impact. Without data, we fail not just ourselves, but our communities too. We have had for example, great success with e-waste campaigns: RID 3131 started this in a systematic way for the past three years and it has been gaining momentum in a number of





districts. When you deliver e-waste to a collection agency identified by the pollution control board, your club gets a receipt on your impact. This receipt can be just uploaded as your impact. Appoint a data-tracking champion to your club project team to share the impact with your community and upload data each year on ESRAG's Project Impact Reporting tool ([www.esrag.org/initiatives](http://www.esrag.org/initiatives)). If there are any issues, send an email to [support@irotree.org](mailto:support@irotree.org). Please tell us about your environmental projects so we can highlight your initiatives.

Why is the data important? We can see the club projects evolve and document the social and environmental benefits of your projects. Behaviour change sustains environmental project impact. Projects done consistently foster relationships with local administrations and build community pride and ownership. Successful environmental projects draw new Rotary or Rotaract members and can catalyse the emergence of new, cause-based clubs. Projects and competitions in this area of

focus are growing globally. The rise of environmental RYLAs and the inter-country Interact competitions as carried out by RC Ahmedabad Greater have also helped increase youth partnership and membership in Rotary as Rotaract clubs or Interact clubs. This club has ten Interact clubs and seven Rotakids clubs.

### **2023–24 a year of breakthroughs:**

This Rotary year had many firsts, including the first-ever Rotary booth in any major international gathering, at the UN Climate Conference in Dubai, COP28. At this year's International Assembly, RIPE Stephanie Urchick unveiled a strategic partnership between RI and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to address Community Action for Fresh Water. ESRAG was appointed as an official nominator for the Earthshot Prize, and has submitted five projects to compete for the 2024 prize. If you know of anyone or company doing exemplary work in protecting the environment, they can be nominated through ESRAG.

Starting this April, let's try to do one project to make us and our clubs climate-friendly. We are here to help. A safe, healthy environment is essential to all of Rotary's other six areas of focus. As the examples above show, most environmental projects bring major co-benefits in health and economic development. Let us participate, start, and do impactful, measurable and sustainable projects.

Join Rotary Action Groups like [www.esrag.org](http://www.esrag.org) and share your expertise and passion as volunteer in the Taskforces and projects divisions to help fellow members of the Rotary family, from schoolchildren to business leaders, to carry out successful environmental projects. As a member of the RAG, you will discover opportunities for leadership roles, not only at the local level but also as part of global working groups and committees. Find fellowship and fulfillment as part of Rotary's growing global community of volunteers working to bring about a sustainable future in which health, local economies and food security can flourish.

### **Weblinks**

ESRAG: [www.esrag.org](http://www.esrag.org)

ESRAG projects and global grant help: [www.esrag.org/projects](http://www.esrag.org/projects)

Guinness Book of World Records Water Minga: <https://tinyurl.com/waterminga>

Rotary-UNEP Community Action for Fresh Water: [cafw@rotary.org](mailto:cafw@rotary.org)

ESRAG Initiatives and Taskforces: [www.esrag.org/initiatives](http://www.esrag.org/initiatives)

*The writer is director, Projects (2022–24), Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group and TRF Cadre, Environment For details contact: [Projects@esrag.org](mailto:Projects@esrag.org)*

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Palm germination centre and nursery in the Sundarbans as part of RC Calcutta Mahanagar's global grant project.

# Interactors make adults literate

V Muthukumaran

**M**anju, Babita, Gudiya, Hema, Rakhi and Kajal are happy that they can now read Hindi dailies, sign their names, and transact business (buying and selling) without help from others. These six middle-aged women employed as domestic helpers, shop assistants and doing unskilled work at Naukuchiatal, a hill station near Nainital, have completed their two-month Adult Literacy Programme (ALP) conducted by the Interactors of RC Nainital, RID 3110. All of them

wrote the exam formulated by the Rotary India Literacy Mission, and got their certificates.

All the 30 members from the Interact Club of Naukuchiatal involved in teaching the illiterate women are students in the age group of 10–18 years and studying in government schools. They hail from deprived, marginalised families, says Narinder Lamba, president, RC Nainital. The two-month, five-day a week ALP engaged the women just one hour a day, “where they are taught Hindi alphabets,

simple reading, writing and arithmetic by the Interactors,” he says. The classes are held at Interact in-charge Poonam Sharma’s house “who is proud that her Interactors are doing a job of adult teachers. Now, the six women are handling their own household accounts, able to buy goods from the market, and command a new respect from the community.”

Thanking her parent Rotary, Interact club president Jyoti Arya (Class 12) says, “We feel proud to have taught the women to read



RC Nainital president Narinder Lamba with Interactors at Naukuchiatal.

and write; This opportunity to serve the community has given us joy and motivated us to do more.” As community-based Interactors, they were supported by Nainital Rotarians in their ALP with reading material, study tools, stationery and mentorship. Since inception two years ago, the Interact club is doing cleanliness drive on Sundays. “The young boys and girls sensitise the public about the environment

to ensure litter-free surroundings during cleanliness drives,” says Lamba.

#### **Mental wellness**

Club member Adnan Vahanvaty, who is a sound healer, holds a zoom session on Tuesdays in which around 50 Rotarians participate. They plug in their earphones for a ‘sound bath’ that relaxes their mind; and “come out of their shells to talk about their

problems, anxieties and mental worries.” A guest speaker gives a motivational talk, followed by interaction. So far, the club has given HPV vaccination against cervical cancer to 101 girls and “our target is to vaccinate 150–170 girls by June-end.”

The 72-year-old club with 39 members is sponsoring the education of 30 girls from Class 6 till Class 12 under *Project Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao*. ■



A clean-up drive in progress.



An Interactor tutors a woman.

# A treat for the disabled

**Saborna Kumar Dey**

**I**t was Children's Day 2000. Some members of Rotary Club of Burdwan South, RID 3240, were attending the celebrations of the day in a school.

Children were dancing, singing and taking part in various activities. The joy on their faces touched the hearts of the Rotarians present. An idea also sparked in one of their minds. Why don't we have a similar celebration for the differently-abled children.

The idea was placed in the weekly meeting and it was unanimously accepted. December 3, International Disability Day, was chosen, and we zeroed in on Aurobinda Bhawan in Burdwan, West Bengal, as the venue. Formal permission from the police, sub-divisional officer and the municipality was taken. That time there were only two schools for special children and these children were invited. Eighty children came along with their parents and teachers. We told the parents and teachers to allow the children to do whatever they like on the small ground at the venue. Some children started hopping, few danced, and few others ran in circles. We then provided them art paper and colour pencils. They scratched and scribbled. They remained busy through the two hours of the programme. We gave them gifts and served lunch for everyone. The parents and teachers

were overwhelmed and requested us to arrange the programme the next year too.

So we continued the programme year after year. The number of participants increased with each passing year. We managed to arrange some grant from the Sarva Siksha Mission of the West Bengal government. After 2004 we had to look for an

alternate place to accommodate the growing number of children and we identified the Krishna Sayar Eco Park which was located in the University of Burdwan campus. The park surrounds a huge lake and is lush green. We got permission from the university authorities to use the park for our festivities.

From 2005 until now, the Krishna Sayar Eco Park has become the unanimous choice for the celebrations of December 3. Children come to the venue at 8am, accompanied by their teachers and parents. We serve them breakfast and lunch after which they go back.

We organise drawing competitions and the children showcase their creativity with vibrant colours. For the next couple



**Wheelchair participants at the Parathon.**



Differently-abled children participating in a dance programme.

The *Parathon* event aimed to give better exposure to the public of the challenges faced by the disabled and promote respect for them in the society.

December 2023 and we saw an enthusiastic participation of 102 people using orthosis, prosthesis, crutches, tricycle or wheelchair.

The event aimed to give better exposure to the public of the challenges faced by the disabled

and promote respect for them in the community. We organised the *Parathon* on a Sunday winter morning, considering the weather and lean traffic.

Disabled people from outside Burdwan also participated in the

of hours, they display their skills in dancing, singing, reciting poems, and a fashion parade is also held.

We have had the district magistrate, superintendent of police, university dean, DG and PDGs as guests for the programme every year.

This year around 400 children participated with their teachers and parents. Lunch was served to around 700 people. All expenses are borne by the club.

In 2022, one of our new members suggested that we conduct a short marathon for the physically-challenged. The idea was well supported and we designed an 'On the Road' 1km walk, calling it 'Parathon'. The first *Parathon* was conducted in



A painting session in progress.



Disabled people with crutches at the Parathon.

*Parathon*, and we arranged overnight accommodation for them. Nutritious food was provided to everyone and they were allowed to participate after a medical checkup and verifying the fitness of their supporting equipment. Every participant was given a uniform and a cap for easy identification. The entire route was under the strict supervision of the police and Rotarian volunteers. An ambulance and a medical team were ready to handle emergencies. The participants were recognised with certificates and medals.

The second episode of *Parathon* was done in January this year. We are now confident of organising this event every year.

*The writer is a member of RC Burdwan South, RID 3240*

## A good Samaritan Rotarian

### Team Rotary News

In a joint initiative, RCs Jaunpur, RID 3120, and Mumbai Khar, RID 3141, had sponsored the forearm surgery of an underprivileged woman living in a village near Jaunpur, a small town in Uttar Pradesh.



Renu Gautam, after the surgery, with Rotarians.

While travelling in an Uber cab for a Rotary project, Krishna Kumar, member of RC Mumbai Khar, overheard the driver talking over phone with relatives and a doctor, and getting distressed. Being a doctor himself, Kumar enquired with the driver who replied that his wife had a fall and fractured her right forearm. But to his dismay, in spite of the treatment, the fracture had not healed and now required a surgery, “the cost of which the driver could not afford,” said Kumar. He immediately contacted RC Jaunpur president Sujeet Agrahari who “responded positively to help out the driver’s family.”

They found Renu Gautam, the patient, was having high blood sugar and “we put her under medical observation for a week.” Finally, she was operated and discharged after three days. All the surgical and other expenses amounting to ₹66,000 was shared between the two clubs. Kumar was much relieved with the outcome and expressed his thanks to the team of doctors and Rotarians from both the clubs, including RC Mumbai Khar president Vijay Udani. ■

# RC Alleppey builds houses to celebrate platinum jubilee

V Muthukumaran

**P**roject Rotary Village aims to build 10 houses on 20 cents of land bought by RC Alleppey, RID 3211, and the housekeys will be handed over to the homeless families on Charter Day celebrations of the club on July 25.

“We are celebrating our platinum jubilee this year (2023–24) and the houses are under construction at the Muhamma grama panchayat on the outskirts of Alappuzha. We will retain the land which belongs to Rotary Charities Society of our club. Plans are on to draft day-long programmes on our charter day and we are planning to invite a past RI president as chief guest to showcase our journey so far in social service and community initiatives,” explains Raju Chandy, chairman, Platinum Jubilee Committee (PJC).

While a five-member advocates panel is drafting the guidelines to identify the beneficiary families, the 23-member PJC including five patrons is into the nitty-gritty of the charter day events that are being planned as a big public image endeavour of this “second oldest club in RID 3211 after RC



DG G Sumithran (R), along with RC Alleppey president Muhammed Aslam, laying the foundation for the Rotary homes as part of the club’s platinum jubilee celebrations.

Trivandrum,” says Chandy. On the housing project, he says, “the land cost plus the expenses for building other amenities including a giant compound wall for the community will be ₹25 lakh, out of the total project cost of ₹1.05 crore.” Each budget house will roughly cost ₹8 lakh.

During its silver jubilee year (1974), a Rotary community hall was set up and a second club in Alappuzha, namely RC Alleppey East, was sponsored to mark the occasion. On Rotary’s 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 1980, a blood bank was set up at the Women and Children Government

Hospital, Alappuzha, which has been of “immense use to the patients and the general public during medical emergencies,” he says. “We built a mortuary with a three-cabin facility, a first-of-kind-facility in the city, at the Sahrudaya Hospital in 1996. The project cost of ₹1.5 lakh was met through member donations.”

## Golden jubilee (1999)

The club built 11 houses for those families which had land, but “could not construct their houses for various reasons. So, we identified such families and built houses for them to mark our 50<sup>th</sup> year of

charter,” recalls Chandy. It was a matching grant project worth ₹15 lakh. AKS member Betty Karan, wife of PDG Ravi Karunakaran, is the chief patron of PJC and “she has been advising us on the charter day programmes.”

Chartered on July 25, 1949, the 67-member club meets weekly at its community hall which it had built during its silver jubilee year. DG G Sumithran laid the foundation stone for the housing project at a simple ceremony attended by club president Muhammed Aslam, AG K Cherian, secretary Jijo Chacko and other members. ■



# Water is not for wasting

Preeti Mehra

The precious liquid that nurtures life must be judiciously used.

**D**o we take water for granted? Unfortunately, we do. Despite knowing that it is a vital natural resource essential for our survival and that of all the animals and plants that inhabit the Earth. In fact, most of us don't give a second thought to water since we assume that it will perennially be in bountiful supply. Isn't it ironic that water comes into focus only when there is a drought or a flood — when there is too little or too much of it.

Last month's news that Bengaluru — the city of lakes and gardens — was facing a severe water crisis made us sit up and take notice of that humble resource that sustains us. Reports of the government planning to impose a fine on those who waste water for washing cars, construction, and for entertainment

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The water resources ministry has launched a scheme which plans the construction of 1.42 crore rainwater harvesting and artificial recharge structures across the country to save 185 billion cubic metres of rainfall.

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purposes drove home the severity of the crisis. Even more disturbing were stories of residents of a posh gated community being advised to use disposable plates and cutlery to save water.

How does a vibrant metropolis come to this? Will my city face a similar crisis in the near future? The expert view on it is clear. India could become a water scarce nation in the coming years given the growing mismatch between water resources and demand. Also, groundwater levels are fast dipping at an alarming rate in several rural and urban areas across the country. Added to all this is climate change as a result of which we have witnessed extreme weather events which manifested itself in heavy unseasonal rains followed by long stretches of intense drought.

Given all that, the wise thing to do is to conserve water. So, what can we do to use water judiciously? Charity, as they say, begins at home. Here are a few tips culled from several reports available on the net. Some are also from water conferences I have attended.

One of the simplest ways to respect the earth's natural resource is to ensure that none of the pipes and taps in your house are leaking. It is unbelievable but even a dripping tap left unfixed can lead to a loss of about 200 litres a day. Now think of the damage a leaking main pipe can do.





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Expert view is clear. India could become a water scarce nation in the coming years given the growing mismatch between water resources and demand.

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Unfortunately, I know of families who do not bother to call the plumber and replace a washer to fix a leaking tap. Instead, they resort to half measures like plugging the leak with a cloth rag till such time that the tap has to be repaired or replaced.

Another activity that leads to much wastage is brushing teeth or shaving. It is very common to see people leave the tap on while they brush their teeth or when they shave. If they were to close the tap till it's time to rinse the mouth or wash the face after the razor has done its job, it could save about 10 litres. Now think of a family of four wasting 40 litres of water each morning. It will be 14,600 litres wasted in a year! And remember, we are not factoring in the brushing of teeth at night.

If you enjoy your bath under a shower, remember to install a low flow shower head which dispenses less water. Also, standing more than the required five to seven minutes under the shower could up your water consumption considerably. And yes, remember to turn off the shower when you are soaping your body, or it will be more water down the drain.

For those who use washing machines, it would be wise to put a full load of clothes at each wash rather than run the machine frequently. That will help you save water, although new washing machines have settings for half loads to conserve water. There are also machines which use less water and power. So, do some research if you are buying a new washing machine.

We all love to keep the space around our homes clean. It is not uncommon to see driveways being washed with a power hose every day. Even those living in flats like to have their balconies washed by the domestic helper every morning. Perhaps, making this a biweekly exercise

would save considerable amount of water. Or else, why not just use a wet mop to clean the floor? It does as good a job.

There are various small ways in which we can cut our consumption and you can be proactive in your community by participating or launching a save water initiative. Rainwater harvesting is considered one of the most efficient ways of saving water. Not only can the water collected during rains be used for non-drinking purposes, but it can also be used for recharging groundwater. Those living in housing complexes without a rain harvesting and groundwater recharging system should persuade members to install one. It is worth the investment since it not only saves water, but it can also help in reducing waterlogging, especially in cities where apartment blocks are surrounded by impervious cemented surfaces around it.

You may wonder if an individual's contribution can help to make a difference when the world outside is wasting water. Yes, it can. Also, the good news is that things are changing. The water resources ministry has launched a scheme which plans the construction of 1.42 crore rainwater harvesting and artificial recharge structures across the country to save 185 billion cubic metres of rainfall.

This along with measures to mitigate climate change and to save dying rivers and water bodies is sorely needed. There must also be an effort on the part of citizens to conserve nature and consume water judiciously. Every individual effort counts. Remember the saying "little drops of water make a mighty ocean." Go ahead and become your community's water warrior.

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

# Check out cancer

**Bharat & Shalan Savur**

**W**e have written about holistic health and aerobics at some length in our recent columns. The cynic and the couch potato may dismiss this as a good-in-theory-but-does-it-actually-work-in-practice? Time then to take our Fitness-for-Life approach from the library and test-run it on the killing fields of real life. Pit it against the arguably Enemy Number One, Cancer. Cancer is a fatal disease if it runs its course. But the good news is holistic health and lifestyle can nip cancer in the bud (read cell) if treated at an early state and stage. Aerobic exercise is both a shield and sword in this ancient all-pervading perennial disease. And aerobic exercise is the missile to launch and target a preemptive strike on cancer. Prevention is the best cure.

The tiny atom akin to the cell, developed into a mighty bomb, defeated Japan in World War II. But Japanese grit, enterprise, discipline,

dedication, resilience brought it back and how! Today, it has regained and retained its status — as a social-economic world power.

India as a nation and all of us its inhabitants would do well to emulate the modern Japanese model. The original land of the rising sun blends its ancient eastern ethos with modern western methods to benefit its people and itself. Without shedding its unique identity.

You could do the same and say *Namaste* to good health. First of all,

make exercise a routine, and stick to it. This is how it works. Workouts involve every cell in the body, consume food as fuel and have beneficial effects on our hormonal environment and immune system.

Aerobic exercise positively improves the respiration capability of each cell and creates a harmonious environment that reduces the risk of developing cancer. Thus, its first syllable can spring into action. Exercise can be a preemptive strike against illness — a shield in our body that houses

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**Women who have regularly exercised for a long time are relatively less vulnerable to breast cancer than those that haven't, because exercise extends a shield by inducing reductions in oestrogen levels.**

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an army of white cells for literally self-defence.

Aerobic is an alternate form and word for ‘with oxygen’. Oxygen cannot be stored in the body (unlike food which can) and our cells need a lot of it. That is the state for aerobics to take centre stage. This form of exercise increases our normal capacity to process oxygen, and is the healthy highway to positively step up our cardiovascular and respiratory systems. Aerobics enable the body to take in more air with less effort. It empowers the lungs to derive more oxygen from the increased air supply and transport it to the cells where it is needed to combine with food to produce energy. Aerobics also pumps blood more effectively and increases the total volume of blood. The heart

in turn becomes larger and stronger. The blood vessels enlarge and become more elastic. Blood flow to the muscles is improved. Muscles and ligaments are strengthened. And joints become more mobile and stronger. Aerobics is literally a joint exercise conducted by oxygen and nutrition to defend the body’s borders against its enemies.

American writers Doll and Peto say that 80 and 90 per cent of all cancers could, in principle, be avoided. They also cautioned, “... to begin to meet this challenge we shall need to effect a significant change in attitudes amongst doctors and other health professionals as well as in the lay public whom they serve.”

The tragic truth all over the world including India is that western, modern medicine and its practitioners have little or no knowledge and training in preventive medicine, nutrition and exercise. You, yourself, are responsible for your health and can’t shrug off this burden. But you can surely begin with shoulder shrugs to warm up as a pre-exercise. And work on your aerobic health. As assurance to your insurance.

Normal cells rely heavily on aerobic respiration to produce ATP — a process that is the driving force of every cell to empower the body. On the other hand, cancer is created by rogue cells that multiply like crazy rabbits and voluntarily take in and thrive on an anaerobic (non-aerobic) form of respiration — glycolysis — a process that converts glucose sans oxygen even when it is abundantly available. This phenomenon produces less efficient energy and lays an acidic foundation for cancer progression.

Hence, lower the odds of specific cancer risks with exercise. Exercise exerts a systemic influence on the body’s hormonal harmony by lowering levels of agitated indicators — insulin

## Cancer cases to rise

With nearly 10 million deaths and nearly 20 million new cases in 2022, cancer remains one of the world’s biggest killers, according to a recent report by WHO’s International Agency for Research on Cancer. The IARC predicted that new cases in 2040 (both sexes) would be 50 per cent higher than the 2022’s figure, and 77 per cent in 2050.

	Number*	Mortality*
World	19.97m	9.74 m
India	1.41 m	0.92 m

\* In 2022

and insulin-like growth forces. A high level of insulin exposes the body to a greater cancer risk — primarily, colon cancers.

Women who have regularly exercised for a long time are relatively less vulnerable to breast cancer than those that haven’t. Mainly because exercise extends a shield by inducing reductions in oestrogen levels.

Regular aerobics combined with healthy nutrition and lifestyle virtually eliminate obesity — the huge harbour and harbinger of ill health. Weight management lowers the boom on a variety of cancers.

In India, we need to reassess public health. Increase an incredible number of ‘barefoot’ doctors and spread holistic health to hut and house. To house the homeless and employ the jobless.

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

Designed by N Krishnamurthy





## Wordsworld

# When You Have Nowhere to Call Home



**Sandhya Rao**

An evening of stories and poems with Tenzin Tsundue, the charismatic Tibetan activist.

**T**hank you! Thank you!’ My friends from our book club — Pandu Aunty, Bhama and Usha — wouldn’t stop thanking me as we made our way to the car on the evening of February 29. We were returning from a rousing session of poetry and other readings from the Tibetan poet and activist Tenzin Tsundue in Chennai. I had only shared information regarding the event, but they were ever so grateful. You can imagine, then, how profound the experience must have been.

All of Tsundue’s writings engage with the idea of home, loss

of home, longing for home, hope of home. And every single poem of his contains a story, not just an idea, although the ideas they trigger are mindboggling. Take this example: ‘*Losar is when we the juveniles and bastards / call home across the Himalayas / and cry into the wire.*’ What’s the story here? In his own words, from a little book called *Nang* (Home) in Tibetan and *Nowhere to Call Home* in English, the story goes: ‘Once, on the Tibetan new year, Losar, I watched a long line of young men and women outside a phone booth in McLeod Ganj. One by one the refugees enter the cubicle, speak to their loved ones in Tibet, cry, and come out emotionally wrecked, then pay and leave. I called the booth the Cry Box. I realized that the maximum number of Tibetans in Dharamshala cry during Losar.’

It doesn’t end here: ‘That evening, as I walked down the hillside taking the shortcut through the pine woods and oaks, I reflected that they were fortunate to have someone to cry to, a house to call home. Being exile born myself, and having been deposited in a boarding school as a semi-orphan from early childhood, I find it painful even to write here that I grew up distanced from my family.’ In these few words, Tsundue sketches a whole life.

When the massive region of Tibet was, bit by bit, over time, annexed by the People’s Republic of China, the spiritual head of the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama, fled the country in 1959 and was given refuge in Dharamshala, Himachal Pradesh, thanks mainly to the good offices of India’s first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru. So, today, for all practical purposes, there is a Tibet, outside of Tibet, in Dharamshala. There are Tibetan colonies elsewhere too in India.

Tsundue’s parents were teenagers when they followed the Dalai Lama to India; eventually they settled in Karnataka. Tsundue was born in Manali. After attending boarding school in Himachal, he went to Loyola College in Madras, and did his post-graduation in English Literature, followed by Philosophy, in Bombay University. Poet Nissim Ezekiel was one of his teachers. ‘Punctuation!’ thunders Tsundue, as he raises his voice above the noise of the café in which we have all gathered. It’s part of the Museum of Possibilities, a state government initiative located near the Marina Beach, to showcase devices, technologies and accessible living quarters for the differently-abled. ‘For Nissim, punctuation was the most important thing.’ For Tsundue, stories of the Tibetan people’s homelessness and especially young people’s rootlessness are the bedrock of his creative spirit.

‘I am an activist, so I can raise my voice above any noise,’ he says, as he reads aloud a selection of his poetry which is powerful, ironic and moving. Even as you laugh, you feel a tug of pain. The longing that underlines ‘Exile House’ instantly connects with all of us gathered around a jigsaw of tables.



*Our tiled roof dripped  
and the four walls threatened to fall  
apart  
but we were to go home soon*

*We grew papayas  
in front of our house  
chillies in our garden  
and changmas for our fences,  
then pumpkins rolled down the  
cowshed thatch  
calves trotted out of the manger.*

*Grass on the roof  
beans sprouted and  
climbed the vines,  
money plants crept in through the  
window,  
our house seems to have grown  
roots.*

*The fences have grown into a jungle,  
now how can I tell my children  
where we came from?*

Among the listeners that evening were many renowned poets of Chennai, including K Srilata whose latest collection, *Three Women in a Single-Room House*, was published by Sahitya Akademi. A refugee can find shelter, says Tsundue, and he points to a lady in pink, 'Asha Auntie' who had opened her heart and home to so many Tibetan students in Madras. But a refugee

A reading session with Tibetan poet Tenzin Tsundue in Chennai.



Sandhya Rao

cannot let down roots, cannot settle down, he adds. We understand: refugees must find their way back home. This is a sentiment brilliantly conveyed in the poem, 'Horizon':

*From home you have reached  
the Horizon here.*

*From here to another  
here you go.*

*From there to the next  
next to the next  
horizon to horizon  
every step is a horizon.*

*Count the steps  
and keep the number.*

*Pick the white pebbles  
and the funny strange leaves.*

*Mark the curves  
and cliffs around  
for you may need  
to come home again.*

I remember reading about Tsundue way back in April 2005 when Chinese premier Wen Jiabao visited the Indian Institute of Science in Bengaluru. As the visitor interacted with scientists at ground level, Tsundue who had managed to climb to the roof of the building the night before, unfurled a huge red banner that declared in white letters, 'Free Tibet,' as he shouted protest slogans. A small black-clad figure, bespectacled, wearing a bright red headband — the newspaper photograph is etched in my memory.

He was about 11 when he decided that he would fight for the rights of Tibetans to their homeland. Today, he is 49, and remains committed to that promise. But how does he live? 'My poetry feeds me,' he points out. He describes how, in his student days in Mumbai, he heard the poetry of greats such as Ezekiel, Arun Kolhatkar, Ranjit Hoskote and Eunice DeSouza.

He listened, he absorbed, until finally, he was ready to share his own writings. Winnings from the Outlook-Picador competition for nonfiction in 2001 helped fund the publication of a collection of his writings by Blackneck Books, an imprint of TibetWrites which promotes and publishes the work of Tibetans. He called his essay, 'My Kind of Exile'. And so, he writes, publishes, sells... and helps to keep the dream alive. The dream that one day, Tibetans in exile all over the world will follow the pebbles back home.

A book published recently is perhaps the first collection of writings in English by Tibetans. Called *The Penguin Book of Modern Tibetan Essays*, it is edited by Tenzin Dickie, and features writers working in Tibetan, English and Chinese. Says the blurb: 'There are essays on lost friends, stolen inheritances, prison notes and secret journeys from — and to — Tibet. There are also essays on food, the Dalai Lama's Gar dancer, love letters, lotteries and the prince of Tibet.' As also 'My Kind of Exile'. The collection is 'a commentary not just on the Tibetan nation and Tibetan exile but also on the romance, comedy and tragedy of modern Tibetan life.'

That evening, nothing better illustrated the yearning for home as the presence among us of a Tibetan grandmother from Darjeeling. She was in Chennai at her granddaughter's insistence for medical treatment. She knew no English, but was there simply to see Tenzin Tsundue. That's how much he matters. That's how much home matters.

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

## RC Manora Pattukkottai — RID 2981



An upgraded toilet block with sanitary pad incinerator (₹60,000) was inaugurated by former HC judge Bharathidasan at the Alandur Girls High School.

## RC Delhi Okhla City — RID 3011



Around 700 students from 70 schools took part in an inter-school drawing competition for Class 1–8. Certificates were given to all participants.

## RC Salem Central — RID 2982



Computers and furniture were donated to the Gokulnatha Hindu Mahajana HS School in the presence of AG B Suriyanarayanan.

## RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — RID 3012



Blankets and woollen sweaters were distributed to poor families at Yamuna Pusta, a slum colony. Jackets were given to 70 children.

## RC Pudukkottai City — RID 3000



Over 400 students took part in taekwondo championship hosted jointly by RCs Perambalur, Perambalur Cotton City and Buddhas Youth Welfare Foundation.

## RC Pachora Bhadgaon — RID 3030



Club president Pankaj Shinde and secretary Mukesh Nainav distributed bicycles to girl students under *Project Udaan*.

## RC Bhopal Hills — RID 3040



Limb measurements for over 200 amputees were taken at a special camp at the Bhopal Utsav Mela. RC Sagar Phoenix and Narayan Seva Sansthan were partners.

## RC Shimla Midtown — RID 3080



Around 120 patients were examined at the medical camp held jointly with the Max Hospital, Mohali, at the community centre in Summer Hill, Shimla.

## RC Vadali Round Town — RID 3056



Five vision centres were set up through a GG project with RC Chevrolet, Canada. PDGs Arun Parikh, Lalit Sharma and DRFC Ganpat Patil honoured the project donors.

## RC Patran — RID 3090



A funeral van was donated to the cremation ground of Ram Bagh Committee in a joint project with Shree Durga Seva Dal. The club contributed ₹1.51 lakh.

## RC Surat East — RID 3060



Uniforms, school bags, food, stationery kits, shoes and socks were given to students of two schools at the two adopted villages.

## RC Moradabad — RID 3100



At the mental health seminar at the Chitragupta Inter College Dr Reena Tomar counselled students on how to avoid stress and excel in exams.

## RC Bisauli — RID 3110



School kits having a bag, lunch box, water bottle and dress material were donated to 125 girls at the Sri Agrawal Sabha Bhawan.

## RC Ahmednagar — RID 3132

Blankets and mats were distributed to prisoners at the Ahmednagar Sub Jail in a joint event with the Prajapita Brahma Kumaris Ishwariya Vishwa Vidyalaya.



## RC Kushinagar — RID 3120



Polio drops were given to children at a PolioPlus booth set up by the club at the Primary School, Kasia.

## RC Hampi Pearls — RID 3160

Two toilet blocks separately for boys and girls were built at the Government High School, Nagenhalli near Hospet, with the help of Kirloskar Rural Trust.



## RC Pune Kothrud — RID 3131



Eye check-up was done on 55 tribal women and spectacles were given to those with vision disorder.

## RC Dharwad Midtown — RID 3170

Around 70 patients were screened and eight free angiography taken at a cardiac camp in partnership with the Unity Hospital on World Heart Day.





## RC Mangalore Central — RID 3181



PDG B Devadas Pai conducted the 18<sup>th</sup> edition of Rotary Quiz in which 16 clubs contested through a mobile App. RC Mysore Vijayanagar won the 1<sup>st</sup> prize.

## RC Haripad Greater — RID 3211



A library was inaugurated at a government lower primary school for children to read books to enhance their knowledge.

## RC Erode Emerald — RID 3203



Wet wipes packets were given to mothers of premature babies at the GH. A smart phone was donated to a blind school teacher.

## RC Vaniyambadi — RID 3231



At the 255<sup>th</sup> monthly eye check-up camp being held on the third Sunday every month, 160 patients were examined, and 110 were chosen for surgery.

## RC Kanhangad Mid Town — RID 3204



DG Sethu Shiv Sankar donated 10 hospital cots to inmates at Snehalayam, an old age home. AG B Girish Nayak was present.

## RC Calcutta Kankurgachi — RID 3291



Smart phones were distributed to 23 meritorious students of Indas High School, Bankura, for digital education.

Compiled by V Muthukumar



**TCA Srinivasa  
Raghavan**

# Dealing with the invasion of the idiots



About 30 years ago, while travelling on a train from Delhi to Chennai I was able to observe a very Indian phenomenon: all the six people sitting around me knew everything about everything. The total journey time was 36 hours of which 18 were spent sleeping. But the remaining 18 hours were available for incessant discussion on all subjects under the sun.

The train left Delhi at 10.30pm and everyone went to sleep soon. The talking started in real earnest with the morning coffee the next day which the vendor brought around 7am. Amazingly, everyone knew what exactly was wrong with it except the one thing that was actually wrong with it — and I am not making this up — that it wasn't coffee at all. It was tea. Or maybe tea and coffee that got mixed up in delivery. The vendor had mis-sold it because most probably he also thought it was coffee. But in north India, where the train was still running that morning, coffee is rarely sold as a wake-up beverage. It's tea that wakes up north India.

I am reminded of this because I used to be on several WhatsApp groups, but have exited most of them because in every group everyone knew everything: what was wrong with politics, economics, law, governance, schools, colleges, hospitals, you name it, and there was no knowledge deficit. And no, they weren't journalists who had some expertise and knowledge in any of those areas.

It was for this reason that I quit Facebook 11 years ago and Twitter three years ago. Both were full of nonsense and wanting to be heard. The point about this need is very well captured in the old saying. "Those who care about you can hear you even when you are quiet." Or, as Umberto Eco, the great Italian novelist, said, "Social media gives legions of idiots the right to speak when they once only spoke at a bar after a glass of wine, without harming the community... but now they have the same right to speak as a Nobel Prize winner. It's the invasion of the idiots".

I wouldn't go that far but the fact remains that an increasing number of people voice opinions without knowing

the facts. The tea in the coffee (or coffee in the tea) incident I mentioned above is an extreme case in point. And now, fake news and artificial intelligence have made it worse. The extraordinary thing is that even highly educated people who are otherwise quite sensible, don't pause to question the 'facts' on social media, let alone the motives. The old journalistic trick (which is also practised by all married couples when they are fighting) is to quote out of context. That method has now been taken to new heights. Not only can you quote out of context, you can change the context altogether. Social media is full of this sort of misinformation and mischief. The victim has to grin and bear it.

My two sons are masters of the art of switching contexts. Fortunately, neither is a complete idiot. One of them, like his mother, was very good at writing exams and the other, like me, was no good at them but excelled in perverse logic. Once my wife told the fellow who had got excellent marks that there was more to life than just good marks, like obedience, for example. The fellow who always got bad marks stored this bit of motherly wisdom. When asked why he had so many zeros on his answer sheets, he said he was very obedient. Two facts but both out of context and infuriatingly perverse logic. Needless to say, he has chosen journalism as a career and is doing well with his unique skill set. ■

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Social media gives legions of idiots the right to speak when they once only spoke at a bar after a glass of wine, without harming the community... but now they have the same right to speak as a Nobel Prize winner.

It's the invasion of the idiots.

**Italian novelist Umberto Eco**

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Schools Visited  
**485**  
Total No. of  
Colleges Visited  
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Total No. of  
Students Explored  
**1,57,291**

Total No. of  
Days Travelled  
**355**  
Total No. of  
Teachers  
Participated  
**6,616**  
Total No. of  
Kilometres  
Travelled  
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Rotary Club of Virudhunagar - Idhayam - Parikshan Vigyanrath		
	Students	Teachers
ROTARY DISTRICT 3212	100,038	4388
ROTARY DISTRICT 3203	47150	1901
ROTARY DISTRICT 3000	2961	73
ROTARY DISTRICT 2984	7142	254

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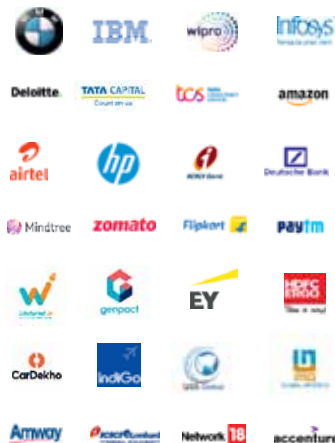
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