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ROTARY CLUB VIRUDHUNAGAR TEACH SESSIONS - Every 1st SATURDAY, Since 2015

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Lively photos, interesting institute articles

The dance performance at the Bengaluru zone institute published as the cover picture of the Jan issue is superb. RI President Gordon McNally in his message describes well the importance of peacebuilding between warring nations and the role of Rotary Peace Centres in building lasting peace in the world.

From the Editor's note it is clear that the Bengaluru zone institute was excellent. I was delighted to read a good amount was collected for TRF and Polio Fund. TRF Trustee Barry Rassin has set a goal of \$500 million for TRF collection this year and we wish his ambition is fulfilled for the betterment of the world.

RID Anirudha Roychowdhury has given a call to tackle health challenges by standing together. All the pictures and their descriptions related to the zone institute were praise-worthy. Articles including EAM Jaishankar's speech,



Rotary's absence in Gaza, TRF donors make India proud, Rotary stalwarts honoured, Branding Rotary for GenNext, Success mantras for incoming leaders, RC Thane Hills sets up autism centre in Mumbai, and 8-year-old Indian mountaineer sets world record, are all interesting to read. Club Hop and Project Vignettes are interesting too. Kudos to Team Rotary News.

Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211

Happy to go through the content of the Jan issue. We are glad to note that the zone institute was conducted efficiently and reporting of the various deliberations provided interesting content. The action photos of the institute gave us a feeling as if each of us was present and participated in the proceedings. A special mention has to be made about the coverage of EAM S Jaishankar's speech which dwelt on the rapid progress of the country.

All the zone institute articles were interesting to read. This magazine serves the purpose of developing a good communication within Rotary and outside too. Congratulations to the editor and her team.

R Srinivasan, RC Bangalore JP
Nagar — D 3191

The zone institute did *Rise* above expectations because of the

Mantras for longevity

The article *Mantra for health & longevity* by Bharat and Shalan Savur gave us a lot of clues to enjoy a long life with good health. All the points quoted from the documentary *Live to 100* by writer Dan Buettner are powerful. Both Rotary and its members will be in a win-win situation if all the points are followed. Many Rotarians might have found their, hitherto unknown, inner potential while executing various Rotary programmes. The fact that networking increases lifespan is relevant to Rotarians.

The article rightly points out that man is the villain of peace. His greed,

over the years, has resulted in environmental abuse. The last paragraph of the article correctly says that moderation may be the new modern mantra.

M Palaniappan, RC Madurai
West — D 3000

Appreciation of magazine by UK Rotarian

I am an Indian in UK and a cricket lover too. I enjoyed reading *Rotary News* from India handed over to me by my fellow Rotarian friend Govind Bahirat from RID 3131.

I agree with the sentiments of the editor on the World Cup final match, where I was one of the thousands in the stadium on that day. I too felt

very bad and disappointed with the loss of the Indian team, but I fail to understand the lack of generosity in not spontaneously congratulating the opponents who handsomely won the World Cup. Even the lights display on the sky didn't immediately show that the Australians were the champions.

This raised questions on sportsmanship, looking after guests and how we treat them and value professionalism... these still need to go a long way.

Enjoyed every page of your *Rotary News*, which I happened to lay hands on for the first time. Keep it up.

Anand N, RC Northallerton
Mowbray — D 1040

dedication, planning and execution of the event by convenor RID Raju Subramaniam and chairman PDG KP Nagesh. Especially because the lifelike digital presentation was world-class and in par with RI conventions as stated by RIPN de Camargo. Needless to say, the presence of RI President McInally, spouse Heather, de Camargo, RI officers, and the 800 delegates added glamour to the event and the camaraderie that prevailed was fascinating. The highlight was the enthusiasm of McInally who took time to take selfies, tee off a local golf tournament and flag off a midnight marathon. His presence netted \$100,000 for the Polio Fund and \$300,000 for TRF. Commendable. Thanks to the editorial team for the colourful pictures in *Rotary News*.

VRT Dorairaja
RC Tiruchirapalli — D 3000

RI President Gordon McInally has penned a nice message titled *The road to peace* in the Nov issue. He has asked us to support the peacebuilding initiatives of Rotary, especially in the Middle East and North Africa. Also, the Rotary Peace Centre is offering a one-year professional development certificate in peace studies. We, Rotarians, must join hands to ensure that peace prevails across the world. Though the journey will be difficult, we can take one step at a time.

S Muniandi, RC Dindigul
Fort — D 3000

Reading the LBW column by TCA Srinivas Raghavan in the

Jan issue, I remember the statement made by a politician in North India opposing capital punishment for rape, saying “*ladke, ladke hain... galti ho jati hai* (boys will be boys... they commit mistakes).” Parents overlook the unpardonable mistakes of their children due to over-pampering, especially in nuclear families.

With reference to the article *Skilling youth for BPO* by V Muthukumar, the use of the phrase ‘passing out’ in the second paragraph is a common mistake while referring to those graduating from a school or university. The phrase means ‘become unconscious for a short time’. The correct usage is completed, finished or graduated.

N Anthri Vedi, RC Hyderabad
Mega City — D 3150

The usage is not wrong. Several phrases in the English language have more than one meaning. The Cambridge dictionary gives the meaning of ‘passing out of a military college’ as ‘the act of leaving a military college after successfully finishing the course’. It adds another example: I went to my son’s “passing out parade”.

Editor

Informative advertorial

I congratulate *Rotary News* for publishing the advertorial “What is

the Pivotal Role of the Rotary Clubs and its Members in District and Zonal Elections” by Rtn A Rangarajan in the December issue. This is a burning topic that reflects on the integrity of our organisation.

Basically, the election process in our RI districts follows either of the two norms — direct e-voting by clubs or election through the Nominating Committee. While both are effective and clean at times, they do have a chance of being tarnished by rumours of being otherwise.

With so many questionable practices prevailing, rumours do the rounds in Rotary circles that attempts have been made to influence the NC members too. But these things sadly can never be proved.

Sometimes the club members are not aware of the names let alone the biodata of the candidates aspiring for the coveted post. There is no shortcut to solve these problems. No matter how many times the Four-Way Test is quoted, the net result remains zero.

One way to ensure the transparency and cleanliness is to inculcate more Rotary knowledge among Rotarians. The onus is on the clubs and district leadership to set such matters right.

Sayantana Gupta, RC Malda
Central — D 3240

On the cover: People carry home relief material provided by Rotarians in south Tamil Nadu which was ravaged by floods.

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

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

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A virtuous cycle

I am enthused and encouraged by your embrace of mental health initiatives throughout the Rotary world. More than 1,000 of you have responded so far to an ongoing survey by the Rotary Action Group on Mental Health Initiatives, offering your feedback on what Rotary can do to improve the personal well-being of members.

The top suggestions are illuminating. Rotary members are asking for more fellowship, camaraderie, conversation, cohesiveness and connection. They also want more recognition, validation and integration. They are seeking more service opportunities, and they want more wellness activities, including mental health speakers, awareness efforts and education.

Our members not only appreciate the greater focus on mental health, but they also believe that making more of the Rotary experience will materially improve their lives. I find it interesting that members are not asking anything dramatically new of their club — rather they want more of what we do best. For example, connection can be improved during meetings simply by assigning seating once each month to encourage people to speak with someone new.

Here are some great ways that we can help achieve these results and make Rotary more appealing to those considering membership. First, we need to acknowledge the importance of increasing belonging in our clubs and to encourage Rotary members to make the most of every opportunity for new and stronger connections. Public health experts

worldwide are concerned about increasing levels of loneliness — the US surgeon general has even declared it an epidemic. Mental health experts agree that finding groups and clubs around common hobbies and interests is a strong way to create greater connectedness. This is what Rotary is all about. We need to make sure all of our members are fully engaged and that our communities are better aware of this inherent strength.

Second, if your club has found new ways to build connection, please share your stories with us at mindhealth@rotary.org so that we can make them more broadly known within the Rotary world. Your good ideas might inspire others. Post your service project stories on *Rotary Showcase*.

And finally, I encourage you to share feedback from surveys like this with your club and bring forward your own ideas to improve your club experience and meet your peers' expectations. The journey we have begun is about more than mental health. It is about taking advantage of the full strength of our wonderful organisation and helping all members feel that they are part of a community that cares deeply about their personal well-being.

Everything you do to strengthen connections in Rotary, with each other and the people we serve, also helps improve mental health. And everything we do to improve mental health helps strengthen those connections. Let's continue this virtuous cycle.

Gordon McNally

President, Rotary International



Reach out to the disturbed/depressed

In the last few months, very depressing news have hit the headlines... mothers taking their lives along with that of their children... sometimes infants. The latest to join this troubling list is a 33-year-old woman, who took her own life, along with that of her six-month-old daughter, by jumping from the 16th floor of her apartment in Greater Noida on Jan 11. She was reportedly suffering from depression.

Just two days earlier, a 39-year-old woman, who is the founder and CEO of a Bengaluru-based IT firm, reportedly killed her four-year-old son in a hotel in Candolim, Goa, by smothering him with a pillow, and tried to end her own life too by slitting her wrist. But this somehow went wrong, and she did not die. She checked out of the hotel, carrying her child's lifeless body in a suitcase, and took a taxi from Goa to Bengaluru. The cause for this heinous crime is said to be her "disturbed mental status," following a court order regarding the boy's custody and visitation rights of the estranged husband.

Much earlier, another such disturbing story emerged from Gurugram... a 32-year-old mother smothered and killed her three-year-old daughter and then slit her own wrist, but did not die. She was arrested after she was discharged from the hospital. Apparently, she told the police, she killed her daughter in a fit of rage as the child was "bothering" her, and when she discovered the child was gone, she tried to end her own life but did not succeed. She was unhappy because of frequent fights with her husband.

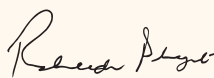
We have also been seeing one too many cases of young actresses and female models, taking their own lives, mostly due to relationships with their partners turning sour.

These cases clearly indicate the depression levels that exist in our country, but unfortunately, it is still considered a taboo in our social circles to seek psychiatric help for ourselves or our loved ones. Celebrities like Bollywood icon Deepika Padukone have stepped out of the shadows and have spoken openly about depression and how professional help should be given to such people. But many more well-known people need to do so to make a definite impact.

Research done by premium medical institutions across the world has shown that women are twice as likely to be diagnosed with depression compared to men; some researchers claim that gap has now widened. Compared to three decades ago, today women are three times more likely than men to experience common mental health problems. Mental health and wellness have been taken up as a primary focus area this year by RI President Gordon McInally. Thanks to this focus, Rotary clubs across the world are taking a closer look at this extremely disturbing area and implementing service projects to identify and deal with mental health issues.

Every life is precious, and no human being has the right to end his/her life. A much more heinous crime is to end the life of a tiny, helpless baby who cannot defend or protect herself.

All of us need to keep our eyes, and more important, hearts open, to spot those who show signs of being mentally disturbed or depressed. If we do so, we will find them, in our families, friend circles, work places, and larger communities. Surely it's not that difficult to reach out a hand of friendship, understanding, support, solidarity, and even concrete help....



Rasheeda Bhagat

Inspiration around every corner



It's a tale as old as the Rotary International Convention: Two members from different clubs bump into each other, start chatting, and get the spark of an idea for a project.

So don't be shy about starting a conversation with the stranger standing next to you or someone you meet over a meal at the convention May 25–29 in Singapore. After all, two people who talked at a bus stop at the 2016 convention in Seoul went on to plan a project fair in Africa.

Members regularly share stories about chance convention encounters that lead to meaningful projects — the kind that fulfil this year's convention theme: *Sharing hope with the world*.

They have met while painting a playground during the 2012 convention in Bangkok, lingering after breakout sessions, and, of course, visiting House of Friendship booths. Members relish the chance

to meet new friends from other countries to find global grant project ideas, but they also run into potential project partners from their own state, province, or district.

After making a convention connection, Rotary members from countries across the world have worked with new partners on countless initiatives, including providing ShelterBoxes to refugees, launching a Rotaract multidistrict information organisation, and recycling millions of plastic bottle caps to raise money to end polio.

A Georgia club's article about a global grant with a club in India to build toilet facilities captures the convention's influence: "This all began at the Atlanta RI Convention in 2017." What seed of an idea will you find in Singapore this spring?

Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org

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Magazine

Director speak



Dear Rotary Family,
Greetings as we embrace the enchantment of a new Rotary theme — *The Magic of Rotary*.

As we journey through the seventh month of this Rotary year, I am thrilled to share that our districts are not just thriving but are accomplishing remarkable feats in executing our plans. Having attended several district conferences, I've witnessed the incredible work undertaken by Rotarians. I am confident that each of you will continue to *Create Hope in the World*, paving the way for *The Magic of Rotary* to unfold.

February is designated as Peace and Conflict Resolution Month. This month also marks the anniversary of Rotary's inaugural meeting on February 23, 1905, now celebrated as World Understanding and Peace Day. It provides each club with a unique opportunity to pause, plan and promote the fourth Avenue of Service, emphasising Rotary's commitment to goodwill, peace and understanding worldwide. Our organisation advances these values through initiatives focused on health improvement, support for education, and poverty alleviation. In Rotary, diversity and inclusivity reign supreme, transcending colour and gender. Let us embrace these principles as we dignify all professions and work together to foster peace, echoing Paul Harris' words: "The way to war is a well-paved highway, and the way to peace is still a wilderness."

Let's make our clubs interesting

The Rotary zone institute held in Bengaluru was a testament to teamwork and dedication. Sixteen months of tireless planning and effort reached a crescendo in a grand event. The institute team along with Rotarians from districts 3191 and 3192, played a pivotal role in elevating this occasion to new heights — making it bigger, better and bolder than ever before. While your accolades and good wishes from across the globe energised the team, what truly stood out was the exceptional cooperation among the delegates.

Let's remain steadfast in our focus on membership retention and growth. The International Assembly emphasised pursuing a richer club experience, because members don't leave Rotary; they leave uninteresting clubs. While our target of becoming a \$2.025 Foundation is on track, the need for funding is escalating. Eradicating polio remains a formidable challenge; champion the Foundation and actively fundraise for polio.

I am genuinely encouraged to witness districts effectively addressing challenges at the local level, without resorting to undesirable campaigns. Our collective image requires a swift overhaul, and our leadership is unequivocally committed to maintaining a zero tolerance policy. While acknowledging the phenomenal work we are undertaking, we must refrain from diluting our positive impact with internal issues and conflicts. Let us uphold the integrity and reputation of our Rotary community, and ensure that our accomplishments shine undiminished by discord. Let's continue crafting the story of Rotary with passion, dedication, and a touch of magic. Together, we can create a world steeped in understanding, goodwill and peace.

Raju Subramanian

RI Director, 2023–25

The groundwork for peace



Following the news is challenging these days. Stories of war and violence are deeply discouraging. It breaks my heart when I hear about innocent bystanders, particularly women and children, who are caught in the crossfire of conflict.

Is there anything we can do about it? We certainly can't turn away from the problem. I think in these times, we need to shift our focus from what we can't change to what we can do. We can also support what we know works.

February is Rotary's Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month. It is one of our areas of focus because peace is central to everything we do in Rotary. Even though most of us aren't diplomats at the negotiating table or peacebuilders working on active conflicts, in Rotary's singular way, what we do works to promote peace and prevent conflict somewhere, every day.

Every Rotary member should remember this during the month of February: When you support any of the areas of focus of The Rotary Foundation, you are contributing to peace. Foundation grants that address fundamental issues — such as a global grant focused on enhancing basic literacy in a community — will cultivate a better understanding of the world and lead to greater economic stability, laying the groundwork for peace.

You can say the same for all the areas of focus, from the environment to economic development. They help stabilise communities, lift families out of poverty, and foster the pursuit of education.

Peace is and always has been inter-woven into the fabric of Rotary beyond our projects, too. In 1999, when we established the Rotary Peace Centers through a visionary initiative of our Foundation, we reaffirmed this commitment. This month, we are once again renewing that vision, with Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul, our host partner for the newest Rotary Peace Center, as it takes its first steps to prepare for the initial cohort of students arriving in early 2025.

All along the way, as Rotary has evolved into a global force for good, it has championed peace and understanding in countless ways, and our Foundation remains the great driving force behind that vision. It will be part of Rotary's eternal legacy.

And by supporting our work, you will be able to say that you are a part of that legacy. You can directly support it by visiting rotary.org/donate and selecting peacebuilding and conflict prevention as the area of focus.

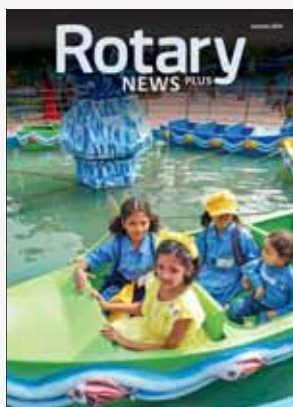
So, yes, there is a lot you can do to support peace and prevent conflict. The next step is up to you.

Barry Rassin

TRF Trustee Chair

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Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,769

Rotaract clubs : 10,784

Interact clubs : 15,138

RCCs : 13,258

Rotary members : 1,166,174

Rotaract members: 161,551

Interact members : 348,174

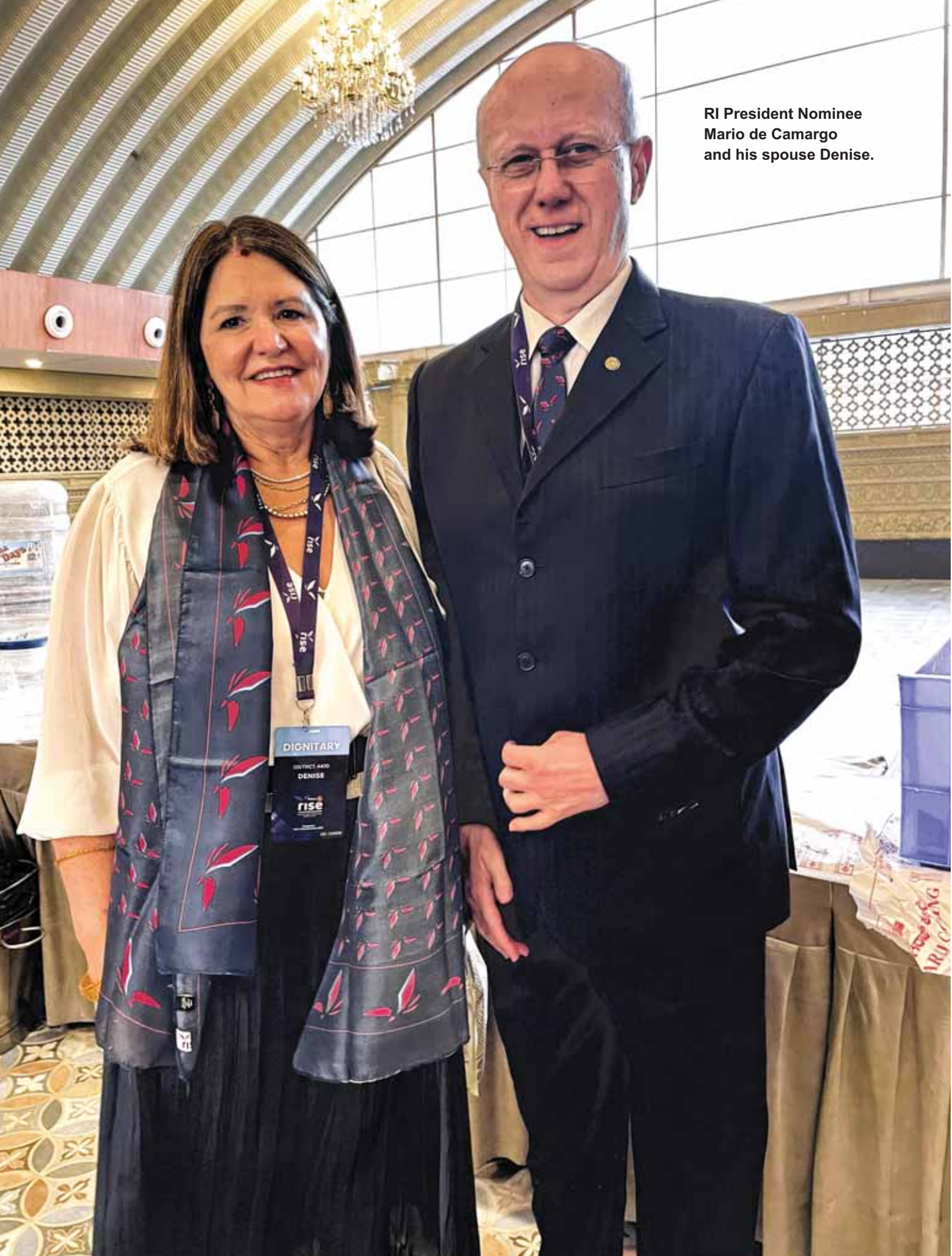
As on January 17, 2024

Membership Summary

As on January 1, 2024

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	6,007	6.13	73	503	34	254
2982	84	3,768	6.13	35	804	95	175
3000	139	5,939	11.97	120	1,816	247	216
3011	132	5,015	29.33	85	2,311	151	37
3012	162	4,056	23.77	77	1,147	99	61
3020	80	4,693	7.48	46	843	121	351
3030	99	5,624	16.66	129	2,088	521	384
3040	112	2,416	14.36	52	902	79	213
3053	72	2,875	16.73	25	404	42	131
3055	77	2,979	12.25	68	1,084	74	376
3056	80	3,690	24.12	34	459	105	201
3060	103	5,123	15.81	68	2,296	63	143
3070	119	3,237	15.63	49	601	52	63
3080	108	4,230	12.43	63	1,885	171	122
3090	124	2,656	6.10	20	366	193	166
3100	109	2,135	10.82	15	138	36	151
3110	132	3,591	11.28	17	110	48	107
3120	90	3,626	15.66	49	616	28	55
3131	141	5,616	30.50	151	3,364	260	149
3132	91	3,689	13.64	43	620	123	204
3141	114	6,202	27.27	140	5,995	169	224
3142	106	3,740	21.60	63	2,165	116	94
3150	108	4,273	13.43	156	1,881	111	130
3160	79	2,600	9.04	32	258	95	82
3170	150	6,599	15.15	123	1,887	198	180
3181	87	3,626	10.70	44	520	94	121
3182	86	3,662	10.43	47	235	106	103
3191	91	3,483	18.40	96	3,110	143	35
3192	83	3,433	21.44	83	2,297	113	40
3201	173	6,681	9.91	139	2,555	100	93
3203	95	4,797	7.28	93	1,205	180	39
3204	74	2,380	6.89	24	226	17	13
3211	159	5,082	8.34	11	178	20	134
3212	122	4,563	11.40	95	3,703	167	153
3231	95	3,350	6.81	39	437	44	417
3232	186	6,137	19.57	130	5,432	155	100
3240	102	3,509	16.87	51	900	69	229
3250	106	4,067	22.20	71	1,011	65	191
3261	97	3,269	21.90	25	270	24	45
3262	115	3,769	15.71	78	766	645	286
3291	142	3,767	25.56			73	741
India Total	4,564	169,954		2,759	57,388	5,246	7,009
3220	69	1,947	16.59	97	4,080	80	77
3271	180	2,939	19.09	194	2,190	333	28
3272	162	2,097	14.12	97	1,278	26	49
3281	333	7,539	17.62	249	1,959	144	215
3282	178	3,467	9.89	179	1,336	30	47
3292	154	5,433	18.74	185	5,468	122	134
S Asia Total	5,640	193,376	15.61	3,760	73,699	5,981	7,559

Source: RI South Asia Office



RI President Nominee
Mario de Camargo
and his spouse Denise.



No fake clubs, no bogus members, no cooking up numbers: **RIPN**

Rasheeda Bhagat

If the session moderated by PRIP KR Ravindran was titled ‘Frankly speaking,’ the address delivered by RIPN Mario de Camargo at the Bengaluru institute deserved the title ‘Plain speaking’.

Addressing one of the sessions, the president-nominee almost read out the riot act to those Rotarians from our zones who indulge in dubious activities to boost figures and win false glory. Spelling out his vision, he told the assembled participants: “Our vision is membership, membership, membership, make no mistake about it. But we want healthy, sustainable membership. No fake clubs, no bogus members. Rotary doesn’t need that; India doesn’t need that.”

Complimenting Indian Rotarians for membership growth, he said, “You’re doing very well and showing the world how to grow Rotary, but you

have to do it in a sustainable, sincere and honest way. We don’t want to cook up the numbers... we are a frontier organisation. We don’t need money in Rotary. We care for Rotary money. So what is the sense in having members who are not real? For what purpose? Politics? Power? What kind of power? The power that we have derives from inspiration and motivation and has to be solid, concrete, true... otherwise it will confront the first question of the Four-Way Test: Is it the truth? If it isn’t the truth, it doesn’t interest me, or (RI president) Gordon or (RIPE) Stephanie.”

Only recently, he had attended a meeting in India about a district split. “And we had to take a very tough decision on a district in this part of the world. The membership, since the district was split, plummeted from 8,950 to 7,200, a loss of 1,700 Rotarians in one single year. You know what we did? We cancelled the split. That district will no longer be split. We revoked the earlier year’s decision. If it’s not sustainable, it is not going to happen,” said RIPN de Camargo.

Many people had asked him about his vision. “I wouldn’t say it’s *my* vision, it’s *our* vision. Our vision is to make our institution strong and we have an outstanding asset that no other institution has — you. The most valuable asset in Rotary is not TRF or

its money, but members. You people make the magic happen at the club and community levels, at the small cities level... not so small in India though!”

The biggest challenge before Rotary was to embrace change and grow the organisation and its impact. “So how are we going to do this? In a few ways; first of all, innovation... doing new things. We are people of action, we not only think, we do things. So we will have to be not only creative, but also innovative.”

An example de Camargo gave was embracing new format clubs. One of the questions he was asked by the chair of the nominating committee that selected him as RIPN was: ‘How will you use new format clubs to enhance diversity in Rotary?’ He had thought very hard on this topic; did they know how many members the satellite clubs of Rotary had? “Only 9,000; that is 0.75 per cent of 1.2 million members. We have a huge opportunity but we have to think outside the box.”

He recalled how during his year as an RI director (2019–20) he had “dared and challenged my club, which is a very old (75 years) and traditional club with 105 members, to charter a satellite club. They opposed the idea as they thought satellite clubs were second grade clubs. And because they were opposed to that, I made a stronger point to charter it. They finally acceded and chartered a club which is my wife’s club with 45 members. So my club’s membership went up from 105 to 150!”

What is the sense in having members who are not real? For what purpose? Politics? Power? What kind of power? The power that we have derives from inspiration and motivation and has to be solid, concrete, true.

It's "just a change of mindset. We have to accept change or change will kill us. And change will happen to Rotary, no matter what we think. The communities surrounding us, the cities you live in, are all changing." From his first visit to India in 2007 to his fifth visit now, he had found that "India is evolving rapidly. Is Rotary following that evolution or not?"

Thanking RI President Gordon McNally for allowing him, a president-nominee, to attend an institute he himself was attending, de Camargo said that by doing so, McNally was sending out a very strong message on 'continuity' and its importance in Rotary. "And it is much more than that. I am being made to participate in and engage closely with very important Rotary committees. I am made to do that now, and not one or two years down the line."

He disclosed that "this year I have participated in five institutes and I must acknowledge this is possible only because of President McNally, who thinks beyond himself and says that for the good of the organisation,

We have to change our mindset, and accept change or change will kill us. Change will happen to Rotary, no matter what we think. The communities surrounding us, the cities you live in, are all changing.



RIPN de Camargo and RI Director Raju Subramanian.

whenever and wherever you are invited, you come along and we will walk alongside each other. He is setting an example for directors, district governors and club presidents. That's the Rotary spirit."

McNally's example was very important and should be followed down the line in Rotary hierarchy. It was a clear message for the directors, DGs, DGEs and DGNs. "The governors of 2023–24, 2024–25 and 2025–26 are present here. To me you are one team, a Rotary team. If governors of 2025–26 have different ideas from their predecessors, that is fine and healthy. But you have to work together. Don't destroy your predecessors' work just to enhance yours! Rotary is not about this."

He gave the example of the year when he was DG in 1999–2000, and "my district beat the record for TRF fundraising." However, he did not

give that year a single cent of his own money, but reserved his becoming a Major Donor for his successor's year, with one condition... "he would have to beat my numbers for TRF. That is the spirit and Rotary recognises such a spirit. They see you not by what you have achieved but what you help others to achieve," he added.

As for the year 2025–26 when he would be RI president, de Camargo said, "That is not *my* year. I cannot own 2025–26. The Greek god Cronos owns the time. We don't; we are just the subjects of time, we do not control it. I told the DGNs that our mission starts now; we don't want the glory of 2025–26, it is only a fleeting, a very short-lived glory. The organisation calls for a joint effort. If we have to deliver results in 2025–26, we have to start working now!"

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat



Nigar Shaji: breaking gender stereotypes

Rasheeda Bhagat

In ISRO, I believe, all the missions that we have taken up have become possible and met with success, because our mantra is taking pride in whatever we do and thanks to a sense of belonging. Self-motivation is the ISRO culture, for the Aditya mission too,” said Nigar Shaji, project director of ISRO’s Aditya-L1, India’s first solar observatory, which has reached its destination. She was addressing a session at the Bengaluru zone institute where she was honoured for the role she was playing in leading the Aditya-L1 mission to the Sun.

On the successful Aditya-L1 mission, a self-effacing Nigar said the whole project “is teamwork, and the honour being bestowed here by Rotary

on me, I dedicate to my team. I am so proud of being the project leader of this mission, which will make it possible for India to also study the Sun, which is the need of the hour.” (Since the institute was concluded in December, the laboratory has been successfully parked at an optimum spot in space from where it will have an unobstructed view of the Sun.) Nigar is the sister of RID 3212 PDG S Sheik Saleem.

Recalling the very purpose behind setting up of ISRO, the aerospace engineer, said, “ISRO was started by

the visionary Vikram Sarabhai with a goal to use space technology to improve the standard of living of our people. It is so similar to what you Rotarians are doing... your service to humanity both locally and globally. I am really amazed that you have managed to carry out such long programmes like polio eradication, spending billions of dollars. You have now taken up projects like eradication of malaria in African countries.”

Saying that she was extremely proud of being a part of Sarabhai’s dream which had come such a long way, she added, “Thanks to all these projects done today by ISRO, we have respect in the world in the area of space technology. All the nations which have developed space programmes respect us today because of our landing on the moon (through the Chandrayaan-3) and because of the Aditya mission and our other achievements. Now these nations are coming to us for co-operation, and this is the biggest achievement for us, and the need of the hour for our country which is inching towards becoming a developed country,” she added amidst thunderous applause.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat



RI President Gordon McNally interacting with RI Director Raju Subramanian; Nigar Shaji, project director, ISRO’s Aditya-L1; and her brother PDG S Sheik Saleem.



From L: Ravvi Shankar, RID 3232 PDG J Sridhar, his spouse Punitha, Nigar Shaji, RID 3212 PDGs V R Muthu and Sheik Saleem.

Rotarians help flood victims in south TN

Jaishree

Even as Chennai and its neighbouring districts were reeling from the devastation of cyclone Michuang, a second major deluge paralysed four districts — Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi (Tuticorin), Tenkasi and Kanyakumari — in southern Tamil Nadu, as extremely heavy rains pounded the region for a week in December. Several towns and villages were ravaged and farmlands destroyed. Every small river and tributary had turned into lethal water streams across the four districts.

Stranded residents sought refuge on rooftops and tree branches, and many people were evacuated and camped in various relief centres. The

NDRF and the Indian Navy stepped up to expedite rescue operations. Boats and fire engines were pressed into service; and helicopters distributed food packets to the marooned.

Rotarians came together to provide immediate relief and coordinated with RID 3212. DG Muthiah Pillai said Kayalpatnam in Thoothukudi district recorded a staggering 110cm rainfall in a single day. In Eral, a commercial town on the banks of Thamirabarani, people were stranded for three days without food and electricity, and roads were washed out in the floods, “which took them back 40–50 years.”

Power outage and communication breakdown added to people’s woes.

“Rotarians swung into action and worked round the clock, accompanying rescue teams in boats to save people,” said Pillai. He recalled a scenario in a remote village where about 70 families were marooned. The village had a couple of concrete houses where women and children took shelter while the men climbed on to tree branches as the water levels rose to 7–11ft. “We went in boats to rescue them.”

As the rains abated, it was time to focus on providing food.



Ramamurthy, a member of RC Udumalpet, RID 3203, who runs a school in Udumalpet was the first to arrive with 20,000 chapatis and tomato chutney cooked by his students and their parents for distribution to the flood victims. Soon two community kitchens — one, in association with the Bhoomi Foundation, Chennai, along with some IAS officers, at the St Mary’s College in Thoothukudi; and another one at the Sakthi Peedam which was an initiative of the district Rotarians — helped provide food for thousands of people for five days.

SPIC Nagar, a sprawling township in Thoothukudi was inundated under 5–7 feet water from the breached water bodies. “The SPIC factory suffered a loss of around ₹500–600 crore; raw material, finished products and equipment were all submerged in the flood waters,” says V Sundaresan, president of RC SPIC Nagar, a corporate club with factory staff as members. The club distributed food, basic medicines and other essentials to labourer families residing around the township.



Rotarians interacting with the flood affected people to help provide relief.

Even the corporate’s whole-time director was one of the beneficiaries of the Rotary community kitchen. With water level rising he had to move out with his family and pet dog to a safer place for two nights. Pillai recalled him saying: “There was no time to think about taking anything with us. Soon my daughters started feeling

hungry and that’s when I heard about Rotary distributing rotis. God bless you all. I have all the money but am totally helpless.”

There was a critical need for drinking water and sanitary pads. Over 50,000 napkins were distributed — 30,000 sponsored by the DG and 25,000 pads were sponsored by sanitary pad manufacturers Bella, Erode.



RC Tirunelveli Star members, along with president T Sathish Narayanan, giving a bag of groceries to a woman.

After the rains had stopped and people got back to their homes, it was time to distribute flood relief kits. The first consignment of 500 grocery kits came from RC Dindigul, RID 3000, and 300 kits containing clothes and groceries from RC Karaikudi, RID 3212. RID 3201 DG Vijayakumar, along with DGN Chella Raghavendra, flagged off four trucks with 2,300 flood relief kits put together by 50 Rotary clubs of Coimbatore. Each kit costing ₹1,700 had 37 items comprising clothes for men, women and children, blankets, candles, provisions and basic sanitary material.

The relief kits were delivered at people's doorsteps by Rotarians across these districts. "In many places we had to wade through knee-deep water, carrying the kits on our head," says RC Pearl City Tuticorin president Mohamed Ibrahim. The DG visited three belts to distribute relief material to people. "Many houses were badly damaged, and the appliances beyond repair. It was heart-wrenching to see children crying in hunger, and the old and the disabled struggling to keep themselves safe."

RCs Udumalpet, Udumalpet Tejas, Salem South, Sathyamangalam, Bangalore Ulsoor, Bangalore Engage India, Vellore and Rotary clubs of 3231 and 3232 had sent truck-loads of relief material. "The total monetary value of our flood relief aid is ₹2 crore. Now we have a good surplus of these kits," smiles the DG. Earlier as the calamity unfolded, Pillai had communicated with RID Anirudha Roychowdhury "who sent a circular to every district to help our people find their feet again."

Many Rotary clubs transferred funds to the District Funds of RID 3212. RID 3000 PDG P Gopalakrishnan deposited ₹1.5 lakh collected from Rotary clubs in Karur. RCs Sivakasi, Virudhunagar and Sivakasi Sparkler helped with the funds initially to prepare and distribute food. RID 3203 DG Sundararajan donated ₹2 lakh which was utilised to reconstruct a house damaged by the floods for a blind person.

"Even as the deluge began, my co-governors from 3201, 3203, 3204, 3231 and 3232 called. All of them had this to say: Don't worry, we'll pitch in with all that we can," Pillai said.

Now that the worst is over, the focus has shifted to rehabilitation.





“We want to give back people their lifeline and help them re-build their livelihood,” he said. Eral, a town that used to always bustle with shoppers on Christmas eve, looks deserted and gloomy. “A week right before Christmas, textile, firecracker and grocery shops have all been washed away,” said Sundaresan.

Pillai recalled visiting a polio-affected youth who was operating an eatery on a push cart. “He was left with nothing after the floods. So we got him a stove, utensils, tables and chairs, repaired the push cart, and provided him a week’s stock of groceries — all worth ₹20,000. He was happy to kickstart his business the next day, busy dishing out dosas, puris and piping hot idlis.” Ajees, president of RC Tisayanvilai Elite, related how the club helped a widow with a six-month-old child by giving her “₹10,000 to rebuild her petty shop and also paid ₹12,000 annual rent to the landlord who, inspired by our service, reduced it from ₹1,300 to ₹1,000 a month.”

Now the Rotarians are receiving requests for repairing homes. “The flood has left large deposits of clay in the fields which will take months to clear. Livestock have been washed off. Around 200 families have asked for goats. The Thoothukudi belt, known for its salt pans, has suffered a huge loss, along with the brick kilns on the river banks,” said Pillai.

Discussions are on to seek CSR support for the rehabilitation work and to build low-cost shelters “within a budget of ₹2.5 lakh, as done in Kerala and the Northeast. As we meet these people, we are overwhelmed by their expectations and the hope that Rotary can reverse their plight,” said Pillai. ■



Clockwise from below: Flood relief material distributed to the blind by RC Pearlcity Tuticorin; DG Pillai hands over relief material to Raman, a polio-affected person, operating a mobile eatery. RC Tirunelveli Star president Sathish Narayanan is seen on the right; RC Pearlcity Tuticorin president Mohamed Ibrahim (R), past assistant governors Sagayaraj and Balamurugan at an event to distribute relief kits to transgenders; RID 3212 DG Muthiah Pillai (centre) and PDG V R Muthu receiving a container of flood relief kits sent to the district by Rotary clubs in Coimbatore. RID 3201 DGN Chella Raghavendra is seen on the right.



Survey shows over 90% Rotarians happy with GGs

Rasheeda Bhagat

In a recent evaluation of global grants (GGs) done by The Rotary Foundation to find if Rotarians were satisfied with the grants process “we found that over the last 10 years since global grants were introduced, **50 per cent of clubs** have participated in one way or another in GGs. They have either given money, been hosts, or sponsored something. This is an impactful thing,” commented TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya, at the Bengaluru zone institute, answering a question pertaining to the TRF

impact in taking Rotary’s Action Plan forward.

He was participating in a panel discussion titled *The Rotary Foundation: Today and Tomorrow*, moderated by PRID C Basker.

The survey also found that “over 90 per cent Rotarians surveyed are satisfied with GGs and 92 per cent said that GGs form a very important part of their Rotary experience, and 95 per cent are interested in applying for a GG. So that counts for enhancing participant engagement,” he said answering a question from Basker on how TRF programmes take forward

the core components of the Rotary Action Plan.

The four priorities of the action plan, Pandya said, were: “Increasing our impact, expanding our reach, enhancing participant engagement and increasing our ability to adapt. Adding environment as Rotary’s seventh area of focus is a perfect example of our ability to adapt. So TRF and our action plan are completely in sync.”

To prove that “TRF programmes are in sync with all these four priorities, let’s look at our Programs of Scale.” Under the first such programme, TRF gave a \$2 million grant to Zambia to combat malaria, “which is one of the leading causes of death in many African countries, especially in Zambia’s children and pregnant women.” That was matched with a contribution of \$2 million each from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and World Vision International.

“The initial results showed that in the provinces where this grant

From L: PRID Kamal Sanghvi, TRF Trustee Aziz Memon, PRID Ashok Mahajan, TRF Trustee Larry Lunsford, TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya and PRID C Basker.



programme was implemented, the mortality from malaria has decreased significantly, so we are definitely increasing our impact.”

This impact is being further strengthened and its scope extended by subsequent developments. “The Gates Foundation is so happy with its execution that they have come forward to give another \$13 million and World Vision added another \$7 million. The TRF trustees said we will also give an additional \$10

million; thus the original \$2 million seed programme, as you may call it, has scaled up to a \$30 million programme in four countries — Zambia, Nigeria, Congo and Mozambique for three diseases... malaria, pneumonia and diarrhoeal diseases, especially in children. These are the biggest killers in that part of the world.”

This was the best example of how a TRF mega programme has increased impact, expanded its reach, engaged Rotarians and adapted to face a major challenge in Africa, Pandya said.

In his introductory comments, Basker said that both India and the world were changing and Rotary and Rotarians had to march along with the changing times. “When Arch Klumph set up TRF, little would he have imagined that this would become one of the world’s largest foundations. Paul Harris had said that this is a changing world and we must be prepared to change with it and the Rotary story must be written and written again.”

TRF had come a long way to become an important and integral part of the Rotary world. “Even though our membership has not gone up significantly, contributions to TRF have grown year after year, increasing to an annual contribution of over \$350 million. We are happy that India has done well too and in the last three years Indian contributions to TRF have been significant.”

Basker next asked a question to former TRF trustee and PRID Ashok Mahajan about the “fatigue and some degree of lack of interest” creeping into Indian Rotarians when it came to contributing to the Polio Fund. What could be done to inspire and re-energise Rotary clubs in our zones to contribute for the polio eradication cause, he asked.

Noting that polio “is very close to my heart,” and that fatigue is bound to creep in after four decades

Over **90** per cent Rotarians surveyed are satisfied with GGs. **92** per cent said that GGs form a very important part of their Rotary experience; **95** per cent are interested in applying for a GG.

Bharat Pandya
TRF Vice Chair



After Turkey, will the next peace centre come up in India?

At a TRF panel discussion, moderator PRID C Basker asked TRF trustee Larry Lunsford to shed some light on the TRF decision to set up the next peace centre in Istanbul, Turkey, despite the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation giving a gift of \$15.5 million to TRF for starting a peace centre in the Middle East. What was the reasoning of the trustees for doing so, he asked.

Lunsford responded that “across the world we might have differing definitions of the ‘Middle East’. I recall that in this selection process, we used a couple of filters or thresholds to decide on this, and one was Rotary’s internal regional definition, and Turkey does fit that definition.”

One important criterion used for selecting Turkey, or for that matter, any country, was the issue of safety and security and “whether it is generally safe for the students at the university as they walk around the community where the centre will be located. And English is not only the chosen language for the curriculum itself but it is also used in the resident and eating halls. Another criterion is

if there is a strong Rotary and Rotaract presence in the region, and that is a filter, because this provides the ability to host families. All these criteria the Rotarians in Turkey fulfilled.”

In addition, added Lunsford, the trustees also look for universities which already have a presence in the area of peace and conflict resolution. “And finally, the most important thing pertains to the ability to enter the country rather easily, equal access regardless of gender, region and easy obtainment of the visa. As the TRF task force went through the criteria, Turkey met these requirements.”

Finally, he added, the university chosen also met the criteria of the donor; “this is the second most significant gift that TRF has ever received so the feelings and desires of the donors mattered.” Similar criteria are likely to be applied while choosing the next peace centre to come up “in your part of the world,” Lunsford added.

Shedding some light on the next peace centre to be set up by TRF in Asia, vice-chair Pandya said, “I am happy to share that India is one of the contenders, and Symbiosis from Pune

has put up an expression of interest in putting up such a peace centre. Two more universities, one in Bengaluru and another in Odisha, are also eager to setting up their expression of interest and if all of us work together, I am optimistic that probably the next Rotary peace centre will come up in India!”

of fight against polio, Mahajan said, “I believe Rotarians need information, inspiration and motivation” to re-engage actively with the polio eradication cause. One of the reasons for their fatigue was that the last case of polio was registered in India in January 2011, even though we were certified polio-free by the WHO only in 2014. “It is almost 13 years since India became polio-free so most Rotarians in our zones feel that our job is done. But they should be told that TRF has spent **\$2.5 billion** for this cause... and in India alone it has spent **\$275 million** for polio eradication efforts. They should know that the support for this has largely come from outside India, and that polio anywhere is polio everywhere. If till yesterday we were exporters of the virus, tomorrow we can possibly become importers of this virus which lurks in our neighbourhood (Pakistan and Afghanistan).”

It has to be reiterated again and again that winning this war means the world has to be totally rid of this disease. As for Indian Rotarians’ contribution to the Polio Fund, “remember that even the mother does not feed the child till it cries. Unless we ask, they will not give. We all know that the Aditya Birla Foundation gives us \$1 million every year for polio but that doesn’t just come on its own; we have to request and persuade them.”



TRF Vice Chair Pandya (R) and Trustee Lunsford.

Symbiosis from Pune, and two more universities, one in Bengaluru and another in Odisha, are eager to setting up their expression of interest in putting up a peace centre in India.

Bharat Pandya
TRF Vice Chair



From L: PRID Sanghvi, TRF Trustee Memon, PRIDs Mahajan and Basker, Trustee Lunsford and TRF Vice Chair Pandya.

Similarly, our Rotarians will have to be persuaded by senior leaders constantly to give for polio by reminding them that polio remains RI's top priority till the entire world is rid of it.

Giving an update on the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan where the last cases of polio still remain, TRF trustee Aziz Memon said that after decades of very hard work, money and other resources put in by Rotarians “we are at this time much closer than we will ever be, for the simple reason the virus is contained in a very small geographic area. In Pakistan the challenge is in the seven districts of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where security and the killings of polio workers are big problems.”

Similarly, in Afghanistan, of the 34 provinces, the virus is contained in one eastern province. But there are a couple of challenges; one being immunity. “We are targeting children under five, but the last two cases that came up were wildpolio virus cases

While conceding the need for standardisation, TRF trustees also should allow regionalisation, and make it convenient for these grants to benefit more people.

Kamal Sanghvi
PRID and Rotary
Foundation (India) Chair

in two 11-year-old children. Also, we have a 2,400km of porous border with Afghanistan, and even adults who are not infected, could be carriers of the virus as they crossed the border frequently on either side.

The other major challenge in Afghanistan was that the Taliban faction which rules the southern region does not allow home-to-home immunisation. “Home-to-home vaccination is the key factor by which we have eradicated polio in the world, but here religious leaders have not yet allowed this type of vaccination. So the children have to be brought to the mosque or community halls. The result is that 300,000 children are

being missed and these children are vulnerable.”

But some progress has been made here; last week the UNICEF regional director had met the deputy prime minister in Afghanistan requesting the introduction of home vaccination and he has been assured this would be done. “Looking at all these factors, I would say we are much closer to a polio-free world. Thanks to the high level of mapping, we are able to track the families moving around the vulnerable regions. We hope this time we will succeed.”

Answering a question on GGs, Rotary Foundation (India) chair and PRID Kamal Sanghvi appealed to the TRF trustees to look at the possibility of processing grant applications and applying various parameters in grant approval “on a regional basis. As the RFI chair, I keep getting questions that as Rotary is strongly advocating and moving towards regionalisation, why can't the process involved in approving GGs be made regional. Because what is relevant in the US or

Europe may not be relevant to India and vice versa.”

Giving an example, he said that when Indian Rotarians apply for a GG for providing e-learning facilities such as smart boards to 20 schools, the grant officer asks them to take up only one school instead of 20. “I’d like to tell the trustees that in the US or Europe, schools have reached a certain level to warrant such micro management, and concentrate on one school. But in a country like India or one in Africa, or South America, schools need such projects done at a macro level. We want to use TRF funds through GGs for extending maximum benefits to the students in schools or patients in hospitals. In such countries we need to provide educational facilities not for 300 or 500 children but a much larger number.”

Sanghvi appealed to the TRF board of trustees “to look at these countries with a different lens. For example, 20 per cent of the grants

TRF has spent **\$2.5**
billion... and in India alone it
has spent **\$275** million
for polio eradication efforts.

are used in India. I assume 80 per cent of GGs are used in developing countries. While conceding the need for standardisation, TRF trustees also should allow regionalisation, and make it convenient for these grants to benefit more people.”

Coming to deployment of CSR funds for Rotary projects, Sanghvi said that the CSR money that Rotarians in India had hitherto managed to rope in was rather small and mostly from companies owned or headed by Rotarians. “But there is a huge pool of CSR money in India, and we need to go out into the jungle and tap bigger corporates, just like RI/TRF have done with the Gates Foundation. We need partners like that. There are so many huge foundations and

corporations in/outside India that we need to tap.”

He added that RFI was exploring various methods of doing this, particularly how to make standardised presentations to large corporates, keeping in mind what excites them and how we can convince them to make Rotary their partner of choice for their CSR grants.

Pandya shared positive news on how “along with our growing membership, we find in the last three years the per capita of giving to TRF by Rotarians in our zones is also growing consistently and that is a wonderful change.”

While only till recently a major concern was contribution to the Annual Fund going down, he was happy to report that this trend had now reversed and Annual Fund collections have increased in our zones. “More and more districts are now going up several notches in Foundation contribution, last year nine districts in India contributed over \$1 million to TRF.”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

RAG for organ donation

Team Rotary News

A new chapter of Rotary Action Group on Blood, Tissue and Organ Donation (BOD) was formed with Rajesh Mittal, charter president, RC Delhi Manthan and RID 3011 chair, Organ Donation, as its country coordinator.

Giving an overview of the group’s mission, Mittal said, “the new RAG will centralise and streamline resources related to BOD awareness through a unified platform. Our goal is that no one should die in India for want of organs.” The group will consolidate the resources through activities and projects,

knowledge repository, and seek the help of experts and champions in legislative bodies. The RAG-BOD will encourage club and district-level activities to create awareness on organ donation through projects and initiatives.

A guide book for Rotarians on organ donation compiled by Hemali Ajmera was included in the Rotary zone institute kits given to the delegates



and a website <https://oneindiaonlaw.org/> offers information on the legal aspects of organ donation. ■



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Rotaract is the present of Rotary

Jaishree

A lot of people describe Rotaract as the future of Rotary. But I very much believe that Rotaract is the present of Rotary. The skills that Rotaract can bring to the Rotary table are fantastic and complementary to the skills that Rotarians have,” said RI President Gordon McNally, addressing the DRRs and DRREs at the Rotaract seminar at the Rotary zone institute in Bengaluru. He is a former member of Rotaract Club of South Queensferry, Scotland.

Recalling the landmark decision when Rotaract was ‘elevated’ at the 2019 CoL, the RI president said that it has brought a whole new relationship between Rotary and Rotaract. “We are still fine-tuning the policies and

exploring ways to make this partnership valuable.”

As a strong believer in collaborative working, he said, “Each one of us has unique strength and talent. Only by working together we can achieve great things and make a huge difference. Rotaract has such a healthy part to play in the growth of Rotary. Ultimately whether you belong to a Rotaract or a Rotary club, we all have one common goal — to transform the world and make it a more peaceful place for our generation and the generations after. I need you to help me achieve my dream to make this world a better place for all of us which I am sure is the dream of each one of you too.”

Institute convenor RID Raju Subramanian reaffirmed the president’s thoughts, saying, “There is no difference between Rotaract and Rotary. We are one organisation.” Pondering over the declining Rotaract membership, he urged the district leaders to share with him the challenges they face in making Rotaract grow. “I want each of you to put your mind and heart into it to see that Rotaract becomes vibrant and happening in our part of the world. Highlight the benefits you enjoy being in this prestigious organisation,” he said.

The registration fees for the institute and accommodation bills have all been waived for the Rotaractors. “You are part of us. We want to give you a peek into the world-class experience



RI Director Raju Subramanian, TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya and Rotaract Chair Abhinandan Shetty with Rotaract district leaders at the Rotary zone institute. Host district DRR Arun Teja is on the right.

you would get being in Rotary, and the lessons you will take from here is invaluable,” said Subramanian.

TRF vice-chair Bharat Pandya explained about Foundation grants and Programs of Scale. As part of the *Elevate Rotaract* policy Rotaract clubs can now work with Rotary clubs on global grant projects, and receive funding from district grants through a Rotary club. “Accountability and stewardship are very important. You must account for every paisa spent,” he reiterated.

Beginning July 2022, institution-based Rotaract clubs pay \$5 and community-based clubs pay \$8 to RI as per capita dues. To combat fall in membership due to resistance to paying Rotaract dues, institute chair K P Nagesh suggested that the parent Rotary club can pay 50 per cent dues for institution-based clubs, 25 per cent can be borne by the college/university and the Rotaractor can pay 25 per cent,



RI President Gordon McNally interacting with a Rotaractor. Institute Chair K P Nagesh is seen in the centre.

which is just \$1 or ₹80. “Rotaractors of community-based Rotaract clubs can afford the cost as they are in comfortable careers,” he said.

The Rotaract sessions were moderated by PDRR Rajith Menon of RID 3141, and was led by Rotaract chair PDG Abhinandan Shetty. ■

Rotary inks pact with insurance firm

Team Rotary News



From L: RI Directors Anirudha Roychowdhury and Raju Subramanian, and insurance broking company RFL’s representative Anurag Srivatsav, after signing the MoU.

An MoU was signed between Rotary India and insurance broking company RFL at the zone institute in Bengaluru to facilitate the flow of funds every time Rotarians, or their references, purchase an insurance policy, whether it is for general, health or motor cover.

The incentives that would usually go to brokers will now flow to the Rotary club or its trust. The partnership with RFL will ensure a steady flow of funds as Rotarians, and their references, engage with the insurance company. RI directors Raju Subramanian and Anirudha Roychowdhury signed the agreement with RFL representative Anurag Srivatsav in the presence of RI President Gordon McNally. The funds that will accrue to the clubs through this MoU can be used to do service projects and community initiatives.

Also, Rotary clubs were urged to appoint an individual, preferably a board director, to facilitate communication between the club and RFL. ■

RI President visits Chandigarh

Rasheeda Bhagat

Thank you for saving 777 lives,” said RI President Gordon McNally to the members of the Rotary Club of Chandigarh, RID 3080, as he visited Fortis Hospital in Mohali, which has been partnering with the club since 1991 in the *Rotary Heartline* project under which free heart surgeries are done. Till date, this project has saved 777 precious lives by doing cardiac surgery on children with heart problems. “I would say you have not just saved 777 lives... you have actually given new lives to 777 children, a commendable feat,” he said.

Accompanied by his spouse Heather, PRIP Rajendra Saboo, RID 3080 DG Arun Mongia, club president Anil Chadda, director of community service Teena Virk and chairman of the Heartline project A P Singh, the RI president met 8-year-old Anu from Mohali district, whose successful heart surgery was done at this hospital by Dr T S Mahant only the previous day. He also met 16-year-old Daphne from Zimbabwe, who had arrived a day earlier with her mother for her second corrective surgery. She had been operated earlier in 2016 at the age of nine, when she

was informed that she would require a corrective surgery later, which has now been done.

McNally also met Dr Mahant and his team of cardiologists and thanked them for the yeoman service they were doing in saving lives of so many children and presented a citation to Fortis Hospital on behalf of RC Chandigarh, acknowledging its support for the Heartline project. Teena Virk gave an overview of the project. Later McNally also met six children who were operated upon earlier under this project and their parents. Heather distributed gift hampers to the children.



RI President Gordon McNally and Heather visit young Daphne, a patient from Zimbabwe, at the Fortis Hospital in Mohali. Also seen are RC Chandigarh president Anil Chadda, DG Arun Mongia and PRIP Rajendra Saboo.

At a banquet hosted by PRIP Saboo and his spouse Usha, and another TRF dinner, \$93,000 were donated to The Rotary Foundation. “It was heartening to witness the collective commitment of these individuals towards TRF. Also, during the dinner, PDG Subash Garg from RC Yamunanagar was felicitated for sponsoring the first human milk bank in Punjab, which was inaugurated by President McNally earlier in the day at the B R Ambedkar State Institute of Medical Sciences, Mohali,” said RC Chandigarh president Anil Chadda.

McNally and Heather also visited the Rotary Vidya Sadan and met 100 students from the school. Established in 1987 by Rtn Major B M Singh, the institute gives education to underprivileged children. The facility, including a



President McNally and Heather visit the club’s vocational training centre. Also seen: PDG Praveen Goyal, Chadda, DG Mongia, vocational services’ director Sartaj Lamba and Basu Goyal.

crèche, provides free service, running primary classes with English, Math, Hindi, and other subjects. A computer room with six stations has been added.

Chadda added that with over 200 students “enrolled in our school, it provides a supportive learning environment, and on special occasions such as Independence Day and Republic Day celebrations, several Rotarians from our club visit the school, so we give not only financial support through scholarships, and so on, but also our time, truly reflecting Rotary’s commitment to genuine community service.”

He added that during the presidential visit, students presented handmade cards, and the president was deeply moved by the quote, ‘Education is a key to the golden door,’ which he took with him as a handwritten note from a child.

A highlight of President McNally’s visit to Chandigarh and Mohali was the inauguration of the

first human milk bank (Comprehensive Lactation Management Centre) at the BR Ambedkar State Institute of Medical Sciences, Mohali, set up by RC Chandigarh. PRIP Saboo, Dr Bhavneet Bharti, principal director of the institute, accompanied him.

The RI president congratulated the club members for the “landmark initiative that underscores the commitment of Rotary to advancing maternal and infant healthcare, and ensuring the well-being of newborns and infants in the region.” Chadda said this bank will have “an active engagement with the community, and offer support to mothers, while promoting awareness about the importance of breast milk for the baby’s optimum nourishment and will play a vital role in spreading awareness about the importance of human milk donation.”

Dr Bhavneet provided an insight into the state-of-the-art facility and assured that advanced technology and proper protocol will be followed to “guarantee the highest standards of safety and quality in storing and



giving out the milk. The facility will collect, screen, process and dispense breast milk for the needy babies.” At a time 500 units of milk can be stored at this facility which will play a crucial role in saving the lives of premature babies or those with specific medical conditions that prevent them from receiving their mother’s milk.

“The director also briefed the RI president that the centre will be manned by lactation consultants having expertise in managing complex breastfeeding issues. It will also act as a dedicated centre to support and promote breastfeeding to improve survival of infants, besides acting as a teaching, training and demonstration site for setting up other milk banks. The latest equipment required for ensuring the availability of safe human milk has been given at this hospital at a total cost of ₹1.1 crore by the Punjab government,” Chadda said.

He added that to set up the milk bank club members donated over ₹5 lakh and Rtn Subash Garg’s company Ruchira Papers donated ₹31 lakh as CSR contribution.

During the RI president’s visit to the various projects undertaken by RC Chandigarh, which was set up in 1955 and has 161 members, rich tributes were paid to PRIP Saboo, for the “crucial and pivotal role he has played in bringing this club to the highest standards and giving us the guidance to take up significant projects,” said club member and PDG Praveen Goyal, who played a leading role in organising the RI president’s visit to the city.

The RI president and Heather were also taken around the vocational training centre established





Clockwise from top left: President McInally and Heather meet children at the Rotary Vidya Sadan; At the human milk bank; President McInally and Heather with Basu and PDG Praveen Goyal, PRIP Saboo and Chadda, at the Rotary Peace Monument; Students present their paintings to President McInally and Heather. Also seen are (from L) Kulbir Dogra, Gurvinder Sagoo, Chadda, and Charu and DG Mongia; President McInally and Heather at the computer station at the school. PDG Madhukar Malhotra, PRIP Saboo, DG Mongia and Chadda are also in the picture.



at the Rotary House where they were received by the vocational services' director Sartaj Lamba.

The services offered here include courses in computer technology, stitching and tailoring, beauty care and gardening. They were accompanied by PRIP Saboo, DG Arun and Charu Mongia, PDG Goyal and Basu Goyal, PDG Madhukar Malhotra, and members of the club.

The tour started with the classes in beauty care, where the students applied mehndi on the palms of Heather McInally, and adorned her with bangles and a bindi. "The nail art designs being taught here captivated both the visitors. They also visited the computer classes, where the president initiated a new batch for Tally learning. The tailoring classes proved fascinating, as the president sat at a machine, attempting to grasp the intricacies of pedal machines. Success stories of women who had excelled at the vocational courses and set up their own enterprises were shared. About 10,000 trainees have benefitted from the vocational courses in the past 33 years," said PDG Madhukar Malhotra. A batch of 10 women, who were passing out, received Singer sewing machines sponsored by club member BB Goel.

President McInally was also taken around the Rotary Blood Bank, where its history and the crucial role played by PRIP Saboo in establishing it was explained to him.

At one of the meetings DG Arun Mongia enumerated major community welfare initiatives being undertaken by RID 3080. PDG Madhuakar Malhotra was the chair of the organising committee which arranged the presidential visit. ■

Villagers welcome Raj Khankari, past president of RC Maple Grove, Minnesota, USA.





Thane Rotarians conserve/reach water to 33 villages

Rasheeda Bhagat

Thanks to a long-standing, sustained partnership between the Rotary Clubs of Thana West, (RID 3142) and Maple Grove, Minnesota, US (RID 5950), a clutch of 33 villages in the talukas of Jawahar, Mokhada and Vikramgad, about 125km from Thane, Mumbai, have water for both irrigating their fields and household use.

Giving details of this project which has been addressing Rotary's multiple areas of focus such as water, health, sanitation and education, past president of the club Sriram Seshan said the club members were happy that their sustained efforts over four years have provided access to water to the people of 33 villages.

"We chose villages with a tribal population as they were facing multiple water problems because some of their needs were already being addressed by Pragati Prathisthan, an NGO working in this region for 50 years, so it understands local needs."

He explains that the 100 villages in this region get good monsoon rain, but due to the hilly terrain, the water flows away and the wells and streams go dry by March every year. "The farmers have small landholding, and lack of water in the summer months restricts their farming,

allowing one kharif crop which is rice and some millets."

When there is no water to irrigate their farms, the farmers migrate to the nearby urban areas along with their entire families in search of menial jobs. "This affects the education of their children and creates unstable family conditions."

Even when water is available in the wells during and immediately after the monsoon season, the wells are far away and to fetch water for their daily household chores and personal use, the women had to trudge 1–2km over a hilly terrain. Hence RC Thana West, some other clubs in Thane and RC Maple Grove came together to alleviate the villagers' misery.

Each village has a zilla parishad school and some villages also have an ashram shala, a day school, run with help of NGOs. The zilla schools have classes till 8th, and after that the students have to find a high school in nearby villages. The cheerful news he gives me is that "many students not only go to a high school in a nearby village, but several of them graduate too. Luckily Pragati

Prathistan's forte is education, health-care and water," he adds.

The partnership between the two RI districts started when in 2019 Raj Khankari was the president-elect of RC Maple Grove and "wanted to do an international project. I was introduced to Shrirang Deshpande from RC Thana West through our sisters who are close friends". As finding a good international partner to execute Rotary projects is always a challenge due to lack of contacts in unfamiliar geographical locations, we "began a collaboration which has grown strong over the last four years through six global grants and one small international district grant."

Giving details of the projects done, RC Thana West president Shrirang Deshpande says the Rotarians concentrated on two types of check dams. The first ones are small check dams that were constructed on the streams and small rivers to hold the water and stop it flowing away to ensure year-long availability of water.

The second type is a sub-surface check dam to serve the wells used by the small landholding farmers. These get water through subsoil streams that

go dry in summer. The solution found, thanks to the expertise of one of their partners, Umesh Mundle, trustee of the Vasundhara Foundation, was to construct a concrete wall right down to the rocky layers existing below the ground surface, thus arresting the flowing away of water brought by underground water streams.

These initiatives have ensured water availability throughout the year and has enabled farmers to take additional crops and/or cash crops like vegetables and fruits. Most important,

their migration to nearby cities in summer months to take up menial jobs has been prevented and this project has improved the overall socioeconomic condition of the villagers, he adds.

A small difference in the concept of check dam and sub check dam is that while a check dam holds water in the water body, the sub check dam prevents rainwater from running away, thus recharging the groundwater and increasing water levels in nearby wells used by farmers for irrigation. This initiative now sees their water needs

We began a collaboration which has grown strong over the last four years through six global grants and one small international district grant.

Raj Khankari
past president
RC Maple Grove



being met during the hitherto difficult summer months.

The additional benefit is that with migration arrested, children can continue their schooling without disruption, says Seshan. On the day we have this conversation for this article, he updates me on the latest water situation. “Last week we completed one of the water conservation projects, and monitored the water levels, only to find that in just one day... only 24 hours... the water level in a nearby well had increased by 11 inches!”

To put an end to the arduous task of fetching water physically from long distances and help women, the Rotarians have brought water to the doorstep of their homes. “Solar powered pumps were provided to bring water close to the village so that it can be stored in large tanks. This water is then filtered and distributed to several points to make clean drinking water available at the village homes,” says Deshpande.

This initiative has proved to be a great boon to the women and teenaged girls; “the women are now able to utilise the time for helping in the farms or supplement the family income. The girls now attend school regularly and concentrate on their studies. Also, due to the availability of clean drinking water, the general health of the villagers has improved significantly,” he adds.

Now with more water being available, these small farmers plan to grow a wider variety of vegetables and also flowers. And there are also plans to

RC Thana West members Prasad Borde, Harshad Mengle and Kedar Vidwans with representatives of Oikos Water Management at a completed check dam at Mokhada.



connect their produce to the much bigger Mumbai wholesale market some 200km away. Seshan explains that the NGO Pragati Prathistan has been monitoring the progress of the projects by the clubs (three other clubs from Thane — RCs Thane Lakecity, Thane Downtown and Thane are also partnering in this water project) and ensures that small maintenance work such as repair of solar pumps, taps or pipeline is done in a timely manner. Each village has a designated account for this maintenance with funds raised by the villagers themselves and the gram panchayats are also on board.

Other voluntary organisations partnering with Rotary in this project are the Blossom Charitable Trust, Shabari Seva Sangh and Gramseva Pratishtan.

During last four years, under this partnership with the US district and a few clubs in Thane, two check dams, 15 sub surface dams and water distribution systems have been constructed. This work has benefitted 11,700 people in 2,099 families in 33 villages.

Seshan explains that in this project, till now four grants have been done; and from 2019, the amount has been going up... from \$30,000 initially to two grants of \$79,000 and \$82,500 in 2020–21 (when he was club president), \$92,000 in 2021–22, \$99,250 in 2022–23, and the next one, which is nearing finalisation will be for \$122,000.

“Even while concentrating on water, for the next grant we are expanding the project scope to include community and economic development.” These projects, he adds, apart from providing water, have also covered literacy and education, healthcare and sanitation, and enhancing livelihoods.

Next the plan is to replace the small plastic pumps which are not





Above: Sriram Seshan, Khankari, Pragati Pratishtan CEO Virendra Champaneker and club president Shirang Deshpande with villagers after inaugurating a sub surface bund in a village.



environmentally friendly that several farmers use, with solar-powered pumps of 5–7.5hp capacity. These will be given to nearly 25 farms, and in these farms drip irrigation will be used.

In October 2023, Khankari came down to India to inaugurate two check dams in two villages where water had been provided at the doorstep of the villagers, bringing huge relief to the women. He also visited the three sub surface dams completed in the earlier years. He inaugurated three water-at-the-doorstep systems in Cherichapada village in Jawahar taluka and Kumbhipada and Nimanipada in Vikramgad taluka.

Khankari says part of the purpose of his India trip was to visit some of the Adivasi villages “and meet the villagers to confirm that they were getting the benefits from our projects. We also visited a site for an upcoming project.” Four years ago, he had met several women from Ramvadi village, including the woman sarpanch to confirm that

there was a need for a water distribution system at their doorstep.

“We met the same woman sarpanch this time. When I asked her if they were happy with the project, the happiness on her face was heartwarming. I also asked her if the girls who were spending a lot of their time in getting water for their families, were going to school now. Her answer was an emphatic yes and that was quite rewarding for me. Such interaction gives us Rotarians more energy and encouragement to do more work,” he told *Rotary News*.

It is challenging to raise funds, he says, but the final outcome is satisfying. And now, with technology allowing the donors to see for themselves visual images of what their contribution has achieved, the trust is established.

“But of course an actual visit is always more convincing. Clubs and members from my district have been very open and generous over the last four years, and some of them visited the project sites with me last year. Their first-hand experience tremendously helped the cause!”



PDG Kailash Jethani (centre) and Khankari (R), along with Rotarians, at a village.

Khankari interacting with villagers in Mokhada.



He is really happy that his quest for “finding reliable and trustworthy partners in the host country, always a challenge for international partners” has met with success. “I have been truly fortunate in finding the clubs of District 3142 and its members; truly dedicated members such as Sriram Seshan. Through RC Thana West, we have also developed relationships with the Rotary clubs of Thane, Thane Uptown, Thane Downtown and Thane Premium.” During the pandemic too they had done a GG where the roles were reversed — RID 3142 was the international partner and RC Maple Grove was the host club. Under this GG PPEs had been given to over 400 health clinics in Minnesota, US.

He adds that he now considers some of the Indian Rotarians his “personal friends. I wonder if this is what Paul Harris had in mind when he founded Rotary! We have successfully completed four additional GGs through collaboration with other clubs of District 3142 too.”



Borde, Deshpande, Khankari, Seshan, Vidwans and Mengle visit a water distribution project at Mokhada.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Partners' support in Rotary leadership

Jaishree

Thank you for the commitment you make as partners of Rotarians serving as district governors. It is a wonderful journey you are all embarking on. It will be a tiring journey at times, but ultimately, a fulfilling one," said RI President Gordon McNally to the spouses of the incoming district leaders at the Rotary zone institute.

Heather, he said, "has been a wonderful partner for almost 40 years I have been in Rotary and particularly excellent during the last 18 months since I became president-elect, and subsequently RI president. It has not always been easy for her and I know that. I recognise the support she has given me and I am very grateful for that." On Feb 9, McNally will be completing 40 years in Rotary. As a practice, the RI president sends a congratulatory mail to Rotarians completing milestones of service in Rotary. "It will be the first time when I will draft a letter to myself and I will be glad to receive it in my mailbox," he jocularly observed.

Recognising the role of a supportive partner, he said, "It's about being there for them, encouraging them and giving honest opinions so that they shine as good leaders."

The partners' session for the spouses of DGEs and DGNs was chaired by Vidhya Subramanian and moderated by Roopa Hariani and Sujata Madhav Chandran. Heather McNally, Madhavi Pandya, Vanathi Ravindran and Vinita Venkatesh led the sessions, fostering bonds through fun games and shared experiences.

Congratulating his spouse Vidhya, institute convenor RID Raju Subramanian said, "From whatever reports I've heard, you've done well and I know you always will." Stressing on being passionate about and enjoying one's work, he recalled the year when Vidhya was president of his home club. "I was ordered by Vidhya to be my club's sergeant-at-arms and I dutifully said yes. Whatever we do, we must do it with passion. Only then we can be successful. There is no organisation that can match ours for the service that we

do and the lives we touch. We are part of an international organisation and each of you play a big role in supporting your spouses," he said.

Underscoring the need to be participative at the International Assembly, the RI director said, "Language should never be an issue. Do not feel shy to speak. Everyone has a unique talent. Your non-participation will prevent bringing out the best out of you."

Observing that the partners' programme was "elevating every year," institute co-convenor RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury said, "That shows the significance of the partners who are the wind beneath the wings of every Rotarian. They bring a huge energy for the team."

Shipra Roychowdhury imparted some invaluable advice to the spouses. "Your involvement in the service projects in your district will inspire other Rotarians to get involved in the spirit of service and volunteer for projects. Enjoy your role as the first lady; if you love what you do then it will not seem like a task. Listen to what others say. It will add value to your relationship building. Encourage feedback as it helps in improving leadership skills of your partner."

Sharing her experiences as first lady when Roychowdhury was DG, she said that she would maintain a family calendar so that they did not miss

family occasions such as birthdays, anniversaries, etc. She recalled how she would fill in for him, attending family events and their children's school events. She also actively participated in Rotary programmes. "That's how I learnt more about Rotary and would talk about its good work with pride wherever I went. I would even share my ideas at some of the district events," she said. ■



Vidhya Subramanian (seated right) and Michelle (seated left), spouse of RID Jeremy Hurst, with the spouses of incoming Rotary leaders. Event moderator Roopa Hariani is seen on the right.

A Rotary Mithai Mission for our soldiers

Rajendra Saboo

For four consecutive years, Rotarians have rallied funds to send Diwali sweets for Indian jawans. Notably, in 2020, 2,000kg of sweets were sent during Gurburab amidst the challenges of the pandemic.

Sometimes chance meetings can lead to major initiatives. It was one such encounter that led to the much-feted Mithai Mission of the Rotary Club of Chandigarh, RID 3080. My better-half Usha was travelling to the national capital on the Delhi-Chandigarh Shatabdi Express in 2016 when she met this dashing young army officer.

The affable young man who wore a big smile struck a conversation with Usha. Intrigued, she inquired about the challenges faced by army personnel.

The officer shared the daily hazards, the dangers encountered at every step, and the big sacrifices routinely made by jawans and their families to safeguard the nation. It was from him that Usha learnt about the vagaries of

army life. She discovered that a jawan posted on the high reaches such as the Siachen might receive just one or two buckets of water for personal needs, obtained by melting snow over kerosene. Also, the majority of his food was dehydrated and packed, a far cry from our delicious daily meals.

This encounter planted a seed in Usha's mind for a mithai mission.



PRIP Rajendra Saboo and Usha in conversation with Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh UT, Banwarilal Purohit (R).



Usha Saboo with PDG Kamal Bedi (seated). Also seen are Jagmohan Garg, Kamal Sharma, PDG Jitendra Dhingra and Ritu, AP Singh, Neeru Malhotra, PDGs Praveen Goyal and Yoginder Diwan, and Harjit Singh.

With Diwali approaching, we decided to send mithai boxes to the soldiers as a mark of our gratitude.

In the first consignment, the Rotary Club of Chandigarh sent 4,500 carefully selected boxes of sweets to our Indian soldiers stationed in areas like Leh/Siachen during Diwali, where courageous jawans endure challenging conditions. These boxes, filled with non-perishable treats from a renowned shop, were loaded onto army trucks at the Rotary House. The first consignment of 2,000 boxes was airborne, with Member of Parliament Kiron Kher flagging off the mission.

Each box carried a heartfelt message, *Aap Hain Toh Hum Hain*, symbolising gratitude and solidarity. The response we received from the soldiers was equally heartwarming: “We are for you,” they responded.

Since then, this compassionate initiative has grown, earning the Rotary Club of Chandigarh the Best Project Award in June 2017. Usha’s vision is simple yet profound — to extend our gratitude to those who give their all

for our safety. As Diwali approaches, the focus remains on celebrating not just the festival but also expressing appreciation for the soldiers, who spend the occasion away from their families.

Usha highlighted, “They give their lives for us; we should at least express our thanks to them during Diwali.”

This noble endeavour drew national attention in 2017 when famous actor Amitabh Bachchan thanked the Rotarians for celebrating Diwali beyond their families with the soldiers during his show *Kaun Banega Crorepati*.

In 2018, 5,000 boxes from RI District 3080, covering Chandigarh, Punjab, Haryana, Himachal, Uttarakhand and UP, were sent to the soldiers. The batch of 3,000 boxes was flagged off by then Governor VP Singh Badnore. Our Rotary club, with over 1,700 boxes, played a pivotal role in this consignment.

For four consecutive years, Rotarians have rallied funds to send Diwali sweets for Indian jawans. Notably, in 2020, 2,000kg of sweets were sent during Gurpurab amidst the challenges of the pandemic.

2021 witnessed an overwhelming participation from Rotarians beyond Chandigarh, who sent 6,000 boxes of sweets. Punjab Governor Banwarilal Purohit flagged off the trucks from the Raj Bhavan.

In 2022, under Rotary District Governor VP Kalta, the tradition continued, and in November 2023, 6,000 boxes were flagged off by the Governor of Punjab and Administrator of Chandigarh UT.

Looking ahead, our club plans to extend its compassionate efforts to Naval bases in Kochi, Visakhapatnam, and Porbandar, recognising the sacrifices made by those at sea. Rotarians, irrespective of religion, always unite to support our armed forces during various festivals.

These activities embody timeless values and unwavering integrity, serving as an expression of our deep admiration for the armed forces, and their families.

The writer is a past president of Rotary International

This article first appeared in *The Indian Express*.

Simply irresistible

Diana Schoberg

President-elect Stephanie Urchick sees Rotary's Action Plan as key to a vibrant future.

It's late October at One Rotary Center, one of those autumn days that feels like summer, a last blast of warmth before the Chicago-area weather abruptly shifts. In less than a week, on Halloween, nearly an inch of snow will fall. Luckily, Rotary President-elect Stephanie Urchick isn't one to wither in the face of change. Instead, she embraces it. On the bookshelf in her office at the Rotary headquarters, among the club directories and banners, the commemorative plates and plaques, and — surprise! — even some real books, there is a wooden sign adorned with multicoloured leaves that reads, "Fall is proof that change is beautiful."

"It's the same reason I like butterflies," explains Urchick. "They start out in little cocoons and don't look like much, but then they burst out and become a beautiful creature".

Urchick, who wears an Action Plan pin this day on her black quilted jacket, champions the Rotary plan as a guide for Rotary clubs hoping to undergo a similar metamorphosis. "I'm all about helping clubs look for ways to change their culture so they become simply irresistible," she says. "If you look at our worldwide numbers, there's something like 150,000 people who come into Rotary every year, but there are 160,000 who leave. What that says to me is that some people are not finding value in their club experience. They're not really leaving Rotary; they're leaving a Rotary

club. We need to get clubs to examine what's happening."

A member of the Rotary Club of McMurray, Pennsylvania, Urchick joined Rotary in 1991 and was quickly drawn to the work of The Rotary Foundation. As a new member, she heard about Rotary's work to eradicate polio and became intrigued. She became the Foundation chair for her club and then for her district. Later, at the zone level, she served as a regional Rotary Foundation coordinator, focusing on fund development, and in 2012–14, she was a Rotary Foundation trustee at the international level. "There are so many great things that Rotary clubs do, and much of it is because they have worked through the Foundation," she says.

As fall teetered between summer and winter, Urchick sat down with Rotary magazine senior staff writer Diana Schoberg to talk about her past and Rotary's future.

You'll be the second woman to serve as president of Rotary. Should we even be making that distinction anymore?

From my perspective, no. It's about being the best leader for the time. However, I also recognise that people, especially women, will

**RI President Elect
Stephanie Urchick**



look to the position of Rotary president, and if they see a woman, they'll say, "Wow, if that's somebody who could do it, maybe I could do it too."

I'll also be one of only a few Rotary presidents who have been single while in office. Lots of people come up to me and say, "I'm single too, and it's so great that you're in the position." To me, having a spouse does not determine whether you're qualified for this role. But again, it does mean a lot to people to see someone in this position who looks like them or who has the same life status as they do.

It's like another element of diversity. Do you think the view of diversity at Rotary has shifted over the past few years?

Diversity has always been one of our core values. But I think the way we've measured diversity has definitely changed. Today it means so much more than it did 40 years ago when we were an all-male organisation. For instance, we now ask people to look at their community and see if their Rotary club mirrors that community. That could mean all kinds of things. It could be age; it could be gender; it could be religion or political affiliation. It could include things like a different perspective, the fact that people think differently. If your club mirrors the community, then you really have a handle on the future. And if it doesn't, you have an opportunity.

You became a Rotary member in 1991, shortly after women

were allowed to join. Why did you join and why did you stay?

Well, I was recently divorced. And when you are married, you tend to do a lot of things together. You go out to dinner together, you go on vacation together, and so on. I suddenly didn't have that. Much like Rotary founder Paul Harris, I was looking for ways to meet new people. A woman walked into my office and asked me about going to a Rotary club meeting with her. I didn't know anything about Rotary, but when she talked about the service and the internationality, I got interested. So I went, and I ended up joining.

Originally for me, it was about the fellowship. I wanted to meet new people. And I did; I met all kinds of people. But I also immediately got involved in service activities. By the fourth meeting, I was doing the newsletter, so I was already doing club service. That club was active in Rotary Youth Exchange and Group Study Exchange and Rotary Foundation grants. It was all amazing to me. So like most people, it was the service that kept me engaged in Rotary.

Why did you want to become Rotary president — and what makes you the right leader for the organisation right now?

Becoming Rotary president was never really on my radar screen. I've served Rotary in so many different ways over the 30-plus years I've been a member. A special opportunity that really shaped my thinking was chairing the Strategic Planning Committee. We had the chance to look at the organisation's strengths and weaknesses and reach out to the Rotary and non-Rotary world to get information about what people thought would move us into a thriving future.

Rotary had had the same meeting model for decades. We met four

Life gives you so many opportunities. Say yes to them. You'll have time to figure out what to do next.

times a month; we rang the bell; we took attendance, etc. Clearly the world had changed, but we hadn't. We really needed to catch up! Now we have e-clubs and passport clubs and satellite clubs and corporate clubs, all different opportunities for people to come into Rotary and to serve.

I started to look at all of that, and I realised that we are positioned to move into a thriving future. That's what really propelled me to put my name forward. I truly believe that if Rotary districts and clubs use the Action Plan, we can thrive. It's a future where there are many more Rotary members involved in service and fellowship.

What skills from your past professional life will you lean on as president?

I have a background in three different fields. I sang with a band when I was in college and for a few years after that. I had the experience of getting on stage and inspiring people, getting them to dance and have fun. It may sound simple, but it really did develop a set of skills. My second career was in higher education. I worked in college and university settings. For much of that time, I was helping students find careers and jobs. It was both fulfilling and eye-opening. My third career was as a self-employed person at my

consulting and business development firm. I did a little bit of training and a whole lot of business development. I don't think there's any skill that we leave behind. They all become part of your package.

What was your band name?

The Harmonisers.

Will there be any Harmonisers music playing as you arrive onstage at any events?

No, I don't think so. I hope they'll be playing Robert Palmer's "Simply Irresistible."

You used that phrase earlier: "simply irresistible." Is there a significance to it?

That's what I want Rotary to be: simply irresistible. I'm hoping Rotary and Rotaract clubs will be simply irresistible to community members who have a heart for service and fellowship. They will use the Action Plan to assess where they are and figure out where they need to go. Hopefully the outcome is clubs that are more attractive and will retain more people.

Every club is different. There's not a cookbook that we can give to clubs and say, "Do this and you're going to be fine." Every club develops its own culture. Country to country, Rotary is done differently. You can have Rotary clubs in the same district that are very different. We need every club to take a moment, do an assessment, and look at the four priorities of the Action Plan. Then they must ask themselves, Is there something we can do a little differently, or are we already doing the best we can in this or that category? If you're already irresistible, then stay that way. But we have to attract people to our existing clubs, and we have to start new clubs. That's the way to grow Rotary and to have a future.

What's your theme, and how did you come up with it?

It's simply *The Magic of Rotary*. People can put any verb they want in front of it. Believe in the magic of Rotary. Spread the magic of Rotary. Build on the magic of Rotary. Celebrate the magic of Rotary. There are all kinds of words that we can use.

It came from a visit to the Dominican Republic. We were helping install a water filter in a home where a grandmother, a mother, and three little boys lived. We assembled the water filter and then put dirty water in it so that the family could see that it came out clean. The women learned how to use the filter, and we were getting ready to leave

My theme is simply *The Magic of Rotary*. People can put any verb they want in front of it.

Believe in the magic of Rotary.

Spread the magic of Rotary.

There are all kinds of words

that we can use.

when one of the children grabbed my sleeve and said, "Show me that magic again." That caught me, and I thought: It is magic. We're helping create a change in their lives.

What will be your priorities as president, and why did you choose them?

Advancing the Action Plan to grow membership is at the top of my list. I love this organisation, just like every member of Rotary whom I meet. I want Rotary to have a future.

My second priority is healing a divided world through Positive Peace. There are several ways to get involved. If everyone would live The Four-Way

Test instead of just reciting it, we would have a more peaceful world. I hope clubs will rally around The Four-Way Test and use it in creative ways. And there is the peace pole project: Clubs can have peace poles erected in their local park, town square, or college campus. The message of peace on the poles is a visible sign to the community that Rotary is a peacebuilding organisation. Additionally, Rotary has a Positive Peace Academy, which is an online activity. Any Rotary member or non-Rotary member can take the time to go through that. And our Rotary Peace Centers are powerful activators in changing lives. We're opening a new peace centre in the Middle East, in Istanbul. In February 2025, we will have a peace conference at that location.

My final priority will be continuity. That means two things: all of us in leadership positions working with our predecessors and those who follow us. It also means looking at the things that clubs have rallied around and things that have taken root. Just because a president leaves office doesn't mean that you should drop a successful programme. What would have happened if Rotary had abandoned its efforts to eradicate polio after Clem Renouf or James Bomar were no longer president?

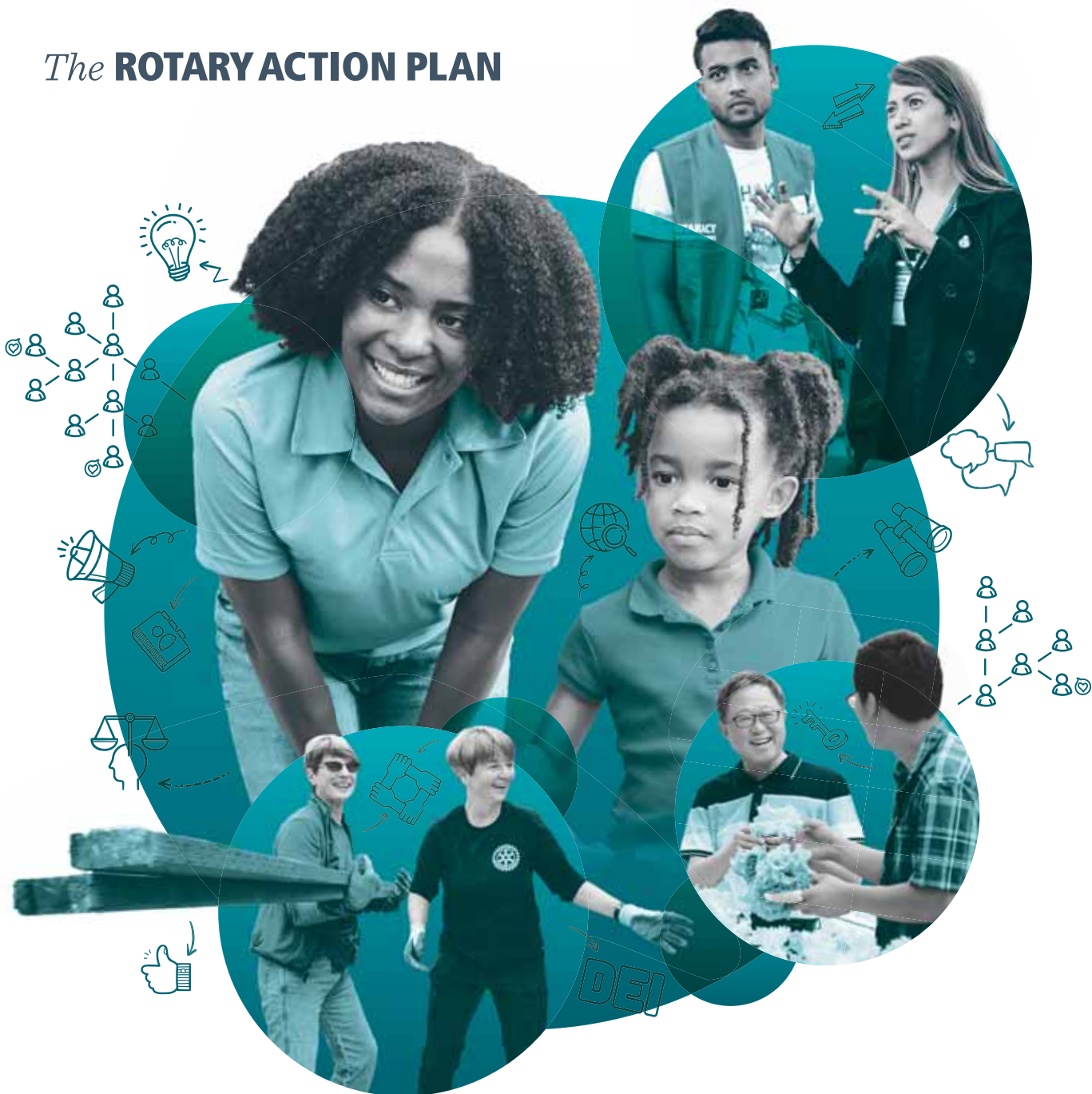
One of your favourite mantras is "life is more interesting on the other side of yes." Can you talk about that?

Usually what I tell people is: "Say yes, and then just figure it out." "Hey, do you want to be newsletter editor?" "Yes." "Hey, do you want to be president?" "Yes." "Hey, do you want to do this?" "Yes." The only time I say no is if I follow it up with the word "problem". No problem. Life gives you so many opportunities. Say yes to them. You'll have time to figure out what to do next.

Picture: Lucy Hewett

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The **ROTARY ACTION PLAN**



Is your club looking for new ways to connect with your community?
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The Magic of Rotary

theme for 2024–25

Etelka Lehoczky

Rotary International President-elect Stephanie Urchick announced that the 2024–25 presidential theme is *The Magic of Rotary* and called on members to recognise and amplify the organisation's power to save lives.

“Don't misunderstand me — we are not going to end polio or bring peace to the world by waving a wand and saying some funny words,” Urchick told incoming district governors at the Rotary International Assembly on Jan 8. “It's up to you. You create the magic with every project completed, every dollar donated and every new member.”

Urchick, a member of RC McMurray, Pennsylvania, USA, said she saw the magic of Rotary on display when she was helping install water filters in the Dominican Republic. Two boys were watching as dirty water entered the filter, then ran out clean at the other end.

“One of the boys grabbed my sleeve and said, ‘Show me the magic again,’” she said. “Obviously, the water filter wasn't magic. We worked hard to transport those filters, install them, and work with community leaders in the area to maintain them. But those boys knew that easy access to clean water would change their lives.

Knowing that I played a small part in that certainly changed my life.”

Prioritising peace

Urchick urged members to champion Rotary's Action Plan, find a balance between continuity and change, and work for peace. She plans to host a presidential peace conference in 2025 with the theme “Healing in a divided world”.

Rotary has a long history of promoting peace through its network of peace centres, Urchick noted. Located at top universities around the globe, the centres have trained nearly 1,800 peace fellows who are now working in



RI President Elect Stephanie Urchick announcing the 2024–25 Rotary theme at the International Assembly held at Orlando, Florida.

more than 140 countries. The newest centre, located at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul, Turkey, will welcome its first class of fellows in early 2025.

“The Rotary Peace Fellowship began more than 20 years ago to equip peace and development professionals from communities around the world to become effective catalysts for ending and preventing conflicts,” Urchick said. “This conference will focus on Rotary’s peace efforts and provide opportunities to learn together.”

In addition to emphasising peace-building, Urchick reiterated Rotary’s commitment to eradicating polio. She urged the incoming governors to join or initiate PolioPlus Societies in their districts and do all they can to help end the disease.

“Contact elected officials and other government leaders. Remind

them that polio is still a threat. Push them to support polio eradication,” she said. “Polio remains our top priority and requires our fullest commitment, but there is so much important work to do.”

Balancing continuity and change

Urchick also underscored the necessity of balancing continuity and change, both of which animate Rotary’s Action Plan. “The plan is all about building on our best ideas, not abandoning them,” she said. “We face a tough balancing act. We must change ourselves and stay true to who we are.” She asked the governors to do whatever is needed to make the club experience irresistible to members.

“That might mean changing how things are done in your district,” she said. “If your district has been doing

things one way for 50 years, it’s probably time to reassess. If a club in your district isn’t active or is losing members, maybe it’s time to start a new club that fits better with the community. Just because a club or district hasn’t changed in a while doesn’t mean no one is hungry for change.”

One way to make positive change, she said, is to embrace the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion within clubs. “I hope you’ll join me in opening your arms to future people of action, even if — and in some cases, especially if — they don’t look or act like the typical member of your local club,” she said. “With DEI, it is easier to be united in a common purpose. It’s in those moments when we are committed and focused that we are the most effective and relevant.”

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From RI South Asia

Give online on behalf of club or club members

All club officers, such as the club president, foundation chair, membership chair, executive secretary/director, secretary and treasurer, can make online contributions on behalf of their club members through their *My Rotary* account, using their credit/debit card or Net Banking.

It is important to note that while the contribution credit is assigned to individual members, the 80G receipt is generated solely in the club leader’s name as the remitter and not in the name of individual members. For more details refer: [\[online_on_behalf_of_club_or_club_members_sao.pdf\]\(http://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/give_online_on_behalf_of_club_or_club_members_sao.pdf\)](http://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/give_</p></div><div data-bbox=)

Major Donor recognition

All individuals or couples whose combined giving has reached \$10,000, regardless of the gift designation, are being recognised as Major Donor by TRF. This recognition level can be achieved only through personal/spouse contributions and not through matching contribution by another individual, club, district, or any other entity or through recognition points. Donors can choose to receive a crystal piece and pin(s) commemorating the gift at each new recognition level. Major Donor recognition commemorate giving at these levels:

Level 1: \$10,000 to \$24,999;
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The recognition is not processed automatically. Donors need to submit the filled-in Major Donor form along with engraving instructions to Donor Services Team, RISAO. Major Donor recognitions are processed at Evanston and take 5–6 weeks-time to reach donor. Please contact Madhu Mangain (Madhu.Mangain@rotary.org) and Manju Joshi (Manju.Joshi@rotary.org) for more information.

The form can be downloaded from: http://www.highroadsolution.com/file_uploader2/files/new_major_donor_recognition_form.docx

Source: RISAO

On a unique and happy Sunday morning in December, RC Bharuch, RI District 3060, and R K Hospital, in partnership with several organisations in this Gujarat city, organised a walkathon for a group of 300 people. The title of the march was *Chalo saath kadam badhae* (Let's walk together).

Asked about the objective of the event, club president Rizwana Talkin Zamindar said, "Mental health is RI President Gordon McNally's preferred focus area this year. To be honest, I am a very grassroots person who has worked for long years with people in different areas who are facing challenges of different kinds. So when I became the president of my club this year, I decided to have such an event which would engage people and create positiveness, inclusiveness, empathy and mental wellness."

RC Bharuch brings cheer to the elderly & disabled

Rasheeda Bhagat

Also, as club president, "my dream was to work with and for the physically-and mentally-challenged people, who I like to call 'special people'. I also work with transgenders, though this event was more for persons with physical disabilities and elderly people."

The event was a resounding success thanks to the partnership the club forged with several organisations in the area of health and fitness, education, and physically-challenged. The Indian

Medical Association of Bharuch, Mansa Centre, Kalrav School, NAB, Seva Yagna Samiti, Human Welcare Foundation, Bharuch Cyclists, GJ16 Pedallers, Bharuch MTB Riders, Ankleshwar Runners & Women Runners, Bharuch Running Club and RC Bharuch Femina, all participated and helped bring in special people along with a *saathi* (companion) to either hold the hand of a blind person or push a wheelchair.

In all, 300 persons comprising Rotarians, volunteers from the partners



Participants walking hand-in-hand, and accompanied by a companion, at the walkathon.

and companions from some of the families of the elderly participated in the 1km walkathon, where even those on wheelchairs got medals after the event which lasted for one hour.

“The best part was that some fitness-conscious youngsters were very happy to bring their grandparents. They said we walk or jog daily, but they don’t get the opportunity to go out and enjoy the company of others. So this is the perfect opportunity for them. Some of them brought their grandparents on wheelchairs which they pushed,” said Rizwana.

Because of the health condition and age of many of participants, the Rotarians had thoughtfully organised several hydration points with water along the way, and an ambulance



facility was also available, but luckily not required.

On how easy or difficult it was to get so much of participation, she said that even before her year as club president began, she had a complete planner ready for her club members, listing dates, events and venues. So they had time to mobilise people. “This was a first such rally in Bharuch, with the objective to create empathy and equality among all citizens through a sport activity like a special walkathon.” Participants included blind persons, homeless adults, elderly citizens above 70, mentally-challenged children and physically-disabled persons on wheelchairs, as well as citizens with prosthetic limbs.

At the end of the event each participant was given a medal. “It was overwhelming to see them receiving the finisher medals, as we found happy and beaming faces of the participants and their *saathis*, from the NGOs or Rotary, or their families, who had walked the steps along with them, supporting them to finish the walkathon.”

The response was happy faces, but the heartrending common question was: “When will you do such an event again and give us this kind of an opportunity?”



The 'saathis' pushing wheelchairs to help the physically-challenged participate.



RC Bharuch president Rizwana Talkin Zamindar

Will her club do it again? “Well, I don’t have another such event planned, but am certainly hoping that every year our club will repeat this event,” says Rizwana.

The walkathon was flagged off by RK Hospital trustees, both Rotarians, Pankaj Hariyani and Chirag Tambedia, and Menopause Society chair Dr Bhavna Sheth. The different government schemes that exist for the benefit of the physically and mentally challenged were explained to all the participants. Refreshments were served.

RYLA for the disabled

Rizwana added, that in September, she had organised a RYLA for two schools from Bharuch and Vadodara exclusively for the hearing and speech handicapped youngsters. “This RYLA, where we had 75 participants, was done in sign language with interpreters. Motivational speakers addressed them, and it was learning combined with fun activities such as engaging games, icebreakers, and other group activities, all in their sign language.”

Explaining the issues that engage these youngsters, she said, “they have so many concerns and face so many challenges and have questions about the opportunities that will be available to them after they finish their education.”

The single message the youngsters communicated to the organisers and the speakers who addressed them was this: Please carry out advocacy to create opportunities, facilities, suitable infrastructure and an enabling environment for us, so that we can lead a decent life. Also, create job opportunities for us. We too have skills; just give us a chance to show our creativity. ■

Fuelling dreams of women entrepreneurs

Kiran Zehra

RC Bangalore Yelahanka, RID 3192, and the Rotary Action Group for Community and Economic Development (RAGCED) organised a Women's Entrepreneurship Festival in Bengaluru. Rakesh Babuji, chair of the RAGCED-India chapter, said the objective was to showcase the importance of innovation and inspire women from humble background to start their businesses with confidence.

The action group is dedicated to "enhancing the capabilities of local entrepreneurs through education, microcredit, mentoring and networking.

The focus extends to empowering community leaders and organisations, fostering economic development and creating opportunities for fulfilling work and sustainable livelihoods."

The India chapter of RAGCED is working with local Rotary clubs, and has found a significant number of skilled and ambitious women in the community aspiring to establish small-scale manufacturing units, producing value-added products primarily for the urban market. The initiative identified skilled and semi-skilled women who required support in terms of infrastructure, equipment, training, seed funds and

marketing assistance to initiate seven microenterprises in areas such as textile accessories, solar appliances, oyster mushrooms and terracotta jewellery.

While the Entrepreneurship Festival "showcases our commitment to supporting and empowering women entrepreneurs, we hope to collaborate with various clubs to undertake more innovative projects in the future," said Babuji. Interactive workshops at the event provided an insight into areas such as starting a business, scaling up, accessing funding, and leveraging technology, practical tools and strategies, empowering over 150 women entrepreneurs with "newfound skills and confidence to navigate the entrepreneurial landscape," he said.

Panel discussions featuring industry leaders delved into critical topics related to women's entrepreneurship, exploring challenges, opportunities and the importance of fostering a supportive ecosystem. The programme facilitated networking opportunities, "creating a platform for like-minded individuals to connect and foster a supportive network for mutual learning, growth and collaboration," he added.

The event also celebrated the achievements of women entrepreneurs who have made a significant impact in their respective fields. "Their stories served as motivation for women like us who are just beginning our entrepreneurial journey. I left the programme feeling inspired, motivated, and equipped with valuable insight to take my business to the next level. It showcased the power of women supporting women in the entrepreneurial journey," said Roopa, a participant.

Another participant Surabi said, "this was a game-changer that provided me with the knowledge, resources and connections needed to turn my business idea into reality. I cannot wait to start." ■



Rotarians interacting with an entrepreneur at one of the stalls.

Ray Klinginsmith, a Rotary leader of the highest calibre

K R Ravindran

The first time I saw Ray Klinginsmith in action, he was chairman of the 1998 New Delhi Council on Legislation, where I was a delegate. He had his own unflappable, unique style conducting the council deliberations, having one hand leaning nonchalantly over the podium, which was quite mesmerising for a novice like me. Little

did I realise then that one day in the future, this person I was admiring from afar and I, would serve together... Ray as chair of the trustees and I as RI president. He served as RI president from 2010–11.

In fact, years later, sitting on his Board as his treasurer, I realised Ray, a long-time member of Rotary Club of Kirksville, was one of the most

brilliant minds that I had ever encountered. And it was indeed a fascinating study of leadership and a learning experience to sit on the Board table with Ray presiding. In fact, he was the first and only president who had his vice-president and treasurer elected by his own Board members by ballot!

The first thing that occurred to you was that he was never in a hurry. The Board papers often exceeded 500 pages. I learned then that even the longest agenda can be handled, if proper preparation and planning had preceded it and Ray knew every page.

I learned how a meeting can be run, where each participant has an opportunity to opine and an occasion to contribute; that the gravity of the event can be mitigated by good humour and that to be formal and serious, one does not require to wear a three-piece suit! It was a learning experience for me to watch him preside and to educate us; to see the patience and tolerance he exercised even as he provided leadership and direction.

He placed principle and system before expediency and personality. He had the strength to face an awkward situation and tell you so straight to your face.

I saw that he drove changes which others could only dream about. The several changes the Board made were significant to the operation of the organisation and if he had a fault it was that he made or tried to make too many of them.

But I also learned and can tell you first hand, that it was not a crime to disagree with him as president and that

PRIP K R Ravindran with PRIP Ray Klinginsmith.



if it was done in an agreeable manner, such disagreement could be left behind on the table and forgotten by fellowship time in the evening.

Travelling with him in India and the then conflict zone in Sri Lanka (the first international leader to do so), I saw the genuine interest he had in meeting the Rotarians of the world and how tirelessly he worked prior to boarding and waiting for flights and at every possible moment. He would go back to his room and again work on his computer till late and be up again by 4.30 in the morning and back at his computer once again. The result was that he was up to date with everything that happened in the Rotary world at all times. At the RI headquarters in Evanston, it was no different. He was always in before any of us and nearly always the last to leave the building.

He also had another talent that I envied. Once he boarded the aircraft,

the computer was put away and he would go off to sleep before the aircraft even took off, and then sleep through the meal service, waking up a few minutes before landing, refreshed and reinvigorated for another day in the life of a president!

I was so impressed by his photographic memory, his warm wit, and his encyclopaedic knowledge of Rotary. For example, if you asked him, he could tell you who the president of Rotary was in 1922 and who the vice-president was in 1941! He could tell you when a particular amendment was made to the code of procedure and who moved the motion to do so. He would tell you who the chairman of the 1965 Rotary convention was, and in which city it was held and so on!

Ray had no airs about him, was humble in his ways; firm and persuasive and yet soft spoken in his arguments; ready to stay with his convictions, and,

at least on the Board, tolerant to the views of others, and a gentleman to the core. He was kind and encouraging to newcomers and novices like me and endearing to all. He was also thrifty. When he invited the Board to dinner, you could well end up at Pizza Hut or McDonalds! He would fly economy class when some of us, embarrassingly were sitting, in the forward cabin!

At the time of his passing, Ray had been a Rotarian for 62 years. He was also the first ever Ambassadorial Scholarships alumnus to serve on the RI Board.

Like all of us Ray also had his faults (who hasn't?) but in the final analysis, I have to say he was an extraordinary individual and a Rotary leader of the highest calibre.

Ray had a full life. May he now find eternal peace.

The writer is a past RI president

Archers Aditi and Deotale get Arjuna Award

Team Rotary News

Archers Aditi Gopichand Swami (17) and Ojas Deotale (21), who made India proud at the Hangzhou Asian Games, were felicitated with the Arjuna Awards by the Union government. They had been nominated for the Arjuna Award when they were honoured at the Rotary zone institute in Bengaluru. (For more details, read *Now India matters in global games — Rotary News*, January 2024.)

While Aditi is the world's youngest senior archery champion, Deotale, the first Indian male to win a gold at the World Archery Championship (Berlin, 2023), is ranked ninth in the world. Both the archers are products of Drushti Archery Academy being run by Pravin Sawant in Satara, Maharashtra. ■



Ojas Deotale and Aditi Swami with Arjuna Awards.

Rotary hospital provides quality care in Sirsi

Rasheeda Bhagat

To celebrate its silver jubilee in 1985, Rotary Club of Sirsi, RID 3170, set up a small charitable hospital. Today that has blossomed into a multi-specialty 65-bed hospital, offering medical services to the people of three revenue districts of Karnataka — Uttara Kannada, Haveri and Shimoga.

Situated at a prime location in the town of Sirsi, the hospital is run by the Vishwa Sewa Samiti, a Rotary charitable trust set up by RC Sirsi, with a matching grant from TRF, and donations from Sight Savers, England; Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind, England (RCSB); Christoffel Blinden Mission (CBM), Germany; and a number of other philanthropic institutions. This multi-storey facility with qualified and skilled doctors offers treatment in

various specialities and has five hi-tech operation theatres and other modern medical equipment.

That it is much more than an impressive brick and mortar structure providing top quality healthcare can be seen from a recent letter of gratitude the club president Shreedhar Hegde and past president Nitin Kasarkod, who manages the hospital, got from a senior executive of Tata Steel, expressing his gratitude for the “privilege of extraordinary services my mother had in this town in your hospital. The quality of service by the nursing staff and the dedicated service by Dr Rajesh Shet was absolutely commendable. While my mother unfortunately passed away on Jan 2, 2024, she spent her last few days peacefully at the hospital and then at home. That is something that I will

always be grateful for. My respect and regard for the noble work done by your Rotary club has increased manifold,” writes TV Srinivas Shenoy.

Hegde says the “founder and architect of this hospital is RI district 3170 PDG Subrao Kasarkod, and another stalwart is PDG Sadanand Nilekani, whose name the ICU and trauma care centre have taken. It is their dedicated efforts that have brought up this health complex to a level of prestige, which can be seen from the recent note of gratitude we have got.”

The hospital has also got a lot of support from Maruthi N Bhatkal, a senior advocate in Mumbai, “who has stood behind us like the Rock of Gibraltar, and has been instrumental in upgrading our ICU to the present ultra-modern level, offering emergency medical services,” says Nitin Kasarkod, past president of the club and secretary of the hospital. He is the son of PDG Kasarkod, who had originally started the hospital.

Hegde adds that prior to the setting up of this hospital, the people in this area surrounded by hundreds of villages, had to depend on far away city hospitals, and there were no good private hospitals

The Rotary Charitable Hospital set up by RC Sirsi.





Women waiting for check-up at the hospital after cataract surgery.

operating in the area. “And, even when somebody could access a private hospital in a city close by, the cost of medical treatment even for basic ailments was very high, making it impossible to get that service.”

It was at that time that the club leaders decided to set up a hospital in Sirsi, and in no time at all it became a household name, known for its good quality medical service at an affordable cost. A Rotary charitable trust under the name of the Vishwa Seva Samiti was set up to manage the hospital with the clear objective of offering quality medical services to the people, including those who could not afford to pay.

The trust is primarily focused on the prevention and treatment of eye diseases

and has run a campaign titled ‘War on Blindness,’ says Nitin Kasarkod. Under this programme “we organise weekly outreach camps in very remote and unreachable areas of the surrounding districts to screen people for eye problems. Those requiring surgery are transported by our own bus to the hospital, given the best surgical treatment, and also accommodation and food, and taken back to their homes after the treatment, all free of cost.”

Over the last 35 years, this programme has “succeeded in bringing back vision to over 70,000 poor people. This outreach programme of ours, which is funded by one of our partners, CSR grants and local donors, restores vision to around 4,000 people every year,” says Kasarkod.

Those who can afford to pay for the medical/surgical services do pay, and for others, the money is raised either through donations or by availing government benefit schemes. “We ensure that senior citizens and people with disabilities are looked after well and given special discounts in our hospital. Our Nephrology department is equipped with four haemodialysis units which serve patients round the clock. Free dialysis is done for very poor patients, with the hospital meeting the costs,” he adds.

Hegde says that this hospital has won “many laurels from reputed international organisations overseas, and was

recognised as one of the best 50 Rotary service projects of the world and given an award by the RI president in 1995.”

This hospital also offers treatment facilities for specialities like ENT, orthopaedics, gynaecology, nephrology, emergency and trauma.

As for the funds required for all these services, Kasarkod says that while the paying patients subsidise part of the treatment for the very poor patients, “we also depend on local philanthropists, institutions, corporates, social service organisations and others for donations.”

On future plans, he says they now want to strengthen their ENT services, while ensuring that the best quality medical service is given to all their patients, irrespective of their capacity to pay.

Talking to *Rotary News* about the “excellent service” his mother got from the team of doctors and nurses at this Rotary hospital, Shenoy said that she was 88 and suffering from some complications related to the liver. As her caregiver, who spent the nights at the hospital, he says, “I saw for myself how she was treated by the hospital staff, the excellent care she got from them, made her last seven days in this world so peaceful. She was cared for by the staff so well, that she trusted them completely. Most of the time you see people doing service only in name... but in this Rotary hospital, I saw service being done from the heart.” ■

Over the last 35 years, this programme has succeeded in bringing back vision to over 70,000 poor people. This outreach programme restores vision to around 4,000 people every year.

Nitin Kasarkod
Past president, RC Sirsi

RC Delhi South impacts communities

Jaishree

In the past seven years RC Delhi South, RID 3011, a 55-year-old club with 79 members, has empowered nearly 2,000 women with a new career in tailoring through its vocational training centre established in association with the NGO Nai Disha Educational and Cultural Society on the NGO's campus. The club has equipped the centre with 20 sewing machines. Presently, 40 women from less privileged families are undergoing the course.

"We keep upgrading the sewing machines to provide women better opportunities," said club president

Pramod Agarwal. Two advanced machines were recently provided to the centre to enable the women to learn machine embroidery and other professional techniques, and upgrade their tailoring skills. The NGO helps them get orders if the women decide to set up their own unit, or if they opt for employment, it assists in identifying potential employers.

RC Delhi South has been supporting the Dr Shroff Eye Hospital in Darya Ganj, Delhi, with ophthalmic devices and equipment for over 20 years. In November 2023, the Urmila Khemka



Below: Girls after getting their cervical cancer vaccination.





Above: RC Delhi South president Pramod Agarwal (L) and Rajeev Seoni, vocational services director, at the Nai Disha vocational training centre. Also seen are Savitha (second from L), founder, Nai Disha, and instructor Meenakshi (third from R), along with students.



From L: Club secretary Sarvpreet Singh, past president Lalit Sawhney, president Agarwal, Rajni Dua and Som Dua at the municipal corporation school in Roshanpura, New Delhi.

Cataract Centre was inaugurated at the hospital campus and the club participated in executing the project which was funded through a CSR grant. “This addition will enhance the hospital’s capacity to perform 6,000 additional surgeries,” he said.

The club revamped the MCD Primary School in Roshanpura - II area. A fresh coat of paint was put on the school building, the equipment on the playground was repaired, and new equipment added, “which really delighted the children,” he said. Around 1,400 students attend this school. The students participated in planting 80 saplings provided by the club to make the school campus green. A smart TV was also installed in the school’s digital classroom.

Close on the heels of inaugurating the refurbished school, the club organised an eye checkup camp for the students and provided spectacles to those who had defective vision. Funds are being raised to provide more facilities to the school; “next on our agenda is to provide wash stations,” the president added.

In another initiative, a cervical cancer vaccination camp was organised for 60 adolescent girls under the care of Nai Disha. “These girls are fully vaccinated with the mandatory two doses,” he said. A similar camp helped vaccinate 230 girls at the Birla Vidya Niketan where the club has sponsored an Interact club. The next dose will be given in June to these students. Prior to the vaccination process, the club had organised an awareness session for the parents and school staff on cervical cancer and how the vaccine provides protection from it. At both the venues, club member Dr Neeraj Bhalla and assistant governor Vandana Bhalla, and Ajay Narayan, secretary of the Rotary Cancer Foundation run by RIDs 3011 and 3012, supported the vaccination process which was undertaken by the BLK-Max Hospital.

On Diwali day, the club members distributed sweet boxes to 1,600 patients and caregivers at the AIIMS Hospital in Delhi. ■

RID 3030 empowers girl students

Kiran Zehra

Adorned in exquisite white and gold sarees, women presidents from clubs in RI District 3030 welcomed DG Asha Venugopal, RIPR Pubudu de Zoysa, and their Rotarian spouses Venu Gopal and Krish Fernando at the inaugural parade of the district conference *Aashayein*. The procession was led by Kathakali and Bharatanatyam dancers, accompanied by the rhythmic beats of traditional *panchari melam* (Kerala temple music).

There were 1,900 registrants and guests who participated. In her welcome address, DG Asha said, “From being a Rotarian to becoming a DG and an AKS member, I have been inspired by the Rotarians present here.”

Giving details of the district projects, she highlighted *Udaan*, a project by RC Nashik Grapecity, that distributed 5,555 bicycles worth ₹2.22 crore to enable rural girl students to go to school. “Thousands of girls from distant tribal villages in Maharashtra are eager to learn

but find just reaching their schools a challenge. A bicycle is more than just a mode of transport for them. It is a symbol of empowerment. With these bicycles, we have transformed obstacles into opportunities for these girls,” she said. Other notable projects included *Boond* (water conservation), *Spandan* (blood donation for thalassemia patients), *Akanksha* (online study tool), and *Ankur* (bamboo plantation being done in collaboration with the Maharashtra government).

Congratulating DG Asha on receiving the AKS pin, RIPR Pubudu, past governor of RID 3220, Sri Lanka, said, “For Asha, this is not just about being an AKS member. Of course, it is a prestigious contribution, but it also signifies the love and care she has to offer. She has given to the Foundation not because she has

RID 3220 PDG Pubudu de Zoysa, RIPR for the district conference, and her spouse Krish Fernando (R) felicitate DG Asha (second from R) and her spouse Venugopal (fourth from R) for her AKS contribution. Also present (from L) PDGs Shabbir Shakir, Kishor Kedia, K Sunder Rajan and Rajiv Sharma.





PDG Shabbir Shakir in conversation with actor Anupam Kher at the district conference.



Thousands of girls from distant tribal villages in Maharashtra are eager to learn but find just reaching their schools a challenge.

A bicycle is more than just a mode of transport for them.

Asha Venugopal

District Governor, RID 3030

surplus funds, but because she is generous. Thank you for believing wholeheartedly that through our Foundation, you have the power to make a difference.”

Pubudu also stressed the significance of the End Polio initiative and said, “Thanks to the infrastructure, including emergency operations centres, disease surveillance officers and the seamless communication line between local and international health authorities established by Rotary in Africa through the polio model, the spread of

Ebola could be stopped! This stands as a testament to Rotary’s strength.”

Commending the district for its remarkable contribution of \$27,448 towards the End Polio Fund, she added, “The eradication of polio not only prevents its resurgence but also unlocks a potential return of \$50 billion to the global health budget. This financial boost can play a pivotal role in addressing other critical health challenges, such as malaria, cervical cancer, tuberculosis and HIV-AIDS.”

The event concluded with a dance performance by RYE students, portraying the lives of iconic Indian women. Followed by district awards, the release of GML and interactive panel discussions, distinguished speakers including Major General Sanjay Kumar Vidyarthi, Bharati Thakur, founder of NARMADA, an educational institute for underprivileged and rural children, and actor Anupam Kher, addressed the Rotarians.

Pictures by Kiran Zehra

Over 1,200 surgeries at 10-day Kashmir camp

V Muthukumaran

It was a challenging, but most satisfying mission for a team of 35 doctors, all of them Rotarians, and two volunteers to perform 1,223 surgeries and minor procedures at government hospitals in Pulwama, Shopian, Kulgam and Anantnag (medical college) districts over a period of 10 days (Sep 3–13). “The

project required a lot of detailed planning in logistics and support from the UT government, health officials and local hospitals,” explained PDG Dr Girish Gune, general surgeon and project chair of Kashmir Surgical Project-III held in September 2023.

The seed for the third medical camp in the troubled state was sown when Lt Governor Manoj Sinha during the inauguration of the second surgical camp in Sopore, Baramulla district, in May 2022, urged Rotarians to hold a similar one in South Kashmir which is ravaged by militancy.

Both PDGs Dr Gune and Dr Rajiv Pradhan, project advisor and pathologist, through Adeep Mehta, a Rotarian from Jammu, RID 3070, the chief coordinator with RIDs 3131 and 3132 for holding medical projects, started their liaison work with Dr Mohammed Rather, director, State Health Services. The latter appointed Dr Abdul Rauf as the nodal officer for the Rotary Surgical Project and he was supported by health secretary Bhupinder Kumar at regular meetings.

After several zoom meetings and adept spade work, “we put together a team of general surgeons, gynaecologists, orthopaedics, ENT, plastic and paediatric surgeons, ophthalmologists and anaesthesiologists — the majority being Rotarian doctors from RID 3131 and 3132,” recalled Dr Pradhan. PDG Upinder Ghai and Dr Jagat Surinder (RID 3170); onco surgeon Dr Umang Desai (RID 3060); and Dr Darshana Shah, Dr Manisha Jagtap and Dr Ujwala Devare (RID 3030), also joined the project team.

A Rotary team was sent to check the medical facilities and interact with the chief medical officers and superintendents at the government hospitals; While Gune and Rahul Phase, a Rotarian, made a quick trip to Kashmir to finalise the surgical project in September.

All surgical equipment, facilities and medical supplies were arranged by the J&K administration. “Local health officials did a door-to-door survey through ASHA workers and volunteers to enrol patients for the camps. Even the initial hurdle of lack of adequate number of OTs, equipment and trained staff was sorted by the health officials through quick purchase, relocation of staff and equipment and putting additional tables in OTs,” said Pradhan. He has organised over 25 medical missions to 16 African countries.

After seeing the flawless 1,223 surgeries done by the team of 35

Four-year-old Sarah Ebrahim Bhatt, who was operated for congenital bilateral squint eyes, with her father.



Rotarian doctors in a record time of 10 days in four revenue districts, the then superintendent of Anantnag Medical College and Hospital Dr Malik Abid Hussain quipped, “I think our surgeons should also accompany your Rotary teams to serve in other parts of India. This project, by alleviating the pain and suffering of a section of Kashmiris, has earned their goodwill.”

Suffering from malignant colon, Gulam Rasul (42), from Anantnag, said “I was writhing in acute pain for two months and needed surgery badly. I owe my life to these messengers of Allah.” Reactions from other beneficiaries were generous too. The parents of four-year-old Sarah Ebrahim Bhatt, hailing from Pulwama, who was operated for congenital bilateral squint eyes, said, “Now our daughter has got normal vision. We will give her



Project chair PDG Dr Girish Gune, laparoscopic surgeon (second from right), and his team at the operation theatre.

the best education and make her a doctor, thanks to the Rotary medical mission.” If one can sum up the mood of the surgical camp

beneficiaries, here it is: “Allah has sent you as Rotarians to save our lives,” said Shabana Khatun (32), a resident of Anantnag, who had a large uterine tumour with severe anaemia leading to heavy blood loss during menstruation.

Following the success of three surgical projects in Dec 2012 (at the Rotary Eye and ENT Hospital, Udhampur; a 10-day camp, 1,100 surgeries); May 2022 (at Baramulla, Sopore, Kupwara and Ganderbal; week-long camp, 2,474 surgeries) and the latest one in September 2023, the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir has urged the Rotary medical mission led by Gune and Pradhan to hold similar surgical camps in Poonch and Rajouri districts, preferably in April-May this year. “I will be visiting these border areas soon along with two other Rotarian doctors for a recce to decide on the duration of the surgical camp, types of surgeries to be conducted and also liaise with the local health officials,” said Gune. ■

Dr Meenal Chidgupkar, gynaecologist, during a surgery.



RID 5610 delegation visits Gorakhpur

Team Rotary News

A delegation of six Rotarians from RI district 5610, USA, made a two-day visit to Gorakhpur in Oct 2023. Led by PDG Pat Sutliff, the team included Willis Sutliff, Gerrit Juffer, Michelle Juffer, Joe Gomley and Anne Gomley.

They first participated in a multidistrict meet organised by RC Gorakhpur, RID 3120. Over 500 Rotarians from the home district and RIDs 3250, and 3292 (Nepal) attended the programme which was presided over by RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury.

The next day, the team, accompanied by Mahabir Prasad Kandoi, president-elect of RC Gorakhpur, visited various community projects which included the Guru Shri Gorakhnath Chikitsalaya, where RC Gorakhpur has donated two medical equipment — an ultrasound system worth ₹54.75 lakh and a dura diagnostic F30 x-ray machine worth ₹40 lakh through a global grant.

At one of the primary schools in Sonbarsa on the outskirts of Gorakhpur, which was transformed by the home club into a Happy School, the visiting Rotarians witnessed the positive impact of TRF — the improved infrastructure,



The delegates from RID 5610 visit one of the Happy Schools transformed by RC Gorakhpur.

including tables, benches, whiteboards and smart classrooms. They were also shown classes being conducted using AV aids. RC Gorakhpur has transformed 16 rural primary schools into Happy Schools.

The team also visited another primary school in Daulatpur where the club has upgraded the infrastructure such as continuous water supply, overhead tanks, handwashing stations and toilets for girls. “These Happy Schools have reported a 20 per cent increase in academic performance, negligible

dropouts and improved attendance. The club is addressing the demand for more desk-benches due to increased student enrolment,” said Kandoi.

The visit concluded at the Singer Rotary Skill Centre, a project run by the club in collaboration with the National Education Society. The centre, set up through a global grant support with RID 5610 as international partner and TRF in 2015, provides training in stitching and embroidery to over 55 individuals from low-income groups. ■

Women being trained at the Singer Rotary Skill Centre run by the club.



‘Khushi’ fosters new bonding

V Muthukumaran

Orphaned Mahima Patil (13) says, “I got my grandparents during RYLA and am grateful to Rotary for creating such a beautiful relationship for me.” For 70-year-old Vaishali Rajshekhar Bhutkar, it is like “moving to a new sweet home with the overwhelming love and affection of children kindling a never-before joy in me.”

A two-day RYLA, *Khushi*, hosted by RC Kolhapur Sunrise, RID 3170, helped create such close bonds when 200 orphaned children from the Bal Kalyan Sankul orphanage met 25 elders from the Matoshree Vrudhashram, an old age home in Kolhapur. It was a coming together of two generations and the bonding was instant. “It was touching for us, rather emotional, as Rotarians to see children enjoy a lively banter with the senior citizens, neglected by their families and forced to live in a special home,” says club president Chandan Mirajkar.

The programme was supported by the district Rotaract led by DRR Pranjal Marathe and ZRR

Abhijeet Patil. “It was a get-together between two generations who miss their relatives. And when they departed after the RYLA, most of them wept as by then the children and elders had really bonded,” recalls Mirajkar.

When Pranjal and Patil approached the club in October last year with the “idea of opening a platform for orphans and neglected elders, I readily agreed to support it with funding,” he explains.

There were several high moments at the RYLA. “During a visit to the DY Patil Hospital and Research Centre, Kolhapur, the children had a guided tour of the DPU Clinical Simulation and Skills Lab where high-fidelity manikins offer a hands-on experience in a controlled environment for medical



Children mark their palm impression on a white cloth to be gifted to DG Nasir Borsadwala.

students to reinforce classroom learning,” says DRR Pranjal. They also visited Gokul milk plant, one of the largest dairy facilities in the country, to learn the process of milk production and distribution.

However, the main highlight is the visit to the Kaneri Math, a seven-acre museum in a rustic set-up with lifelike sculptures and scenes that depict ancient life in India with its rich heritage. On the first day, childhood games were played, instilling a strong bond between youngsters and elders, followed by a pottery workshop. The ancient, but forgotten Mardani Khel, a martial art for self-defence, was showcased to the inmates. Both Mirajkar and Pranjal are excited to make this special RYLA an annual feature. ■



DRR Pranjal Marathe (L) and ZRR Abhijeet Patil, along with orphaned children, at the Bal Kalyan Sankul.

Learn about the good stress

Bharat & Shalan Savur

Anxious, worried, troubled were familiar words. But its synonym — stress was still new on the scene. Over time, I've got it. Stress is all of the above.

Stress is as subjective as sin: Time to analyse the word. As stated in earlier columns, stress is a condition, not the cause. It is a creature of the individual's mental, emotional state of mind. You could liken stress to a sneeze. One sneeze does not necessarily make a cold. Or think of stress as a guitar. A guitar without strings is just a piece of wood. It certainly won't make music without its strings. Unless you use it as a drum. Let's drum some sense into stress. Fine-tuning is the solution for both guitar string set and stress. Together, the two create harmony for music and mental/emotional happiness respectively.

Speaking reflectively, remember Y2K? The twilight zone of the year 1999 was spent discussing, debating and grimly anticipating the next

century: Y2K (2000 AD). Computers, the computer age, indeed the world itself, were supposed to crash. In retrospect, Y2K was a false alarm. An anti-climax as the prophets of doom were proved wrong back then. But today, it could appear to be a pilot project for the world just a little ahead of its time. The tsunami (2004), the financial and economic shocks to world markets (2008), were just forerunners to the near future.

That future is here. Ill winds and sick minds, now centrestaged, have aroused and angered Mother Nature. Father Time too is furious. The planet's parents are upset with its wayward children: Covid and cyclones. Hurricanes in a hurry. The jury is still out on Covid. Bat-born in the market or lab? But the judgment from above is loud and clear. Collective man's ways from the Industrial Revolution onwards have enraged its guardian. This globe and its gods have gone crazy. Acts of god that occurred occasionally have stepped up frequency in step with rising global tempo and temperature.

The World Economic Forum's *Global Risks Report* has coined the term 'Polycrisis' — a cluster of related risks with compounding effects, such that the overall impact exceeds the sum of each part. Evidently, the language of stress generates a new term when old ones become obscure or inadequate. A catchword uttered often enough turns into a cliché. Here's hoping 'Polycrisis' is a one-time phenomenon. And the above chain of circumstances is aborted. These events are above our individual control. But, at least our reactions to them can be contained. And to a great extent controlled.

Stress blocks energy, eustress makes it surge and flow. Eustress is a positive form of stress having a beneficial effect on health, motivation, performance and emotional well-being. The word was introduced by endocrinologist Hans Selye in 1976. And with this surge, this flow, 'you know exactly what you want to do from one moment to the other. You know what you need to do is possible even though difficult; you forget yourself, you feel part of something larger,' describes psychologist Mihali Csikszentmihalyi. Eustress comes like a balm from the blues of stress when the stressor is perceived as manageable, meaningful and desirable.

Work on the flow of your breath to relax your body. Take a nice deep breath and imagine it entering your heart and stomach. Then, exhale through your mouth to simulate a huge sigh of relief — 'haa.' Sometimes one to three times helps. And sometimes it takes longer. Perhaps 20 to 30 times. But deep breathing helps for sure. Just remember: adding an alphabet 'R' to panic makes breathing *pranic* — the eternal force and flow of life is yours to tap.

This is stress with a 'yes'. 'Eustress is positive stress,' states Dr Michael Genoverse. '...a product of nerves stimulated with a "fun challenge"'. Eustress helps us stay motivated, work towards goals and feel good about life.'

The body's fight-or-flight reaction is set in the subconscious from earlier evolution. Hence, eustress is the wind beneath our wings. 'Eustress produces positive feelings of excitement, fulfillment, meaning satisfaction and well-being,' says professional counsellor Casey Lee, MA.

Eustress makes energy surge and flow. It is a positive form of stress having a beneficial effect on health, motivation, performance and emotional well-being.

Beyond boundaries

The benefits are bountiful. Emotionally, eustress fuels a positive sensation of contentment, inspiration, motivation and flow. Psychologically, eustress enhances our self-efficiency, autonomy and resilience. Physically, eustress enables harder physical work. And greater stamina for work-outs.

Let Ashton Eaton, decathlon legend (a sport spread over 10 track-and-field events) and two-time champion have the last word: 'The challenge is more mental. Because it's way harder to defend a title than to be an underdog. Because there's more at stake to lose, more expectation from yourself... the satisfaction is not in winning or getting a medal. It's like you can do this again.'

We have always said it is easier to attain than maintain. We often turn to sport to illustrate a point. Partly because it's likened to a war without weapons. More importantly, it demands sustained

physical and mental efforts for man's higher-faster-longer endeavours.

As an earth-being, you already have the 'liquidity,' potential energy on tap. Over 70 per cent of your body is fluid. All it requires is the trigger — eustress, to convert potential into kicking kinetic energy and channel it to the required, relevant target. To illustrate: your boss sets you a new sales' target. Or entrusts you with a new project. Eustress helps you leverage your existing strengths and skills. Or even better, enhance, enlarge your efforts towards meeting the new demand. (Incidentally, we are glad to hear our old deadline now described as timeline.) The new word (to us) itself is uplifting in place of the dreaded deadline which stressed much of our professional lives with its implied dread — so yesterday.

Please remember, eustress is a short-term solution. It requires constant and consistent efforts to enlarge

its stamina and staying power. Eustress can also be a response or reply to different and divergent activities: Like starting, renewing a relationship, marrying, taking up a new job, etc. In short, you name it. Eustress could well be and have the answer.

To embrace eustress, or more correctly, have it embrace you, here are a few steps to follow: Learn something new every day, push yourself outside your comfort zone at work, play, etc, set new goals (personal and professional) that are challenging yet realistic. Track your progress and be accountable to yourself. Finally, exercise. Meanwhile, let's celebrate. Stress is not the bogeyman we thought it to be. Time to boogie.

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



Meet your



Arun Kumar Mongia
Plywood maker
RC Jagadhri North, RID 3080

Need to educate new Rotarians

Rotary must hold training and orientation sessions for new members to educate them about “our global activities, so that they are involved in our service projects. It will increase our membership, and we must focus on public image building too,” says Arun Mongia.

Confident of achieving a 15 per cent membership growth, he says, “we will add 600 new Rotarians and eight new clubs (three already formed), to bring the count to 4,500-plus and 116 respectively.” Five dialysis centres (GG: \$100,000), attached either to hospitals or charity groups, are being set up; Around 10–12 toilet blocks are renovated, five new ones under construction (GG: \$35,000), along with safe drinking water facilities, in government schools; and nutrition kits (CSR: \$30,000) are given to 200 TB patients.

Through a mix of CSR grants and donations, 2,000 desk-benches are being distributed to 35 government and private schools. “We have given 1,000 pink bicycles to rural girl students; and another 1,100 cycles will be given soon; and tricycles will be given to 250 physically-challenged,” he explains. Through district grants (\$20,000) 20 computer labs and 20 skilling centres will be set up in remote villages; and another \$10,000 will be used for building 20 medical equipment banks in clubs to lend critical medical tools to poor patients. For TRF, his target is \$1 million. He joined Rotary in 2000, attracted by its fellowship and networking.



Vivek Garg
Real estate
RC Kanpur Industrial, RID 3110

CSR grants for diverse projects

Be different, and make a difference in others’ lives. This is the driving motto of Vivek Garg; “as Rotarians our priority must be to improve the lives of the less privileged,” he says.

With 149 clubs and 4,000 Rotarians in his district, he is confident of netting 10 per cent membership growth and opening three new clubs, taking the count to 155 by June 30.

Digital classroom boards are being installed through a CSR grant of ₹28 lakh from Karan Latex. “We will set up eight computer labs (CSR: ₹40 lakh); take up two Happy Schools (CSR: ₹50 lakh); and flag-off an ambulance (CSR: ₹40 lakh) in the coming months. Also, we will receive CSR grants of ₹1.5 crore for other projects that are being worked out,” explains Garg. His team is planning a global grant project for environment care. Around 75 blood donation camps have collected 2,500 units of blood; “and we will complete the year with over 100 such camps.”

On July 1, 100 medical camps screened 1,00,000 patients and “we will hold 200 health camps by June 30,” he smiles. Under *Project Beti Shikshit Mata Vandit*, 2,500 girl students will get lunch boxes, school bags and stationery, while their mothers will be given sarees. His target for TRF-giving is \$100,000. He joined Rotary in 2007, after “I was moved seeing the amputees, who crawled to the camp, walking out with artificial limbs sporting a big smile.”

Governors

V Muthukumaran



Manjit Singh Arora

Fashion & jewellery

RC Rourkela Midtown, RID 3261



Ghanshyam Kansal

Textiles

RC Sunam, RID 3090

Aiming for 100% TRF-giving clubs

Aiming for a 15 per cent growth in membership, “I will charter 10 Rotary and 10 Rotaract clubs, besides forming 25 Interact clubs in schools,” says Manjit Singh Arora. At present, there are 105 clubs with 3,500-plus Rotarians in the district.

He has lined up a slew of big ticket projects: a neo-natal ambulance (GG: \$39,000) will be flagged-off; CT simulator (GG: \$180,000) will be installed at a cancer hospital in Jabalpur; a cancer detection van (GG: ₹80 lakh) is under process; and an eye hospital (GG: ₹75-80 lakh) will come up at Jharsuguda, Odisha. He has planned two cervical vaccination programmes — around 5–7 inoculation camps (GG: \$45,000) for 1,500 girls; followed by a CSR project (\$21,000) at three rural schools benefiting 600 students.

Arora has set \$500,000 for TRF-giving. He is motivating clubs to make them 100 per cent TRF-giving clubs. A Major Donor, Level-II, “I will graduate to the next level soon,” says Arora who joined Rotary in 1993. He hopes to induct one AKS member, and an existing AKS member is poised to go to the next level.

Empowering women Rotarians

Inducting more women into Rotary is one of his top priorities, as he says, “we can empower women by encouraging them to initiate projects and giving them creative freedom.” Out of 500 new members being added this year, 150 will be women; and among the 25 new clubs, 20 were already chartered. Four among them were all-women’s club. At present, there are 290 women Rotarians out of 2,800 members in 125 clubs.

A Rotary eye hospital (GG: \$100,000) is being built in Sunam; and a digital x-ray unit (GG: \$30,000) was installed by RC Mansa Royal at a government hospital. Ricela Group is providing a CSR grant of \$50,000 to RC Dhuri for it to sponsor the school fees of 4,000 students in Classes 9–12.

His home club is running Dr Gagandeep Rotary Public School in which at least 200 projects are held annually. Kansal aims to collect \$280,000 for TRF. He was an Interactor in 1989, joined Rotaract in 1992, was a DRR in 1999-2000; and joined Rotary as charter president of RC Sunam Golden in 2002. “Initially, I was drawn to Rotary as it was a great platform for fellowship and networking,” he smiles.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Turn solar in 2024!

Preeti Mehra

Installing a solar power system could be your way of mitigating global warming in 2024.

Whoever said it was right. Solar power is the energy resource that isn't owned yet—nobody taxes the Sun! From the break of dawn till dusk, the sun shares its heat with the earth. And in India, which lies close to the equator, there is bountiful sunlight for most part of the year.


Luckily for us, this solar energy is not only freely available, but we also have the technology to harness it to light up our lives. Solar power, as is well known, is the cleanest and greenest energy resource that we can easily tap into.

So, why not make 2024 the year that you will take your first step towards

adopting a sustainable lifestyle by embracing solar energy and putting it to use in your home. If you have already done that then you could possibly build on what you have started and decrease your dependency on power from the grid.

So where does one start? If you live in an independent house, it would be





good to go in for a rooftop solar system. Those who own a flat in a housing society can convince other members to jointly invest in an energy saving system on the roof of apartment blocks. The good news is that the Central government has announced in January (consider it a New Year's gift!) an enhanced subsidy for setting up solar units in residences to ramp up renewable energy in the country. That should be an added motivation for you to turn solar in 2024.

Incidentally, technology to capture solar energy has taken large strides and will continue to do so in the years to come. So how is solar energy converted to electric energy? Simply put, when the photons from the sun hit the rooftop

solar panel, they are converted to electrons of direct current (DC). Rooftop solar panels come with inverters, which in turn convert direct current electricity into alternating current (AC), which are used to power lights, fans, refrigerators, laptops and other devices at home.

The solar panels that you install last as long as 25 years, and the investment you make on them can be recovered in approximately four to five years. Hence, solar energy is a winner on several counts — it not only makes you feel good as you are saving fossil fuel and helping the planet, but it also comes 60 per cent cheaper and in the long run gives you energy virtually free of cost.

A friend who is a solar energy expert says that all you need to install a 1.5kW capacity system is sufficient space on your terrace to accommodate the solar panels. And such a system will generate sufficient electrical energy to fulfil the basic needs for a family of four or five members. It could, by supplementing the power being used, reduce your dependency on electricity supplied from the grid and will in turn reflect in a healthy trimming of your electricity bill. And the best thing about rooftop solar units is that they require very little maintenance and can be set up for the whole house or for specific applications and be customised to your needs.

If you are really considering installing a solar system, it would be best to call in a rooftop solar company. Its experts will give you the exact calculations and match your demand to the capacity of the system to be installed and the space you can allocate for it. The capital costs for solar panel installation have also been falling over the years, so it would be advisable to speak to more than one player and get their competitive quotes before zeroing in on one that is most reasonable and suited for your requirements.

Please do ask for all the latest options available. Today we have solar hybrid inverters which have built-in battery connections to enable energy storage for later use and can act as a power back-up when there is a black-out. Several systems also have remote control and monitoring technology through which solar system owners can monitor its performance and see what savings it is bringing for them.

But there is a downside to solar power. There may be days when sunlight is bleak, and the panels fail to generate sufficient energy. But this is more of a problem in western nations when there is very weak sun for days together. But in tropical countries like India the sun is evenly strong except during adverse weather conditions and during brief spells in the winter months. But to tide over such situations there is a backup now in storage batteries. Solar energy can now be stored and used later, making it of use even in the non-sunny hours.

Solar energy and hydrogen are often touted as the fuels of the future. As the world battles with global warming and climate change it is imperative that all responsible citizens do their bit towards making the earth a safer and greener place. And what better way to do that than by making the switch to solar power!

Moreover, if we set an example, then others are likely to follow. When neighbours, friends and colleagues learn about the benefits from your initiative, they too might be interested to install rooftop solar panels in their homes and offices. And even if they don't, you can have the pleasure of having a self-sustaining source of energy which gives you some level of independence from the power grid and keeps you ticking during power outages.

Surya namaskar to that...

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

Car rally spreads climate change awareness



Members of RC Chennai Meraki with (from L) PRIDs AS Venkatesh, TRF Trustee Larry Lunsford, RID TN Subramanian, RI President Gordon McInally, RIPN Mario de Camargo, PRIP KR Ravindran and TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya at the Zone Institute.

The 6th annual car rally by RC Chennai Meraki, RID 3232, spanning 5,905km in 14 days, promoted climate action and nature conservation. Textile baron Nalli Kuppusamy flagged off the rally which also made a stop at the Bengaluru Rotary zone institute. ■

Water filters for Kolkata government schools



Students in front of the newly donated water filter.

RC Calcutta, RID 3291, through *Project Pranadhara*, distributed 150 water filters to 75 government and government-aided schools in Kolkata. The total project cost was ₹10 lakh. ■

Human milk bank in Shimoga



A mother feeds her infant with milk from Amrutha Bindu.

RC Shimoga Central, RID 3182, in association with the Sarji Group of Hospitals and RC Central Chester County (Lionville), USA, RID 7450, set up a human milk bank — Amrutha Bindu — in Shimoga. The facility, with a processing capacity of 200 litres, will donate 40 per cent of the processed milk to the Government McGann Hospital. The GG project cost ₹50 lakh. ■

Ophthalmic equipment donated



Rotarians at the Sabarkantha Community Rotary Eye Care Centre after donating the eyecare equipment.

RC Vadali Roundtown, RID 3055, and RC Chevrolet Canada, RID 7090, through a GG partnership donated equipment to five eyecare centres in rural Gujarat. The total cost of the project was ₹25.4 lakh. ■

2022–23 Service Award for a polio-free world

TRF trustees established the Service Award for a polio-free world to honour members who have made outstanding contributions to Rotary's polio eradication efforts. Members can nominate individuals for regional or international service. The members listed here received the 2022–23 award.

J Sridhar, RID 3232

Shivakumar JM, RID 3190

Narasinha Ramchandra

Joshi, RID 3170

Sasanka Mahapatra, RID 3262

Rabinderjit Singh

Panesar, RID 3240

Shyamashree Sen, RID 3291

Parameshwar Shiggaon

RID 3182


N Subramanian, RID 3011

Lakshmanan Veerappan

RID 3000

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meeting wherever you go!

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District Wise TRF Contribution as on December 2023

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution	
India						
2981	18,676	875	1,000	0	20,551	
2982	20,112	694	7,085	8,857	36,749	
3000	60,832	290	0	26,171	87,293	
3011	94,885	21,603	26,089	183,587	326,164	
3012	10,630	50	0	65,588	76,269	
3020	100,063	13,444	30,223	49,025	192,755	
3030	50,145	27,248	4,275	187,574	269,242	
3040	3,028	108	0	25	3,161	
3053	18,314	0	0	12,439	30,753	
3055	61,747	2,260	30	6,228	70,265	
3056	16,246	125	0	0	16,371	
3060	58,485	9,515	200	114,793	182,993	
3070	3,985	20	0	0	4,005	
3080	78,484	19,786	0	11,184	109,454	
3090	37,477	1,113	8,000	5,121	51,711	
3100	62,350	2,687	25,301	22,456	112,795	
3110	10,476	30	0	79,348	89,854	
3120	33,325	129	0	0	33,454	
3131	333,808	7,535	85,098	422,875	849,315	
3132	76,199	4,558	10,000	20,051	110,808	
3141	233,474	11,082	59,012	439,873	743,442	
3142	236,442	33,263	14,500	8,846	293,051	
3150	30,768	30,478	160,411	73,365	295,022	
3160	9,588	1,051	0	0	10,639	
3170	58,758	26,577	12,700	70,534	168,568	
3181	62,922	1,930	0	75	64,927	
3182	28,317	4,606	0	0	32,922	
3191	28,702	5,366	60,976	286,416	381,459	
3192	44,213	8,767	0	46,198	99,177	
3201	67,196	43,609	45,684	986,848	1,143,337	
3203	13,872	14,858	1,220	15,550	45,500	
3204	14,099	2,535	0	14,574	31,208	
3211	34,454	4,236	27,325	94,924	160,940	
3212	45,869	18,206	0	51,853	115,927	
3231	3,232	2,135	0	0	5,367	
3232	34,936	16,675	14,005	815,812	881,428	
3240	60,226	8,158	0	86,571	154,955	
3250	21,871	2,951	26	10,298	35,147	
3261	11,313	968	0	28,978	41,259	
3262	29,473	3,886	1,000	2,575	36,934	
3291	87,735	2,242	41,646	1,050	132,673	
3220	Sri Lanka	27,110	3,154	0	873	31,137
3271	Pakistan	15,150	72,053	0	20,402	107,606
3272	Pakistan	4,342	385	0	25	4,752
3281	Bangladesh	80,569	2,105	3,000	264,728	350,403
3282	Bangladesh	91,336	4,472	1,000	9,116	105,924
3292	Nepal	138,818	20,556	13,000	77,421	249,796

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



Wordsworld

Weaves of words



Sandhya Rao

We live in troubled times, and as the years roll by matters will only get more complex. Histories, civilisations, beliefs, knowledge, even information, twists and turns in an endless spiral; the furthest point gets pushed further, the further you proceed. To put it simply: it's confusing out there. That's why people turn to faith, to meditation, to work, to play, to retreat and so on in order to make sense of the swirl, to unravel the threads, to weave patterns into a more comprehensible and comforting tapestry of their lives. I believe that books and reading are powerful enablers of tapestries: they help undo knots and inspire creative designs. Fundamentally, however, they entertain.

In the recent past, there has been an active move from children's

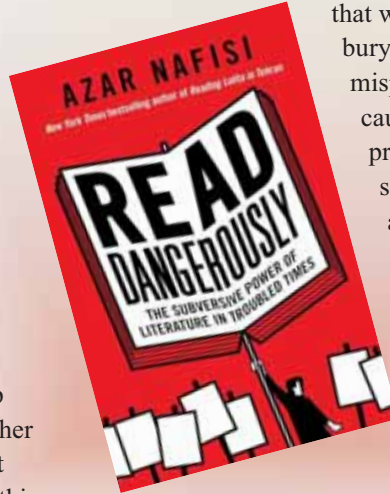
book publishers to 'whitewash' the writings of certain authors who are now retrospectively charged with political incorrectness. Enid Blyton, for instance, who some see as being racist in her books which, it must be said, have enjoyed massive readership in anglophile India. In fact, at one time, they were the staple diet (*Famous Five, Noddy, Mallory Towers*) of kids desperate for a read. Many adults today have grown up on her books. The other person who's been at the receiving end of this movement is Roald Dahl (*Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, Matilda*).

An undated piece online titled 'Why Boys Stop Reading?' by Shaun Emerson on *MenLiving* quotes writer Matt Haig (*The Midnight Library*) from an Instagram post saying: 'You only have to look at the whole recent Roald Dahl re-edit farce. A farce that was not at all about gen z wokery and more about corporate greed and timidity. Roald Dahl is a writer who relished nastiness. And now there is a worry among the old people in charge of the Roald Dahl cash cow that generation x don't want their generation z offspring to read nasty things because books are there to DO US GOOD.' Haig argues that books should be seen as entertainment, in the same league as movies, YouTube, video games, and not as tools of teaching/learning. To put it in his own lingo: 'Young people in general like risky things. Their prefrontal cortex is yet to fully develop so they have a shitload of imagination and zero caution.'

Expectations of books for adults somehow manage to shed the teaching/learning angle, along with some other qualities. I believe we adults too have 'a shitload of imagination' that we unconsciously bury beneath misplaced notions of caution, misogyny, preconceived notions, societal pressure and the like. Setting aside the supposed benefits of reading, of which there are any number, think of all the delights you are missing!

That's why, when I see people being herded about by comen and tricksters and self-styled god-persons, the thought flashes: Mmmm, they must not be reading much, if at all. How much fun can it be, being led by the nose?

Human beings think, speak, reason. Reading engages our minds in many ways, not least to connect our experiences and our imagination. From these and other interactions

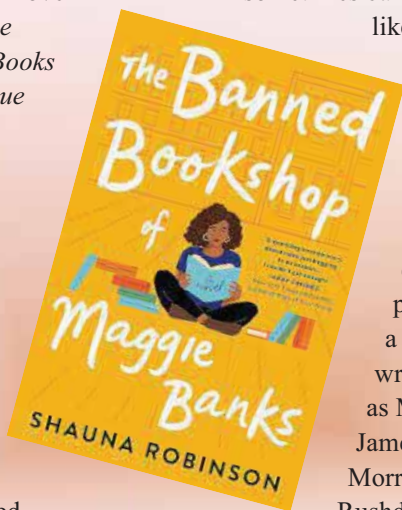


Collecting books is the same as looking up at the stars: you don't want to own the stars, any more than you want to own books. All you hope to do is to brush the surface of wonder, to acknowledge that there is still some part of you that is always in awe of, and in love with, the world and the word.

spring forth ideas, and the capacity to reflect and ruminate. To be unherded. To hear and be heard. This train of thought led naturally to books, specifically books about books, bookshops, reading. Here's a small sampling of what came up, in no particular order. Be warned, though, this is just one small grain of sand on the vast and varied beaches of the written world.

It seems appropriate to begin with *The Banned Bookshop of Maggie Banks* by Shauna Robinson because the shelves in this bookshop are filled with mostly classics and it's only thinking out-of-the-box that helps popularise the place. The clue that makes me curious is that they start a secret book club where people read forbidden books! The second book is one that I long pursued having first seen it in the hands of a friend. Since then I have acquired two copies of it, one signed by the author, Markus Zusak, and titled *The Book Thief*. Set in Germany during the second world war, a young girl steals books and then slowly learns to read them. A clue here too: the narrator is Death! Stealing for love is the theme of *The Man Who Loved Books Too Much: The True Story of a Thief, a Detective, and a World of Literary Obsession* by Allison Hoover Bartlett.

John Charles Gilkey loves books so much he steals them left, right and centre. He is chased down by a bookseller who ends up falling in love with books himself!



In *The Reading List* by Sara Nisha Adams, the protagonist finds a list of books she's never read hidden in a copy of *To Kill A Mocking Bird* by Harper Lee. Her project to read all the books in that list sets her on an amazing journey.

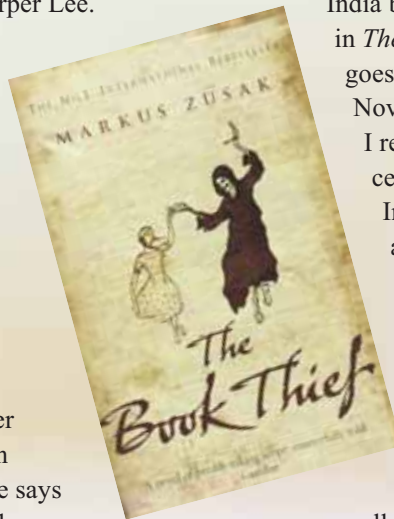
Nilanjana Roy has a collection of essays called *The Girl Who Ate Books*. She is the author of *The Wildings*, a heart-stopping thriller featuring feral cats in Delhi. Read what she says about collecting books: 'Collecting books is the same as looking up at the stars: you don't want to own the stars, any more than you want to own books or the knowledge in them. All you hope to do is to brush the surface of wonder, to acknowledge that there is still, as an adult, some part of you that is always in awe of, and in love with, the world and the word.'

Why do governments/leaders sometimes ban books? You are likely to get a sense of what this means in *Read Dangerously* by Azar Nafisi, famous for *Reading Lolita in Tehran*. She examines reading as a political tool through a discussion of the writings of authors such as Margaret Atwood, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison and Salman Rushdie.

Some writers actively pursue content for their books. Take Monisha Rajesh who has written

Around India in 80 Trains and *Around the World in 80 Trains*.

Let's see what floated Monisha's boat. An excerpt from the India book that appeared in *The Guardian* in 2020, goes: '...one drizzly November morning I read an article celebrating how India's domestic airlines could now connect 80 cities... However, the cost... held little appeal... until I noticed a network of threads running all over the map, thick



arteries fraying into the finest of capillaries. They reached into every nook and cranny, winding up mountains, hemming in the coast, stringing cities and states together. This was Indian Railways, the lifeblood that keeps the country's heart beating.'

British author Ann Morgan decided to read at least one book from every country in the world within a year. *The World Between Two Covers: Reading the Globe* is what she has served up for bibliophiles like us! And for those with unread books on their shelves, Susan Hill has written *Howards End is on the Landing: A Year of Reading from Home*. The story is that she was looking in her library for *Howards End* by EM Forster when she discovered she had not read so many of the books she possessed. She resolved not to buy a single book for a whole year until she had gone through all of them.

What have you decided?

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist

TRF Star Performers (2022–23)

Trophy	Zone 4	Zone 5
Highest Contribution to TRF Annual Fund	Sandip Agarwalla, RID 3141	VR Muthu, RID 3212
Highest Contribution to TRF Endowment Fund	Dr Lalit Khanna, RID 3012	Dr N Nandakumar, RID 3232
Highest Contribution to TRF Polio Fund	Sandip Agarwalla, RID 3141	VR Muthu, RID 3212
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF	Sandip Agarwalla, RID 3141	VR Muthu, RID 3212
Highest Total Contribution to TRF	Sandip Agarwalla, RID 3141	Dr N Nandakumar, RID 3232
Highest Donor Participation (% wise)	Sandip Agarwalla, RID 3141	VR Muthu, RID 3212
100% Club Participation for TRF Giving	Sandip Agarwalla, RID 3141 Kailash Jethani, RID 3142 Shrikant Indani, RID 3060	S Rajmohan Nair, RID 3201 Pubudu De Zoysa, RID 3220



IPDG Sandip Agarwalla receives trophies from RI President Gordon McInally and RIPN Mario de Camargo. Also present (from L) PDG Shashi Sharma, RI Director Raju Subramanian, TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, Malini Agarwalla, TRF Trustee Larry Lunsford, Vidhya Subramanian, PDGs Harjit Singh Talwar and Balkrishna Inamdar, and PRID Ashok Mahajan.



IPDG Anil Parmar receives an award from RI President McInally. Also seen (from R) PDG Deepak Purohit, RID Subramanian and Hema Parmar.



IPDG V Bhaskar Ram receives an award from RI President McInally. Also present (from L) PDGs Dodla Bharat Reddy, G V Mohan Prasad, TRF Vice Chair Pandya and Trustee Aziz Memon.

— Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7

Trophy	Zone 6	Zone 7
Highest Contribution to TRF Annual Fund	Jitendra Rajbhandary, RID 3292	Dr Anil Parmar, RID 3131
Highest Contribution to TRF Endowment Fund	Jitendra Rajbhandary, RID 3292	Jeetendra Aneja RID 3190
Highest Contribution to TRF Polio Fund	Dr Anand Jhunjhunuwala, RID 3030	V Bhaskar Ram, RID 3020
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF	Dinesh Sharma, RID 3100	Dr Anil Parmar, RID 3131
Highest Total Contribution to TRF	Pawan Agarwal, RID 3110	Dr Anil Parmar, RID 3131
Highest Donor Participation (% wise)	Dr Anand Jhunjhunuwala, RID 3030	Venkatesh Deshpande, RID 3170
100% Club Participation for TRF Giving	Dr Anand Jhunjhunuwala, RID 3030 Dinesh Sharma, RID 3100	V Bhaskar Ram, RID 3020 Dr Anil Parmar, RID 3131 Venkatesh Deshpande, RID 3170

Zone 4, 5, 6 & 7 (India, Nepal and Sri Lanka)	RI District
Nitish Laharry Trophy for Highest Total Contribution to TRF	3141
Binota and Kalyan Banerjee Trophy for Highest Endowment Fund Contribution	3012
Usha and Raja Saboo Trophy for Highest Annual Fund Contribution to TRF	3141
Highest Polio Fund Contribution to TRF	3212
District with highest new AKS members	3141



RI President McNally presents an award to IPDG Anand Jhunjhunuwala. (From L) TRF Vice Chair Bharat Pandya, PRID Manoj Desai, RI Directors Subrmanian and Anirudha Roychowdhury are also seen.

Membership and Public Image Awards in the next issue.

Pictures by K Vishwanathan

Friendship beyond borders

H Rajendra Rai

It has always been my dream to visit Pakistan and Bangladesh — the two countries which were part of India before 1947. I could visit Bangladesh twice on business trips in 2019. But my desire to visit Pakistan remained a dream till recently when I got an invitation from my batchmate TRF trustee Aziz Memon to attend his son Sinan's wedding in Karachi.

I landed in Karachi on Nov 18, 2023, where I was received by young Haseeb who whisked me quickly through the immigration. I cannot imagine something like that happening in India. That was the magic of my host PDG Aziz.

He hosted me at the Karachi Gymkhana which was established in 1886. During my three days stay in Karachi, apart from attending the Shandee (shaadi+mehandi) and

Sinan's wedding reception, I was escorted by Rtn Noaman Abdul Masjid who took me around on a tour to visit the Mohatta Palace, Mazar-e-Quaid-e-Azam, Hazrat Syed Abdulla Shaha Ghazi shrine, St Patrick's Cathedral, Farers Hall and the Empress Market. I thoroughly enjoyed my stay here as the hospitality of our Pakistani friends was fantastic.

The icing on the cake of my visit was meeting Qunoot and her father Mirza Afzal Baig after a gap of 12 years. Qunoot was treated for a complex heart surgery (transition of arteries and suturing of four holes in her heart) in 2011, thanks to Rotary, at the Jayadeva Hospital, Bengaluru. Dr Devananda, a well-known cardiac surgeon of Manipal Hospital and also a Rotary GSE alumni from 2000, had performed the surgery.



In response to a Facebook post a few days before my trip, Qunoot contacted me and, along with her father, met me in Karachi after a three-hour bus ride from Hyderabad (Pakistan). I was overwhelmed to meet them and equally happy to note that she is doing fine. She has completed her graduation and is looking forward to pursue a Masters degree and become a teacher. I connected them with Dr Devananda over phone. Qunoot thanked him and took his medical advice for her heart care. What touched me the most was the note she sent to me after her meeting with me in Karachi: "Rajendra Rai uncle, it was very nice meeting you after 12 years. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the members of the Rotary club. Indeed, I got the gift of life and am here because of the prayers of my parents and the hard work of all of you. I'd also like to thank Dr Devananda. He gave me a new life; if he hadn't accepted the challenge, I might not be here with you all. Thank you all for your love."

This note was the most valuable gift I have got in a long time and it will stay with me for years to come.



PDG Rajendra Rai (second from L) at the artificial limb section of the Pakistan Society for Rehabilitation of the Differently Abled in Lahore.



Above: PDG Rai meets Qunoot and her father Mirza Afzal Baig during his recent visit to Pakistan.

Left: Qunoot and Haseeb from Pakistan at the Jayadeva Hospital in Bengaluru, where they were treated for heart ailments, in January 2011.

My next stop was Lahore, the second largest city in Pakistan, with a population of over 13 million. Called the ‘City of Gardens,’ after the significant rich heritage of the Mughal Empire, Lahore has always been a seat of learning and knowledge with many prestigious universities. I had the glimpse of the new and old Lahore, thanks to my new Pakistani Rotarian friends Dr Ali Arshad

and Usman. We visited the Badshahi Mosque (built during 1671–1676), Minar-e-Pakistan, built during 1960 and 1968, on the site where the All-India Muslim League passed the Lahore Resolution, the Shahi Hammam, a Turkish bath house (built in 1635 during Shah Jahan’s reign), the Patli Gali, the narrowest lane (2.5ft width) of Old Lahore and the spice market.

During my week-long stay in Pakistan, I attended the meetings of the two oldest Rotary clubs in the subcontinent—RC Karachi, chartered in 1933, and RC Lahore, chartered in 1927. I also visited two schools—Kulsoom School supported by RC Karachi, and Aabroo School in Lahore, supported by RC Lahore Garrison Club.

This memorable visit to Pakistan was a revelation in many ways as I could see many similarities in how Rotary clubs in India and Pakistan have been helping the underprivileged by addressing their needs in the focused areas of literacy, mother and child care, and health. This trip not only fulfilled my dream of seeing that part of the subcontinent which has always remained an enigma to many of us in India, but it also made me experience the love and affection of Rotarian friends in Pakistan.

I am convinced that Rotary and Rotarians can do what the governments of the two countries cannot do—promote peace and amity through our good deeds.

The writer is a past district governor of RID 3191



With students at the Kulsoom School run by Hijaz Foundation and supported by RC Karachi.

RC Chidambaram Central — RID 2981



Sewing machines and dustbins, all worth ₹40,000, were donated to the Government Girls HS School.

RC Gurgaon — RID 3011



More than 100 girls and their parents agreed for vaccination at the cervical cancer awareness camp hosted with the support of Neev Foundation.

RC Sankagiri — RID 2982



Club president K Senthilkumar provided financial assistance of ₹5,000 to students of AGN Matric HS School, Konganapuram.

RC Pilkhuwa City — RID 3012



A Swachh Bharat drive was taken up in association with the DAV Public School and the municipality to create cleanliness awareness among the public.

RC Karur Young Gen — RID 3000



A goal-setting event on self-discipline and motivation was organised for 235 students at the government high schools in Somur and Vangapalayam.

RC Chopda — RID 3030



Dr Neeta Jaiswal examined the children and gave medicines at a health camp for differently-abled hosted by Rota Kids at the Purna Matrimand Vidyalaya.

RC Jaipur Kohinoor — RID 3056



Ration bags were donated to an old age home run by Aasha Deep Sansthan, Mansarovar. The caretaker thanked the club.

RC Pune Central — RID 3131



Twelve members contributed ₹40,000 each to donate sports wheelchairs to the Maharashtra Wheelchair Cricket Team.

RC Moradabad — RID 3100



A blind walk rally was taken with the support of Moradabad Institute of Technology and the health department to spread awareness on eye donation.

RC Solapur North — RID 3132



Over 100 patients were examined by Dr Suhas Kulkarni at an eye camp in Bhandarakwathe village. Spectacles, eye drops and pills were given.

RC Bareilly Metro — RID 3110



Around 90 patients were examined by Dr Rajesh Gupta, a Rotarian, in a medical camp being held every month over 20 years.

RC Virar — RID 3141



Sparsely used clothes, shoes and toys were donated to marginalised families after a collection drive by the club members.

RC Smart City Navi Mumbai — RID 3142



Around 120kg of e-waste was collected in a special drive with the municipal corporation. It is being held on the third Sunday every month.

RC Thirthahalli — RID 3182



Club members distributed school bags, notebooks and uniforms to students in rural schools in Thirthahalli taluk.

RC Hampi Pearls — RID 3160



DG Manik Pawar and PDG Tirupathi Naidu distributed blankets to 30 individuals in a special drive.

RC Coimbatore East — RID 3201



Providing desks and chairs, installing water purifier and tree plantation, all worth ₹60,000, were done at a primary school in Karupparayan Palayam.

RC Panaji — RID 3170



On World Polio Day, the Atal Sethu bridge across the Mandovi river was illuminated as part of Rotary's End Polio campaign.

RC Ammapettai Kaveri — RID 3203



Nilavembu water, an herbal concoction, was given to 800 government school students to ward off dengue.

RC Kollam Royal City — RID 3211



Keys to the newly-built house (₹7.5 lakh) was handed over to Prise Joseph, an auto driver, living with his wife and two children under *Project Rotary Home Abhayam*.

RC Siliguri Midtown — RID 3240



Dustbins were installed at the Government Higher Secondary School, Jaorpaukarai, with the help of Project Setu Foundation and BSF jawans to instil hygiene values in students.

RC East Coast Ramnad — RID 3212



Six bins for collecting recyclable plastic bottles were installed at the Bogalur toll plaza and two more will come up at the Ramanathapuram Railway Station.

RC Raipur — RID 3261



Diwali was celebrated with the deaf and mute children at the Arpan Divyang Public School. Sweets, oil, lamps, wicks, toothbrushes and pastes, along with stationery, were distributed.

RC Chennai Thiruvannamiyur — RID 3232



Tarpaulin sheets were distributed to 32 Irular families at the Chinna Edaiyathur village to provide a new roof to their mud huts.

RC Calcutta South City — RID 3291



An auto analyser (₹10 lakh) was donated to the pathological lab at the Bharat Sevashram Sangha.

Compiled by V Muthukumar



**TCA Srinivasa
Raghavan**

To throw or not to throw....



Over the last 25 years our family has shrunk. But for some reason that I can't explain, our house has grown from a two-bedroom thing with a large terrace to a five-bedroom thing with virtually no terrace. We only use one bedroom, however. The remaining four rooms are used as storerooms, because, well, they are there. But every now and then, the urge to clean up, especially when the weather is benign, comes upon us and we start looking for things we can discard or, because hope springs eternal, sell. But eventually all the effort results in nothing more than rearranging a lot of junk. It also involves severe emotional obstinacy on everyone's part. Fights ensue. Sulks rule the day. In the end it's the whiskey that provides much needed balm.

For example, we still have three cartons of our two sons' school notebooks, running from Class 1 to 12. They are in their mid and late thirties. But quite brilliantly, their textbooks have been given away because my wife thought someone could use them. I told her that by this yardstick, the notebooks were completely useless and should have been thrown away long ago. That suggestion was met with suppressed fury, and there's an impasse. I am not much better. I am hanging on to a few old broken guitars and cricket bats. My reaction to their being called useless was total non-cooperation. This

tamasha happens every three or four years, and life goes on.

Once, when both my sons were visiting, I told them very firmly to take away their things. Both refused equally firmly. Irritated, I asked them why I had to store their things. Their response was "It's you who has all the rooms, not us." In economics this is called Say's Law: supply creates its own demand. But I have another explanation. I think their wives decide what comes into the house and what doesn't!

Meanwhile, I have given away over 400 books, mostly to my old college. It's celebrating its 125th anniversary this year. But do you see the problem? I am giving away things that are important to me because I don't have the space and storing things that are not important to me because I have it.

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In voting theory this is called the Majority Decision Rule. The minority always loses. Indeed, some have even got a Nobel Prize for saying majority decisions are dictatorial.

Anyway, during a cleaning up effort five years ago we came across a beautiful wooden box with heavy inlay work and five old steamship type clasps on the lid. We have no idea how we acquired it. But somehow it had landed up in our house and we had stuffed it with souvenirs, locked it and stored it away. We don't even remember when that was. But it must have been at least 22 years ago. In the meantime, we had lost the key.

The problem now was to open the brass clasps without breaking them. They are old and brittle. So we went first to a locksmith, who failed. Then we went to a carpenter. He also failed. So we decided to store it away again. That was five years ago.

Last week, while searching for a room heater, we came upon this box once again. It has been under layers of plastic dust covers. We had forgotten all about it. This time, quite cleverly, we took it to an antiques dealer and he opened it in just a few minutes. Of the dozen or so awards there, only two were mine. The rest were my sons' and wife's.

No further proof was required as to who the underachiever in the family was and is. ■

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