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**Registration must be paid in full between 12 and 16 June 2021 to receive the US\$425 rate.*



**HOUSTON
2022**

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He enthralled the whole nation with his soulful renditions.

On the cover: RI President Shekhar Mehta and his wife Rashi at their home in Kolkata.

Picture: Rajesh Gupta.



Condolences to RNT family

Glad to see a colourful photo of RIPE Shekhar Mehta and Rashi on the June issue cover. RI President Holger Knaack's message is motivating and the Editor's Note explains well the agonies of people who have lost their loved ones. The RI directors' statement that the pandemic has shown that the only constant is change, and together we can do so much' is meaningful. Foundation Trustee Chair urged us to go forward without fear. *Dreaming big, bringing smiles* by Rasheeda depicts Shekhar Mehta's noble character. All other articles like the water projects done by RC Belthangady, life story of RIDE Mahesh Kotbagi, etc are excellent. Also, the advice by Dr Ramasubramanian in containing the second wave of Covid is an eye-opener. Photos are colourful too. Kudos to the editorial team for a superb edition.

Philip Mulappone M T, RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211

The sad demise of the close relatives of three of the RNT family members due to Covid, makes sad reading. We pray for the departed souls to rest in peace. Never in a hundred years there has been such a pandemic, and it is heartening to note that Rotary clubs are providing relief in many forms to the affected. RC Madras donating logistic equipment and trucks worth ₹1.1 crore for Covid vaccination, RC Madurai



Midtown running an electric crematorium that charges a nominal amount, RIPE Shekar Mehta's quick decision to kick-off distribution of 50,000 oxygen concentrators and many other clubs hosting vaccination camps, are all noble projects.

Winston Churchill's words, quoted by the Ravindran: "Let us go forward together" are so relevant during the present crisis. Rotary India Covid Task Force chairman Ashok Mahajan has rightly said, "Fighting Covid is our priority".

R Srinivasan, RC Madurai Midtown — D 3000

The profile on Shekhar Mehta showcases his boundless energy and Rashi's statement that he makes heart-to-heart connections is quite true. I wish his campaign *Each one bring one* achieves great success.

I felt extremely sad to read that the Covid had not spared the kin of the RNT team. I had the same feeling as your favourite writer Chimamanda Ngozi — "my anger scares me, my fear scares me, and somewhere in this shame, too- why am I enraged and so scared?" My compliments for the title of the editorial: "The trauma of long-distance mourning".

RID Bharat Pandya rightly says where there is great love there are always miracles, RID Kamal Sanghvi appeals to Rotarians to adapt to the new

Sound advice by Dr Ramasubramanian

The interview with Dr Ramasubramanian is informative as he advised us to have a balanced meal, sleep and exercise, avoid alcohol and smoking, and get vaccinated. Bharat and Shalan Savur in their article, *Stability on a seesaw* gave an insightful account of appreciating the "sight and sensitivity of what life is". Their tips will help us to manage our lives better by thanking our blessings.

*KMK Murthy
RC Secunderabad — D 3150*

Dr V Ramasubramanian rightly advises us not to panic if infected with Covid, and stay calm at home for a week and take medication. He urges everyone to get vaccinated, stay healthy by taking balanced meals, getting good sleep, exercise and avoid smoking. I thank this member of RC Madras for his sane and sensible advice.

N Jagatheesan, RC Eluru — D 3020

The editor's interview with Dr Ramasubramanian was absolutely delightful and informative with

the right emphasis on being calm. His perception and views are of an experienced clinical physician. The importance on psychological counselling and support ring true. He rightly says, "Whether it is helping somebody to survive or to feel better... showing empathy is important, and getting a warm glow which only helping others can bring." This is what Rotary is doing. This interview deserves a much wider circulation.

*Dr Usha Desai
RC Deonar — D 3141*

LETTERS

normal of virtual world. Trustee Chair Ravindran sums up the achievement of the Foundation so far: “We’ve raised more than \$282 million, putting us on the track to reach our \$410 million fundraising goal.”

Nan Narayenen, RC Madurai West — D 3000

It is sad that the RNT family was not spared by the pandemic. The editorial rightly pointed out that most families had to bear loss due to coronavirus. As the death toll rose, so many young people living overseas were at a loss to understand the grave situation in India. My daughter-in-law, an only child, living in the US, lost her father due to Covid but could not visit India due to travel ban. So many family members were not allowed to cremate bodies of relatives. People can understand the pain of those living overseas, who had to grieve long distance.

T D Bhatia, RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — D 3012

A pleasure to read Rotary News

I was thrilled to receive all the three issues of April, May and June and am thankful for your personal follow-up on this matter. The postman delivered them as we were sitting down for lunch. I lost hunger and started going through the April issue immediately, only to be admonished by my wife Meena, to “eat first and then read your beloved Rotary magazine.”

Rotary News is well-produced, right from the opening page and the

letters are a testimony to the popularity of the magazine.

The well-written articles with accompanying pictures are informative. It is always a pleasure to read them, including the LBW column written with a literary flair by TCA Srinivasa Raghavan. My kudos to him. I only wish that the magazine reaches us in time every month.

*Anil Latey, RC Poona
Downtown — D 3131*

A grim situation indeed

Your May editorial *The Covid Cauldron* vividly portrayed a grim situation, and focused on the need for the government to take emergency measures to contain the second wave.

Rotarians are one with your clarification call to strengthen healthcare system to overcome the pandemic. You are spot on when you said politicians should relinquish the blame game and unite to bring relief to the people.

*Arun Kumar Dash
RC Baripada — D 3262*

The article *Girl’s day out* was impressive and inspires Rotarians to think of taking up such projects in their areas, and tell the local community that Rotary cares for them. We will take up one such project in the near future.

*B A Prabushankar, RC Coimbatore
Industrial City — D 3201*

I liked the global grant project of RC Gwalior. I also read with interest the journey of a young Rotarian, Naresh Kumar from RC Guindy. His is a fascinating journey of 8,646 miles from Chennai to Hamburg, creating awareness about Rotary’s global work.

*Dr Madhav Kashalikar, RC Sangli
Midtown — D 3170*

The editorial *The Covid Cauldron* described an inadequate healthcare system and how both the government and the public are equally responsible for the lapses in handling the second wave. The tragic life of Geeta Dutta was nicely penned by SR Madhu. I am keeping a copy of this tragic life story published in *Rotary News* for my record.

*Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080*

Rotary Plus is a boon

Rotary News and *Rotary News Plus* are informative and have become family magazines. Congratulations to Editor Rasheeda Bhagat and her team.

*Ashish Desai, RC Kankaria
Ahmedabad — RID 3054*

In these unprecedented times, Rotarians have done excellent service. *Rotary News Plus* has given good coverage, showcasing the club projects.

*Moin Khan, RC Jamshedpur
Midtown — D 3250*

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor:
rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com.

Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos,
to rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the Editor at rushbhagat@gmail.com or rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com. WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

Click on **Rotary News Plus** on our website
www.rotarynewsonline.org to read about more Rotary projects.

Rotary must empower girls for a better world



SERVE TO CHANGE LIVES

My Dear Changemakers,

I wish each of you and your families a great Rotary New Year! Together, let us make it the best year of our lives, by making it a year to *grow more and do more*. Let this be a year of changemakers, and let us begin with our membership.

That is precisely why the *Each One, Bring One* initiative is so important. During this year, I urge you to dream of new ways in which Rotary can expand its reach into your community and therefore the world. If each member introduces one person to Rotary, our membership can increase to 1.3 million by July 2022. So, let's just do it!

Imagine the change we, as Rotary members, can make when there are so many more of us! More people to care for others, more people to *Serve to Change Lives*. Think of the impact we can have through *grow more, do more*. More members will enable us to embark on bigger and bolder service projects. And each of us can also continue to serve in our own personal ways, responding to needs in our communities.

The beauty of Rotary is that service means different things to different people around the world. One element, however, that we can incorporate into all of our service initiatives is *empowering girls*.

Unfortunately, even in this day and age, girls and young women face disproportionate challenges all over the world. We have the power to lead the charge for gender equality. Empowering girls and young women to have greater access to education, better healthcare, more employment, and equality in all walks of life should be embedded in every Rotary project we launch. Girls are future leaders, so we must ensure that we help them shape their future.

These are challenging times, and I compliment each of your efforts in grappling with Covid-19. No challenge is too big for Rotarians. The bigger the challenge, the more passionate the Rotarian. Look at what we can do when we take on a colossal challenge such as eradicating polio. Look at the millions of lives we improve by strengthening access to water, sanitation, and hygiene. Look at what we do every year to promote peace in places where it seems unimaginable. Our basic education and literacy programmes have nation-building impact.

This year, let us challenge ourselves to do more such projects and programmes that have national reach and impact. This year, let us *Serve to Change Lives*.

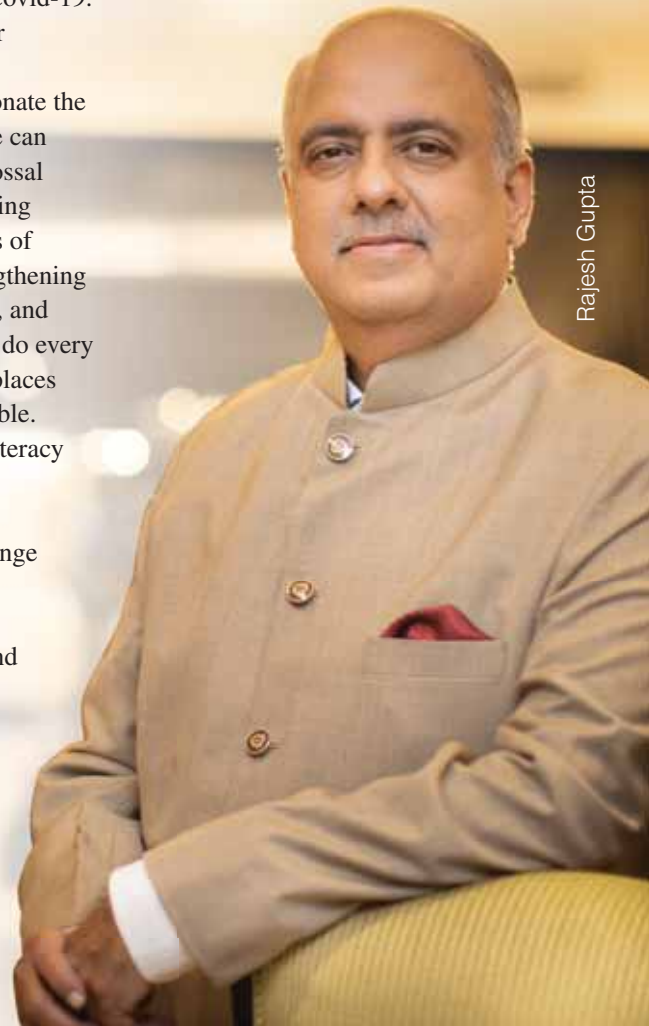
The biggest gift we are given
Is the power to touch a life,
To change, to make a difference
In the circle of life.

If we can reach out
With our hand, heart, and soul,
The magic will start to happen
As the wheel begins to roll.

Let's turn the wheel together
So all humanity thrives,

We have the power and the magic
To *Serve to Change Lives*.

Shekhar Mehta
President, Rotary International



Rajesh Gupta



Chennai schoolgirls' #MeToo moment

A major focus area of RI President Shekhar Mehta this Rotary year will be empowering the girl child. In recent years I've watched several Rotary clubs working passionately for the girl child, building thousands of toilets for exclusive use by girls in schools across India under the WinS programme, to prevent adolescent girls dropping out of school for lack of privacy. So many clubs have also taken up projects to spread awareness on child sexual abuse and how to differentiate between good and bad touch.

For a month now Chennai has been rocked by a scandal involving the sexual harassment of schoolgirls by their male teachers in some of the most prestigious schools. It all started with a brave young woman, Kripali, an alumna of an elite Chennai school, sharing appalling Instagram stories and screenshots of conversations between a Commerce teacher of the school and girl students. The scoundrel, who has now been arrested, would comment on their appearance, send them pornography links, touch them inappropriately, ask them out for movies and turn up for online classes with just a towel wrapped around his waist.

Following these allegations on social media, over 1,000 alumni of that school demanded the teacher's sacking. He was arrested under the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act. Soon complaints, involving male teachers from six schools, including one Kendriya Vidyalaya, poured in. The theme was common — pinching thighs, slapping bottoms, encircling waists, and lewd comments and gestures.

The saddest part was that this heinous sexual predator was dismissed from another school for forcing his girl students to sit on his lap, and give him "friendly kisses", whatever that means. Had the offender been handed over

to the police right then, hundreds of other girls would have escaped the humiliation and trauma of sexual molestation by a teacher.

Unfortunately, in several schools, complaints made to the school managements hitherto had been stonewalled. Denial is so much easier than action. Add to this the upbringing and social conditioning of our daughters in most families being so skewed that a victim of sexual harassment first blames herself, thinking: 'I must be doing something wrong'. Many harassed girls said they had told their mothers, but were shamefully advised to "keep quiet", avoid the perpetrators and finish their high school. Who is going to compensate these young minds for the psychological scarring caused?

I'm sure this is only the tip of the iceberg. Girls from affluent classes going to reputed schools in a city like Chennai finally found a voice, thanks partially to the anonymity offered by social media platforms. What about the small towns and rural areas? What assurance is there that similar sexual harassment is not going on unabated, unreported?

This is serious cause for concern as our education ethos is already loaded heavily against the girl child. We all know that where financial resources are limited, the son goes to a private school, the daughter to a government school. Provided she is not required at home to cook, clean and look after her younger siblings. UNICEF's India head Yasmin Ali Haque had spelt out at the virtual Rotary Institute the terrifying prospect of a post-Covid world where "11 million girls may not return to school this year due to the unprecedented disruption in schooling."

I salute the brave girls of Chennai who dared to speak up, and their seniors who supported them.

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Director

Innovate for a digital world

Greetings fellow Rotarians,
Welcome to a journey of opportunities and joy. We are about to begin a new year of Rotary which is not only challenging but is also going to test our commitment towards our motto: *Service Above Self*.

In these challenging times, we need innovative minds brimming with ideas, joy and enthusiasm. We have to get away from negativity of the pandemic, apply our minds, plan and re-plan, design and re-design our actions.

We have to be innovative in everything we say, think and do. This is the time to re-define our ways and means to serve humanity. We can no longer rely on the way we used to serve for more than a century now.

We need innovation in today's digital world, in this new-normal life. It has provided, along with challenges, new opportunities to us. Post-pandemic, the world has changed forever and the process continues. Nobody knows exactly where we will end up but we need to prepare and be ready to serve in this changing environment.

Instead of trying to achieve our goals on our own, let us expand our vision and outreach to other organisations that are doing good in the world. Find NGOs in your vicinity which can

collaborate with Rotary to make dreams real... ours, theirs and those of our communities.

Edgar A Guest said:

*There are thousands to tell you, it cannot be done,
There are thousands to prophesy failure;
There are thousands to point to you, one by one,
The dangers that await to assail you;
But just buckle in with a bit of a grin,
Just take off your coat and go to it;
Just start to sing as you tackle the thing,
That "cannot be done," and you will do it.*

I conclude with Swami Vivekananda's thoughts: Stop not till the goal is reached. Stand up and express the divinity within you.

Fellow Rotarians, the time has come for all of us to stand up and express ourselves through our acts and deeds. Be a light not only for yourself but others too. Be a friend not only for a few chosen ones but others too.

Remember that "we shall not pass this way again. Whatever good you want to do in the world, start doing it today." My best wishes to each of you on the journey of change, opportunities and challenges.



Dr Mahesh Kotbagi
RI Director, 2021-23



Speak

A magical network for care, selfless service

A new Rotary year is with us and we have learnt a lot of lessons in the year that has just gone by. As we engaged in bringing relief to hundreds of thousands of Covid-affected people, we learnt that the Rotary world truly has no boundaries when it provides opportunities to serve. Distributions of masks, PPE kits and sanitisers, food supply to patients under quarantine, oxygenators import, distribution and tracking, search and allocation of hospital beds to those in need and so much more happened. All this was achieved through the compassion and hard work of Rotarians worldwide coming together magically, swiftly and seamlessly to form a network of care.

We learnt through the pandemic that the world and humanity needs Rotary more than ever before. Rotary is the best suited organisation to efficiently and effectively connect resources to those in need. As we begin a new Rotary year, I urge every Rotarian to work to strengthen Rotary.

A strong membership base is a prerequisite for effective and significant service projects if we are to penetrate all corners of our community. We must therefore work towards a broad-based membership growth, with the responsibility being shared by each and every member — *Each One, Bring One*.

The resilience exhibited by the districts and Rotary clubs in our region in the past two years has been nothing short of amazing. Despite the world as we know it crashing down around us, Rotary clubs effortlessly adapted to the virtual world for meetings, events and even fellowship. That all events,



conferences, training seminars etc were held virtually and none missed out was an admirable show of commitment to keep the show going and on the road. Congratulations everyone! Well done!

As we step forward this year, strengthened and fortified, we must resolve to operate in a leaner fashion and cast away some of the practices that may no longer be necessary and harness those which will help us grow.

Having walked a difficult path over the last two years, which may continue for some more time, and having emerged unscathed and toughened, should give us the courage to take the new and untrodden pathways. For, we must remember that the most difficult roads often lead to the most beautiful destinations. Good luck!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'AS Venkatesh'.

AS Venkatesh
RI Director, 2021–23

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Our vision for a better world



July is the most exciting month in Rotary, a time for fresh starts and new beginnings. For many, it's an opportunity to take on new leadership roles. Rotarians brim with optimism, thinking about the good we can do for humanity in the 12 months ahead.

As I write this message, I recall a quote often attributed to Helen Keller, a renowned American activist

for people with disabilities: "The only thing worse than being blind is having sight but no vision."

How profound that a woman who was blind taught us such a powerful lesson about the difference between sight and vision. Indeed, it is one thing to see the world as it is, but entirely another to envision it as it could be. The Rotary Foundation is all about envisioning possibilities — and making them happen.

As we begin this Rotary year, I ask: what is your vision for the next 12 months? Could a community or region you know benefit from a grant from the Foundation? One probably could, and, as you read these words, many people in that community are waiting for our help and leadership.

We are still reeling from the challenges of serving the world during Covid-19, but we cannot let that or anything else stop us. Many educational and healthcare needs have only been exacerbated by the pandemic. The world needs us.

Beginning July 1, you can apply for Foundation grants supporting Rotary's new area of focus: the environment. July also brings changes, such as the financial restructuring of the World Fund, that have been implemented with an eye toward sustainability. We are just beginning a year when we will continue our first Programs of Scale grant in Zambia, seek a home for our next Rotary Peace Center, and plan and implement district and global grants that will make positive impacts for generations to come.

To paraphrase the ancient Chinese philosopher Laozi, today we begin the journey of a thousand miles by taking our first step. Let's walk together, looking forward, not to the past. Rotarians love a good challenge, so here's one for us all: let's challenge ourselves to think bigger this year and enlarge our vision of what we can and will do.

Make the Foundation a part of your vision for a better world, and you will see the world, and yourself, change.

John F. Germ
Foundation Trustee Chair

Begin countdown!



Houston calls itself "the city with no limits," and when you attend the 2022 Rotary International Convention, June 4–8, you will see what that means. It is a city of big numbers: Houston covers more than 600 square miles, and with 2.3 million residents, it's the fourth-largest city in the United States. The metropolitan area's seven million people speak at least 145 languages; Houston is by some measures the most diverse metropolis in the country.

The city contains more than 300 parks, with some 40,000 acres of parks and green space. It's a hub of entrepreneurship; more than 250 early-stage software and digital technology companies call downtown Houston home. It's also a centre of biomedical research: The Texas Medical Center is one of the largest hospital campuses in the world, employing more than 100,000 people.

And, of course, Houston is home to NASA's Lyndon B Johnson Space Center, which has been one of the country's centres of space flight for more than 50 years. Home to the US astronaut corps, it continues to foster innovative space research. While you are in Houston, make time to visit Space Center Houston, NASA's official visitor centre, which offers a variety of educational exhibits and programmes about space exploration.

Whether you are looking to the stars or making connections with Rotary members from around the world, the 2022 convention is a chance to discover new horizons.

Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org.

District Wise TRF Contributions as on May 2021

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contributions	EREY Donors (in numbers)	EREY %
India							
2981	82,274	5,978	12,128	0	100,381	390	7.99
2982	50,118	17,194	20,770	65,991	154,073	136	4.45
3000	88,727	30,242	492	48,063	167,524	96	1.87
3011	90,729	16,253	65,653	437,990	610,625	153	4.22
3012	18,762	2,580	0	42,321	63,663	87	2.37
3020	162,532	71,917	86,660	42,907	364,017	279	6.84
3030	61,903	2,317	27,840	143,546	235,606	168	3.30
3040	37,694	458	0	14,507	52,659	53	2.53
3053	27,093	4,248	5,000	230,147	266,488	57	2.07
3054	74,395	3,562	0	368,873	446,830	266	4.37
3060	120,683	1,466	158,924	193,665	474,738	1434	32.89
3070	49,059	1,813	0	53,217	104,090	309	9.82
3080	70,784	13,615	97	(11,748)	72,749	183	5.55
3090	36,545	533	0	(736)	36,343	119	5.38
3100	58,072	252	0	15,885	74,209	193	8.59
3110	48,248	200	0	0	48,448	75	2.05
3120	16,919	1,811	0	9,127	27,857	120	3.63
3131	275,463	44,060	136,935	962,735	1,419,193	1153	22.50
3132	30,501	4,612	15,000	6,451	56,564	76	2.27
3141	710,728	46,361	397,279	1,535,408	2,689,776	1283	24.13
3142	258,604	34,634	451	6,831	300,520	1021	31.85
3150	141,302	10,165	160,043	54,299	365,809	821	24.80
3160	44,687	9,846	16	440	54,990	83	3.29
3170	85,135	24,889	1,240	216,338	327,603	318	5.62
3181	96,908	7,524	0	8,826	113,258	383	11.45
3182	102,703	6,170	0	30,852	139,725	416	13.48
3190	226,713	81,234	52,035	243,752	603,733	1150	23.02
3201	191,708	43,344	0	579,819	814,871	669	12.01
3202	69,706	28,028	8,468	94,044	200,246	233	4.32
3211	48,782	3,452	0	151,356	203,589	75	1.67
3212	19,726	56,488	10,153	227,512	313,879	58	1.41
3231	4,776	589	0	23,767	29,132	25	0.64
3232	80,095	48,730	21,500	1,219,025	1,369,349	301	5.29
3240	166,798	29,431	0	48,835	245,063	446	14.65
3250	50,638	4,464	7,195	100,550	162,846	360	9.76
3261	108,390	1,563	50,000	107,471	267,425	46	1.76
3262	114,055	3,253	2,777	(14,082)	106,004	160	4.46
3291	87,422	15,397	35,758	71,577	210,154	142	3.88
India Total	4,009,378	678,674	1,276,417	7,329,562	13,294,031	13,337	8.99
3220 Sri Lanka	196,992	37,082	31,000	48,881	313,956	344	18.07
3271 Pakistan	55,292	102,291	0	306,550	464,132	203	12.50
3272 Pakistan	84,067	20,600	0	1,168	105,835	518	30.94
3281 Bangladesh	192,454	38,600	34,012	480,501	745,567	450	6.37
3282 Bangladesh	64,263	11,023	0	8,270	83,556	129	3.15
3292 Nepal	274,937	9,867	0	317,142	601,947	1,769	35.77
South Asia Total	4,877,383	898,137	1,341,429	8,492,073	15,609,023	16,750	9.87
World Total	112,566,754	24,912,477	28,908,170	27,816,154	194,203,554		

Source: RI South Asia Office



Dream weaver

Our new president, Shekhar Mehta, envisions Rotary's next chapter — and is ready to make it a reality.

John Rezek

Over the years, I caught glimpses of Shekhar Mehta when he came to One Rotary Center in Evanston, Illinois, for Board of Directors meetings. I met him formally during one of the days of back-to-back meetings with various staff members that every incoming Rotary president participates in. During the session I attended, he was the most relaxed person in the room, despite being the only one suffering from jet lag. He was alert, patient, and asked perceptive questions — not surprising for someone as successful as he is in his professional and philanthropic life. I kept thinking that he was assessing each of us to see how we could be recruited to help him achieve his dreams for Rotary.

I was lucky to have met Shekhar in person back when we could meet in person. We are now well into the second year of the global Covid-19 pandemic, and as I write this, India is in the depths of a tragic outbreak. Rotary has had to make adjustments, but the business of Rotary goes on.

In a normal year, one of the *Rotary* editors would have traveled to Kolkata, where Shekhar lives with his wife, Rashi. We would have spent time with him, his family members, and his friends and fellow Rotarians, exploring how his upbringing and adulthood in India have shaped his perspective on life and on Rotary. This year, of course, no one was able to travel — so instead,

we asked the people who know Shekhar best to tell us about him in their own words.

In the following pages, members of Shekhar's family, some of his oldest friends, his personal assistant, and his presidential aide share anecdotes and talk about the man they know, in order to help Rotary members everywhere feel that they know him, too. Many of you will, of course, meet him yourselves — virtually, if not in person — over the course of the coming year.

Shekhar Mehta, a member of the Rotary Club of Calcutta Mahanagar, has been a Rotarian since 1985. He trained as an accountant and founded a real estate development company, Skyline Group, which he also chairs. But his professional title tells only a small part of the story of who he is. He is also a director of the India arm of Operation Eyesight Universal, a Canada-based nonprofit focused on preventing avoidable blindness. He helped establish more than 15 eye hospitals, in several Indian states, that together carry out nearly 50,000 surgeries each year. And he started *Saving Little Hearts*, a project that has facilitated more than 2,500 heart surgeries for children from India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and some African countries and that is now an India-wide programme.

As you'll read in these pages, he also has been actively involved in disaster relief work. Among other undertakings, he helped build 500 homes in



Shekhar and Rashi Mehta at their home in Kolkata. Rashi painted the picture “Mother and Child,” behind her.

the Andaman and Nicobar Islands after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami.

At the International Assembly this year, Shekhar talked about how he and some fellow Rotarians decided to start a local version of ShelterBox, a Rotarian-founded organisation based in the UK. “We named it Shelter Kit and put 52 items of daily need in a large trunk,” he told the incoming district governors. “Over the last 15 years, in every major disaster in India, Indian Rotarians have volunteered to bring Shelter Kits to areas struck by disasters.” The programme already has served about 75,000 people. Shekhar also served on the ShelterBox board of trustees.

And he is also the architect of the TEACH programme, which aims to do nothing less than end illiteracy in India. (You’ll read more about this ambitious programme in a future issue.)

Although Shekhar is skilled in the business arts, he prefers to engage his other fluencies. He told me that, after so much studying and reading during his career, he now favours learning by talking to people. He added, “I hate accounting.” It all follows his belief that we would do well to think from our hearts as much as our minds.

Chiraag Mehta **Shekhar and Rashi’s son**

For as long as I can recall, Dad has lived and breathed Rotary. He and my mother have worked hard at both the service and fellowship aspects: planning and attending events, then staying afterward with Rotary friends into the wee hours of innumerable mornings. My sister, Chandni, and I would joke that we have an invisible elder sibling: Rotary. And Rotary has given back to our entire family. It gave Chandni and me our earliest friends, and it gave us the spirit of service, which Dad has always emphasised to us and in his countless Rotary speeches. Throughout his many leadership roles, he always made us

part of his journey. We’ve been to eye hospitals and polio vaccination camps, participated in disaster relief kit work, discussed every aspect of his literacy mission, and attended many conferences. We learned and grew so much as a result.

Rotary has contributed hugely to my parents’ growth as individuals. Travelling the world and meeting people from many countries has made them more knowledgeable, self-aware, humble, and compassionate. As their son, I feel very privileged to have been a part of it, and proud of who they are today.

One of my earliest childhood memories is of pouring over Rotary directories and memorising the names and themes of Rotary presidents. Now it is

surreal, albeit thoroughly deserved, that my dad is Rotary president himself.

Deepak Choudhury **Rotary Club of Calcutta Mahanagar**

Main hoon na: This Hindi phrase, meaning “Don’t worry, I am there for you,” embodies Shekhar’s mindset. He has been there not only for me, but for many people in Rotary and other parts of his life. He has been this way for as long as I’ve known him — first as his lawyer before he introduced me to Rotary in 2002, and ever since.

With his encyclopaedic knowledge and his wit, he can have you laughing at any moment. But when he sees suffering, he has an unrelenting zeal to eliminate its cause. He dreams about a smiling

RC Calcutta Mahanagar supports this girls’ school in Kolkata, Bhowanipur Arya Vidya Mandir, with a daily breakfast for more than 1,000 students.



world, and when he wakes up, he works to make it happen. He is a changemaker who aims to inspire an entire generation to *Serve to Change Lives*.

I read a few years back that good things happen when you engage in Rotary. Shekhar and Rashi have been instrumental in imbuing this belief in me and others.

Ravi Vadlamani

Rotary Club of Guntur; 2001–02 governor of District 3150

When I met Shekhar almost 20 years ago, he was busily manning a booth at the Rotary International convention. His enthusiasm and energy in showcasing his club's projects were infectious. A project man myself, I was inspired



by the work exhibited at the booth. That casual encounter developed into a strong friendship.

Shekhar is a visionary leader. He always sees things others can't. He envisaged a way to eradicate illiteracy in India by 2025 and designed the TEACH programme (which stands for Teacher support, E-learning, Adult literacy, Child development, Happy school). He started the Shelter Kit project that now is in the vanguard of disaster relief in India. His *Saving Little Hearts* project, which provides heart surgeries to thousands of children, along with the more than 15 eye hospitals he helped establish, which have served hundreds of thousands, speaks to the scope of his dreams.

He has an exceptional talent for building teams and driving them to achieve their goals. Shekhar's programmes and ideas may seem larger than life, but he always walks the extra mile to make Rotarians feel at home.

His power of dreaming big is backed up by planning, perseverance and patience. He's an excellent communicator who connects with his audience instantly and can motivate people to move mountains. He is also a family man, ably supported by his spouse, Rashi.

Shekhar's X factor as a leader? Nobody is able to say no to him when he asks for something.

Sarla and Nisheeth Totla

Rotary Club of Calcutta Mahanagar

We met Shekhar and Rashi about 32 years ago through a mutual friend. Today they are not just our friends, but our family. Shekhar is the first person there in all life's joys and sorrows. He was there for our daughter's marriage, taking on major responsibilities. He was there for the cremation of Sarla's mother. Shekhar also introduced us to the Rotary world, something that's been a gigantic part of our lives.

“Shekhar's programmes and ideas are larger than life, but he always walks the extra mile to make Rotarians feel at home.”

Shekhar has many extraordinary qualities. He is an unparalleled visionary, a great motivator, and an absolute optimist; he's super energetic, enthusiastic, unbelievably kind and sensitive. He's a perfect family person and, above all, a fantastic human being.

Nancy Barbee

Rotary Club of Maysville, North Carolina; 2018–21 Regional Rotary Foundation Coordinator, Zone 33

In 2010, to honour then-Rotary President-elect Kalyan Banerjee, Shekhar stated his vision of opening 100 schools, 100 hospitals, 100 training centres for young women and 100 eye hospitals in India. We were sitting in his home in Kolkata. As I listened, I realised I was in the presence of a visionary.

Since then he has had a profound influence around the world. Paediatric heart surgeries, eye surgeries, the TEACH programme for literacy, and memorandums of understanding signed by governments, nonprofits and foundations — all are the results of his vision.

Every time he speaks, he motivates us all to “dream big.” Shekhar inspires us to do better, be better, think better, and do grand things. No more small projects.

He was thinking big a decade ago, and I knew I wanted to be a part of his dream, which now has become reality. Shekhar has been leading Rotary in India and inspires others to create positive and sustainable change worldwide.

AS Venkatesh

Rotary Club of Chennai Mambalam; 2021–23 Rotary International director

Closest to Shekhar's heart is humanitarian work, the very DNA of Rotary. Conversations with him invariably last late into the night. I have spent hours with him over the last several years and have yet to figure out when he eats or sleeps. He has unending energy, exquisite people skills, and inspiring thoughts. His enthusiasm is infectious. I am excited to be serving on the Board during his term as president.

Rashmi Singh and Madhulika Jain Shekhar's sisters

Shekhar, our elder brother, is a dreamer whose next dream is always bigger and more audacious than the previous one. He inherited a love of community service from our parents, and his optimism, meticulousness and dedication are the secrets to his success.

His favourite response to us is *Main hoon na*, which translates as, "Don't worry, I am there for you." In our more than 50 years together, he has always been true to his word.

Bryn Styles

Rotary Club of Barrie Huronia, Ontario; Aide to the president

I first met Shekhar when we sat on Rotary's Board for 2012–13. Our relationship was





Clockwise from top left:

With PRID Ashok Mahajan, RID 3142 PDG Chandrashekhar Kolvekar and RC Thane Hills member Anindya Dasgupta, inaugurating computer learning programme for students with visual impairments; Meeting patients at an eye hospital founded by RC Calcutta Mahanagar; Building a toilet in a village with club members Pranay Agarwal and Sandeep Shah; With Rashi and Anu Rampal, Vidhawan visiting a child being treated for heart disorder; Celebrating RC Calcutta Mahanagar's 25th anniversary in July 2015; Playing carrom with students at the Paresh Nath Vidyalaya school in Kolkata.



cordial, but not close. When Shekhar was nominated as 2021–22 Rotary International president, he asked my wife, Randy, and me to be aides to Rashi and him. Since then we have developed a close friendship.

What I have learned to appreciate about Shekhar is that he listens to advice. He realises that he is not an expert in all things. Since becoming president-nominee, for example, he has developed a greater understanding and appreciation of Rotary's peace efforts. He has spoken with staff, Rotarians and our peace partners to learn how we can enhance our efforts with the United Nations, our Rotary Peace Centers and our peace fellows, among others.

I would be remiss in not mentioning that Shekhar has a wonderful sense of humour, which allows him to engage with people and put them at ease. He's an excellent speaker and ensures that everyone feels welcome. Although I know he regrets not being able to attend presidents-elect training seminars where he would have met Rotary club presidents face-to-face, his passion comes through even in a virtual setting.

Ritu Kedia

Shekhar's Rotary assistant

Shekhar's guiding mantra is: "Service is the rent I pay for the space I occupy on this earth, and I want to be a good tenant." He envisions goals that might seem impossible to others. He can transform his dreams into realistic goals. He is at his best when he works with a team, figuring out a strategy and a timeline. Shekhar excels because of his passion for what he does. He is an amazing orator, persuading others to join his efforts. He is a great planner and digs deep to the grassroots level to ensure that his plan of action will be successful. His involvement is hands-on throughout the process.

Shekhar is a man of his word; if he says he will do something, he will.

He helps those in need and teaches them to help others. He is a patient listener and a great mentor — I am lucky to have experienced that firsthand. He has taught me how to be comfortable juggling multiple priorities, as he does. He is very kind to the people around him.

Kamal Sanghvi

**Rotary Club of Dhanbad; 2019–21
Rotary International director**

People are so accustomed to thinking like everybody else that they are afraid to explore the possibilities of their mind. Shekhar, on the other hand, has an uncanny ability to picture something that isn't yet there. He sees possibilities where others find dead ends.

He constantly questions the status quo and thinks of improving the

Rotary experience, product, or service. Shekhar is one of the most innovative people I have known. He has a solution for every problem.

Shekhar has a tremendous capacity to overcome obstacles with sheer steadfastness and grit. He will not sleep until he achieves his goals, no matter how hard that may be. His team members do not rest either, and Shekhar ensures that each one follows a mantra of excellence.

For him, everything has to be larger than life. Thinking big is not unique, but thinking big and achieving the audacious is. Shekhar believes that a dream is not what you see while sleeping; a dream is what won't let you sleep. He believes that "love and compassion are necessities, not luxuries; humanity





Clockwise from top: The Mehta family: children Chandni and Chiraag; Rashi and Shekhar; and daughter-in-law Geeta; Enjoying pani puri with Sangkoo Yun, the current Rotary Foundation vice chair; At his desk: “This is where I put all my dreams into action,” Mehta says; Shekhar and Rashi Mehta with 1999–2000 RI President Carlo Ravizza and his wife, Rossana, at the 1999 International Assembly. In 2016, Rotary leaders from across India, including PRIP Kalyan Banerjee and his wife, Binota (front row), lit candles pledging to prepare tens of thousands of children to attend school through the Asha Kiran (Ray of Hope) programme; Shekhar and Rashi Mehta doing their part to spread the message of End Polio Now.



cannot survive without them.” He also believes that if you cannot keep your family happy, you cannot keep anybody else happy.

Anand Sureka

Rotary Club of Calcutta Mahanagar

I’ve known Shekhar since 2001 and had the privilege of working closely with him during the year of Rotary’s centennial in 2005. Here’s what I’ve learned: He is highly focused, he never says no to anything, he is witty and has a great sense of humour, he always delights his audience when he speaks, and, more than anything, he is a very good human being and a great friend. At the base of all of his activities is the philosophy that mankind is his business.

In 2008, Shekhar dreamed of setting up another eye hospital in Kolkata. He established a partnership with the L V Prasad Eye Institute, one of the best eye care hospitals in the country. He helped raise funds and gave his time, resources and energy to make it self-sustaining.

He always leads from the front. Whenever a disaster struck the nation,

I saw Shekhar present. When there were floods in Guntur and Begusarai or earthquakes near the Pakistan border or in Nepal, Shekhar was there, lending his hand for Service Above Self.

He is always looking for ways to do more and explore new areas of service. Whether constructing toilets or setting up a library, he is never short of energy and vision.

Kishore Kumar Cherukumalli
Rotary Club of Vizag Elite; 2009–10
governor of District 3020

I first encountered Shekhar when he spoke at a club in Kolkata in 2008. I was moved by his speech, which was laced with candid and bold ideas. In 2010, I invited him to our district conference; it turned out to be the beginning of a strong friendship. I have also had the privilege of working with him on events and committees and have witnessed his exceptional work ethic. His mission in Rotary is service, service, service.

He has big dreams, but he is also a keen listener who observes, analyses, and then implements a plan in order to achieve his objective. He believes strongly in Rotary, and practices what he preaches. He respects democracy and carefully weighs every opinion in group decisions. This encourages everyone he works with to give their best. He can precisely identify the strengths of his team members and match them with the Rotary responsibilities best suited to them. In meetings he often breaks the monotony with anecdotes and humour.

Shekhar once had to address a conference with just a couple of hours to prepare. One of his former employees lived in the town where the event was being held and had invited him to visit. Although he was on an impossible timetable, Shekhar obliged. He has demonstrated the importance of sustaining relationships — as well as a

mysterious supply of constant energy, a capacity for 18-hour workdays, and an ability to provide instant solutions for any problem.

Anirudha Roychowdhury
Rotary Club of Calcutta Mega City;
2007–08 governor of District 3291

Shekhar is a charismatic leader who always exudes positive energy. He's a great motivator and an out-of-the-box thinker. He fosters friendships, generates goodwill and is easily approachable. His never-say-die attitude is one of his greatest assets. He is a down-to-earth person; he enjoys simple food from ordinary places and often visits roadside joints to eat spicy Indian snacks.

He and Rashi complement each other: Rashi is calm and rooted to the ground, providing strength for Shekhar to fly high.

Chandni Mehta
Shekhar and Rashi's daughter

Dad has tremendous zeal and enthusiasm for life. He exudes energy and warmth and wins people over with his sense of humour and thoughtfulness. He has an intuitive awareness of inequities, and his commitment to service springs from his commitment to fairness and fellowship among people. He ignites enthusiasm in others. He is, most important, a free soul with an undying spirit for life and action.

Rajendra Saboo
Rotary Club of Chandigarh; 1991–
92 Rotary International president

I got to know Shekhar through Vijay Bhandari, a past district governor who spoke highly of him, saying that he had potential to rise within Rotary. My friend Vinay Nevatia, a member of the Rotary Club of Calcutta, told me that if I were to go to Shekhar's apartment I would find that it was full of materials for disaster relief kits, and





that both Shekhar and his wife, Rashi, would themselves be busy packing the boxes. I realised Shekhar was a hands-on, service-oriented Rotarian.

When the Boxing Day tsunami hit in 2004, Shekhar's club put together hundreds of kits for people on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, which had been devastated. Shekhar travelled thousands of miles, many times, to and from those islands in the Bay of Bengal to deliver kits and help set up shelters. And in 2015, Shekhar packed and organised the kits that were destined for Nepal after a catastrophic earthquake there.

Rashi Mehta

Shekhar's wife

Shekhar has a deep soul and a large heart. He is not only genuinely kind but also sees kindness in others, and never shies from praising and encouraging others for the smallest acts of goodness. He loves to work with people, is a team guy as much as a leader. His joy, energy, and capabilities double up when he works with a team. He is an exceptionally positive and enthusiastic person. I have not seen the thought of failure bogging him down. If anything, he emerges stronger and smarter out of challenging situations. He has trained his mind to see the silver lining in difficult situations and firmly holds on to the faith that we will overcome.

Kalyan Banerjee

Rotary Club of Vapi; 2011–12 Rotary International president

I first met Shekhar 25 years ago. I was a Rotary International director, and then-RI President Herb Brown had asked me to convene a South Asia conference in Kathmandu, Nepal, which then was in the same district as Kolkata. The district governor had assigned a team of young Rotarians to help me organise the event, and one particularly bright, smart and often outspoken young man engaged my attention. He was full

of ideas, enthusiasm and innovations and was always willing to learn. That's how I first got to know Shekhar.

Following the success of the Nepal event, Shekhar and I stayed connected. I followed his Rotary career with interest, first as he was elected governor of his district and then, a few years later, as a director. I was always amazed by his ability to get people to support him enthusiastically in whatever task he gave them. He was irrepressible and bustled with new ideas.

After the Boxing Day tsunami, he travelled to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands — which, though a part of his district, are 1,000 miles away in the Indian Ocean. And he later devised an amazing kit, which included a tent, bedding, toiletries, candles, clothing, and basic tools. Rotarians from all Indian districts helped with funds, and if there was an earthquake in Nepal, as there often are, or a tsunami in Chennai or a cyclone in Odisha or a disaster in Maharashtra, the kits would be there in 24 hours flat. Shekhar himself would be there just a bit later.



The UK-based ShelterBox, which was started by Rotarians, is internationally known for providing relief after disasters anywhere in the world. Around 2015, the Rotary Board asked Shekhar to meet with ShelterBox to negotiate a long-term arrangement. Not only was he successful in that,

he served as a ShelterBox trustee as well.

Over the years, with his obvious sincerity and commitment to Rotary, Shekhar has elicited amazing trust and devotion from almost every Rotarian he meets, everywhere. I have watched with admiration as he became somewhat of a pied piper in Rotary and was not surprised when he took on the assignment to help make India fully literate. No one was sure how this could be done. India has a population of 1.3 billion people, about a quarter of whom are not literate. Shekhar connected with the Indian government, joined with all the appropriate NGOs, and got Rotary's efforts and sincerity recognised.

This literacy task is as big as making India polio-free. Now, with Shekhar leading Rotary, I'm confident that it will be achieved. And Shekhar will ensure that Rotary is recognised all over the world not only for the service that it does, but for bringing people everywhere together.

John Rezek is the Editor-in-Chief of Rotary

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Mehta's parents, Sumer Chand and Vallabh Mehta, surrounded by their children and grandchildren: (back row) Chiraag and Madhulika Jain, Rashi and Shekhar Mehta, and Rashmi and KK Singh, (middle row) Geeta and Chiraag Mehta with Shekhar's parents, and (front row) Ishita and Roshni Jain; Shekhar's daughter, Chandni Mehta; and Sejal and Sanjana Singh.

Rotary launches oxygen cabs to ferry Covid patients

Team Rotary News

Cabs fitted with oxygen cylinders and other Covid care facilities were launched by RC Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080, under its *Oxygen on Wheels* project to provide emergency assistance to corona patients and transport them to nearby hospitals.

The club joined hands with Buddy Cabs, a car rental service provider, and Haryana State Legal Services Authority (HSLSA) to extend the “the first mile connectivity before a patient gets proper treatment at a hospital,” said club’s past president Salil Dev Singh Bali who had conceived the project. The service will be available to patients across Chandigarh, Panchkula and Mohali, he added. HSLSA executive chairman Justice Rajan Gupta, also a judge at the Punjab and Haryana high court, flagged off the project and appreciated the club’s initiative.

The cabs will also deliver oxygen cylinders for needy Covid patients at



Club members with the Oxygen on Wheels cab.

their doorstep and assist hospitals with heavy caseloads but lack ambulances by ferrying patients. “The drivers were trained to administer oxygen to patients in need during transportation or at their doorsteps,” said Bali, adding that the oxygen cab service is provided free of charge for Covid patients in the tricity.

The inaugural ceremony was attended by district and sessions

judge Parmod Goyal, also secretary, HSLSA; judicial and police officials from Panchkula and Mohali; and Buddy Cabs founder-CEO Sartaj Lamba. AG Dr Rita Kalra, president-elect Salil Chopra and Rtns Renu Chopra and Pardeep Sisodia represented the club. The emergency project was dedicated to late DGN Naveen Gulati. ■

Justice Rajan Gupta from the Punjab and Haryana high court flagging off the Covid cabs in the presence of Rotarians.



Business as usual not possible after pandemic: **Holger Knaack**

Rasheeda Bhagat

Those who think that after the Covid pandemic it will be “business as usual”, are wrong, as “that will be impossible,” said RI President Holger Knaack, at his inaugural address at the Taipei virtual convention. Rotarians will have to adapt to and embrace change, and think about the opportunities this pandemic has brought, along with challenges. “For Rotary clubs, this means thinking strategically and considering how we can build on the experiences of the past year. We have all seen just how valuable virtual meetings can be. International meetings are now routine. Exciting new service projects can be planned and executed in real time across the world, and we can collaborate together like never before.”

One challenge could be fundraising in this environment, “but that too can be managed, if not enhanced, by the use of technology, as people can see now their donations in action. All of this immediate interaction is leading to new ideas and problem-solving.”

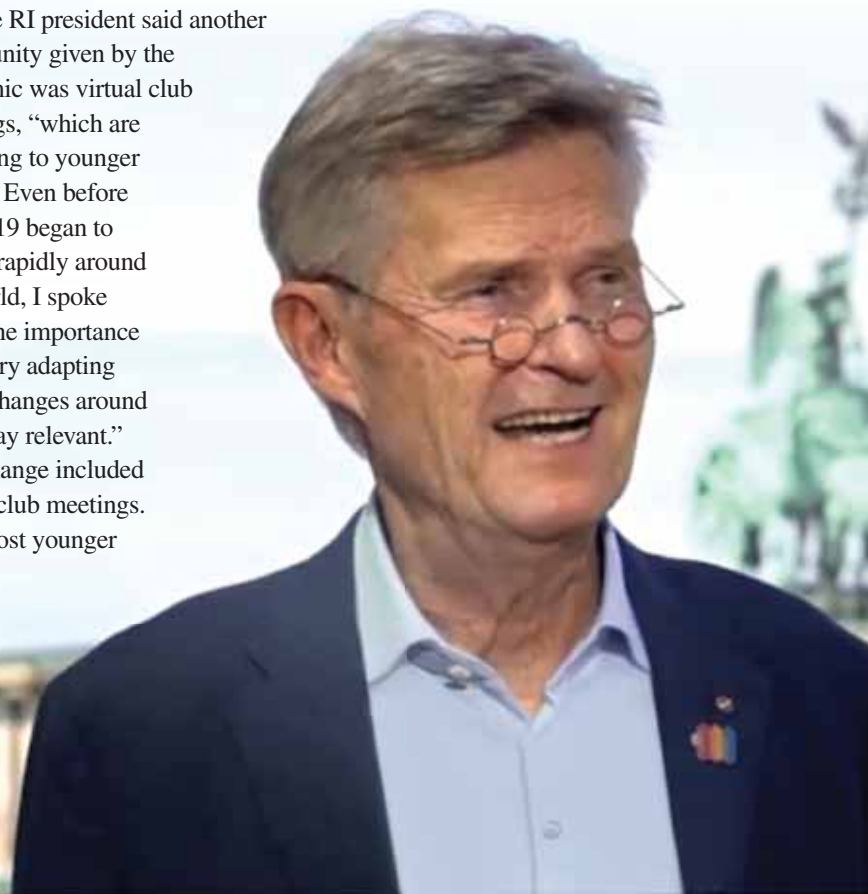
Knaack said that for Rotary and Rotarians, “this has been an important year.” The optimism of Africa being declared wild polio-free, had been followed by Rotarians’ commitment to ending polio being greeted by the news that until early May, there were just two cases of wild poliovirus worldwide. Apart from

their commitment to end polio from the world, Rotarians across the world were also looking forward to taking up work on Rotary’s new area of focus — the environment. Work would also continue to take “Rotaract to a new level this year, with higher visibility in the Rotary world than ever before. Also, two countries — Africa and Australia — as well as many clubs will be celebrating their Rotary centennial.”

The RI president said another opportunity given by the pandemic was virtual club meetings, “which are appealing to younger people. Even before Covid-19 began to spread rapidly around the world, I spoke about the importance of Rotary adapting to the changes around us to stay relevant.” That change included virtual club meetings. “For most younger

generations, clubs built around shared meals don’t fit with their lifestyles. This was not an experience they had growing up, and certainly did not fit with their busy social calendars.”

In his opening conversation, filmed outdoors in his home town of Hamburg, and which gave the feel of a physical, real time meet, he shared that Suzanne and he “don’t have children of our own, but we have hosted about



40 youth exchange groups.” In a lighter vein he added that Suzanne says this improves their tolerance levels!

Knaack said that it cannot be denied that Rotary clubs are “ageing”, and Rotary is counting on Rotaract to help bring the average age down. He said he is often asked what he says when a youngster asks him to describe Rotary. He tells them that it is a service club, but much more than that. “It helps foster international connections, networking and enables friendships around the world, apart from giving the opportunity for personal growth.”

The pandemic had brought great devastation and far many lives had been lost, including many “people important to us. We must continue to honour those who have passed and do whatever we can to bring this devastation to an end as soon as possible.”

He was happy that Rotarians continued to play a crucial role to “help the world cope with the pandemic, and we are stepping up across the globe with vaccination campaigns that can help bring it to an end.

I want to thank all the Rotarians who have done so much to help us cope with these difficult times.

Nothing can override



RI President Holger Knaack in conversation with Sasha Hingst, news anchor and member of RC Hamburg, in front of the 325-year-old German Academy of Arts, in Hamburg.

Instead of speakers at a podium, everybody’s face is right in front of us. We speak to each other directly, face-to-face, and this has helped us transcend cultural boundaries.

our sense of loss, but we cannot ignore the ways the pandemic has forced us to make positive change.”

This change had allowed the forming of a “new closeness through our use of technology and our commitment to mutual care. The time and distance between us has shrunk dramatically. Instead of speakers at a podium, everybody’s face is right in front of us. We speak to each other directly, face-to-face, and this has helped us transcend cultural boundaries,” Knaack added.

Of course, “we have missed hugging people, casual chats over coffee, and our in-person meetings. These

things are important and will return in due time. But we’re also getting better at the casual parts of virtual and turning it into more opportunities for unscripted thinking and planning.”

The lessons learnt in the last one year would help Rotary “become a more modern organisation. We need to use this opportunity to welcome younger men and women and more diverse groups. This is how we will expand our reach. And the technology will continue to evolve. Our comfort will continue to grow. The technology will become more user-friendly, exciting, and engaging, and we will become better at blending the live world with the digital one.”

Always an espouser of new technology, Knaack urged the attendees to use the “technology of this convention to have an engaging learning experience and fun” by attending breakout sessions, engaging in chat rooms, and making new connections.

He extended a warm welcome to Vietnam, the newest country with Rotary’s presence. ■

Our difference and diversity are our strengths: **Jennifer Jones**

Rasheeda Bhagat

Each of us is unique and that's what makes us special. And in Rotary, we know that our differences really are our strengths. It's our diverse perspective

that helps us to tackle the world's most pressing challenges," said RI President Nominee Jennifer Jones, addressing the Taipei convention.

In Rotary people with diverse backgrounds

were "drawn to each other, because we know the power of our service. We've all felt it. We know the mysterious, powerful force that service creates, and which ends up enriching

our souls and creating greatness."

Earlier a video clip was played out of a conversation between Jones and PDG Sylvia Whitlock, a trailblazer in making possible women's entry

RIPN Jennifer Jones (R) in conversation with PDG Sylvia Whitlock from RC Duarte, California, US.



into Rotary. In that conversation Sylvia explained to the RIPN, the whole drama behind the court case to bar women's entry into Rotary, with the US Supreme Court finally ruling that women cannot be kept out from Rotary.

RI President Holger Knaack announced the setting up of a Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award to honour any Rotarian or anyone who had advanced women's membership in Rotary.

Addressing the virtual convention and stressing the importance of the power of team work, Jones said that working together, Rotarians would accomplish great things. As civil rights activist Martin Luther King had



said, “everyone has the power for greatness.’ Not for fame, but for greatness. Because greatness is determined by service.”

By working together Rotarians would not only achieve great things but also “leave for future generations an organisation that reflects the world they live in and that carries forth timeless values we treasure so dearly. Imagine a world that’s becoming more aligned with the values of Rotary.”

One fallout of the Covid pandemic was the creation of “a season of outreach in Rotary. We’ve had to find new ways to connect, new ways to hold our hands and expand our arms a little wider.” Not

only had the clubs been strengthened more, but because of technology, “we also see a Rotary that includes people we would’ve never come into contact with in other times — and who we can’t wait to meet face-to-face” whenever that becomes possible.

Even as its reach had widened, Rotary had found “a broader, more diverse perspective”, reaching out to people, of every gender, age, nationality, language, belief, or economic status. “Now we are diversifying our friendships like never before,” Jones added.

Designed by
N Krishnamurthy

Support the Action Plan to keep Rotary thriving: **John Hewko**

Jaishree

The world is changing rapidly and to continue thriving in the years ahead, Rotary must keep evolving. The new Action Plan has been designed to take the organisation over to the next 20–30 years,” said RI general secretary John Hewko, addressing the Rotary virtual convention. “This plan is intended to help us honour our past and embrace our future by guiding our organisation, members and supporters towards projects, opportunities and activities that support our vision,” he added.

The plan has four priorities — increasing Rotary’s impact, expanding its reach, enhancing participant engagement and increasing the ability to adapt. It is a step-by-step

guide for Rotary clubs and districts to follow the path of growth.

“Often, organisations reach saturation at some point. This made us think what can we do differently, how can we engage members and take the organisation farther. This Covid pandemic has shown us that it is possible to change,” said Hewko, highlighting how Rotarians world over have learnt to adapt to virtual platforms. “We have learnt to embrace technology. We have expanded our reach through partnerships in various areas of focus. We have added a new

area of focus — environment — and programmes of scale to fund large, significant projects to make a difference in communities. We have moved on to engage Rotaractors significantly, into the Rotary family. We can do a lot more on this.”

Clubs and districts are the core of Rotary. “One of the most important things clubs can do to support the Action Plan is to develop their own strategic plan that aligns to and reflects the priorities and objectives of the new strategy,” he said. Every club president, president-elect and nominee must work in tandem to ensure continuity over the years “so that we can all work together towards the same goals. We can evolve and keep Rotary not only relevant but thriving. We need to explore and adopt new, effective models and ways for people to engage with Rotary.”

Earlier Hewko took the convention attendees on a virtual tour of the One Rotary Centre — the RI headquarters in Evanston, Chicago, including the RI president’s office and the AKS Gallery.

Convention committee chair and past RI vice president Kenneth M Schuppert welcomed the delegates and invited them to “have fun” and participate in a walking challenge, cooking classes, yoga and meditation sessions, and even attend a dance party. ■



Environmentalism is part of all our service projects: **Shekhar Mehta**

Jaishree

Caring for the environment has always been part of most of the areas of focus of RI, said incoming RI president Shekhar Mehta at the Rotary convention, talking about Rotary's role in environmentalism and how it has been adopted as an area of focus.

Rotary's WASH programmes have included building check dams,

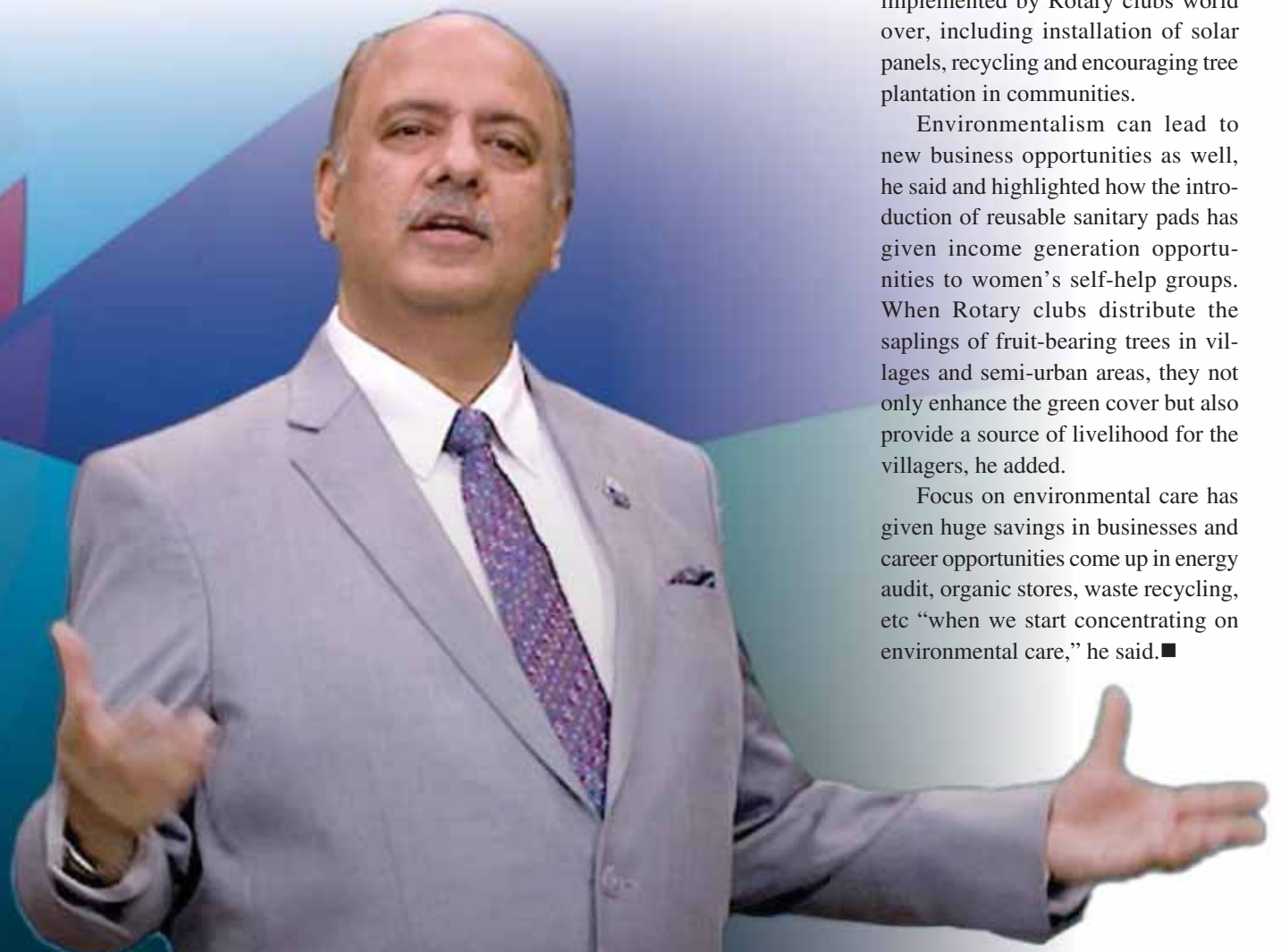
rejuvenating water bodies and water harvesting. "Even if the programme is about water and sanitation, it also addresses the environment. Similarly, when we built toilets in schools and villages, they took care of the health and hygiene of children and adults, in addition to addressing proper sanitation for the surrounding areas," he pointed out. A menstrual hygiene

management programme is a health and an environment programme as well. "When we began promoting reusable cloth sanitary pads, this helped to address women's health and with the elimination of the plastic element from disposable napkins, we could make it eco-friendly."

Mehta highlighted the various environment-friendly initiatives being implemented by Rotary clubs world over, including installation of solar panels, recycling and encouraging tree plantation in communities.

Environmentalism can lead to new business opportunities as well, he said and highlighted how the introduction of reusable sanitary pads has given income generation opportunities to women's self-help groups. When Rotary clubs distribute the saplings of fruit-bearing trees in villages and semi-urban areas, they not only enhance the green cover but also provide a source of livelihood for the villagers, he added.

Focus on environmental care has given huge savings in businesses and career opportunities come up in energy audit, organic stores, waste recycling, etc "when we start concentrating on environmental care," he said. ■



We refused to allow TRF to be “burned to the ground”

K R Ravindran

Rasheeda Bhagat

History is full of catastrophes, rebirths and incredible accomplishments that seemed impossible in the darkest moments. Rotary was born in Chicago in 1905. Only 34 years before that, the entire city had burned to the ground with only a handful of structures still standing. Some wondered if it was even worth the effort to rebuild Chicago.”

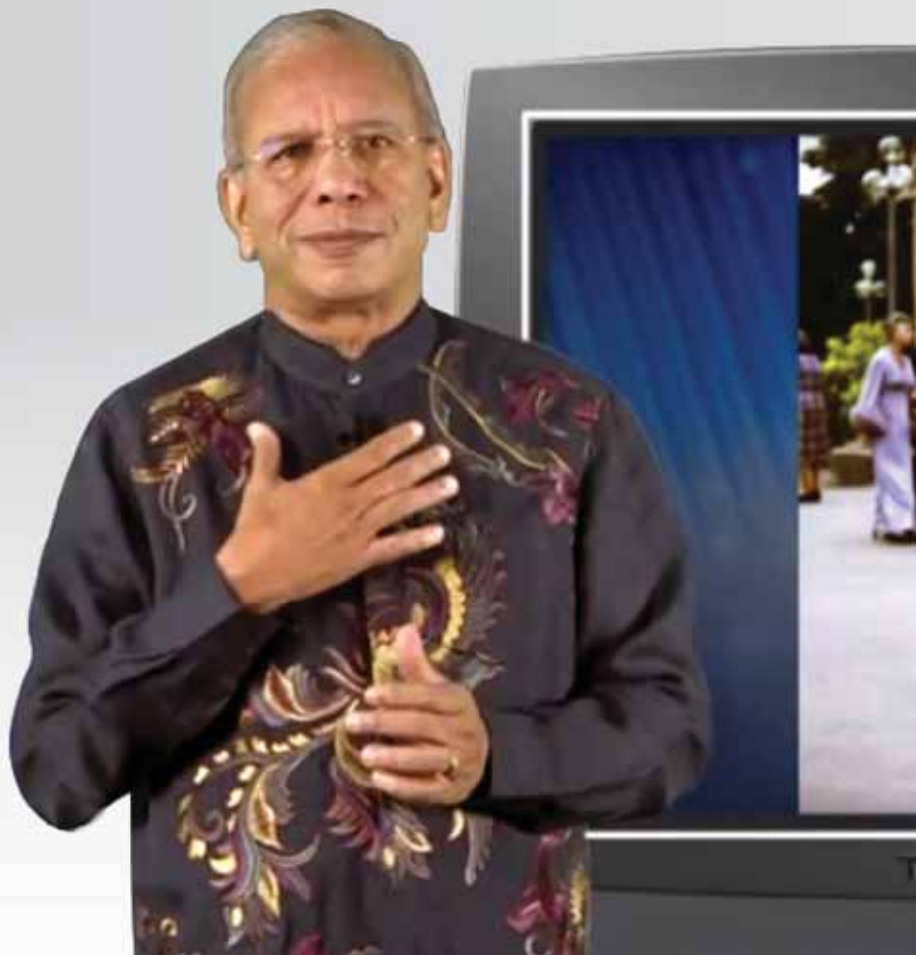
With this anecdote, TRF Trustee Chair K R Ravindran captivated participants of the RI virtual convention, to illustrate how every catastrophe comes with an opportunity.

Chicago’s devastating destruction also brought with it both “hope and vision”, with city planner Daniel Burnham drawing up an entire new vision of the city that “defined the landscape and set the stage for all the structures that we see today. He said about his ambitious city plan: ‘Make no little plans. They have no magic to stir men’s blood; make big plans, aim high in hope and worth, remembering that a noble logical diagram once recorded will never die. But long after we are gone, we’ll see a living thing asserting itself with ever growing insistency. Remember that our sons and grandsons are going to do things that will stagger us. Let your watchword be order, and your beacon, beauty.’”

Ravindran added that Burnham’s plans were adopted; Chicago grew, great skyscrapers rose and “Rotary was hatched in this atmosphere of optimism and ambition.”

Drawing this analogy to TRF and its performance during the

pandemic challenges, he said, “Early in 2020 when we set the goals for this Rotary year we did so with high hopes of achievement only to see Covid 19 posing so many challenges which threatened to derail our plans. But we have,



incredibly, not only achieved much of what we set out to do but in early Jan 21, we even exceeded the goal (the milestone set for the year till January). We refused to allow TRF to be burned to the ground.”

The Trustee chair urged all Rotarians to “look at our architecture and envision a future foundation that will withstand every storm in the horizon.” This year TRF had laid the groundwork to enable Rotary’s seventh area of focus, the environment, to take off on July 1 “to inspire our clubs to think of innovative ways that will help protect our planet and mitigate the growing threat of climate change”.

“We also opened the doors to Rotaract clubs to apply for global

grants. Beginning 2022, Rotaractors take on a new and important role in shaping the service projects that define us.” Even as Rotary celebrated Africa being declared polio-free, “TRF has awarded our first project of scale grant, that will make a major impact towards a 90 per cent reduction in the incidence of malaria in Zambia, saving countless lives of children and pregnant mothers.” In this, the Foundation received equal financial contribution from the Gates Foundation and World Vision. This could be a precursor for the future. Opening the door to corporations looking to partner with us to make a big impact through big projects.”

Ravindran announced that thanks to “an extraordinary pledge

TRF has awarded our first project of scale grant, that will make a major impact towards a 90 per cent reduction in the incidence of malaria in Zambia.

by the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation” a new Peace Center in the Middle East and North Africa region would be opened with no cost to us.”

Amidst “all these ambitious steps”, the Trustees were constantly pondering on ways to raise more funds for the global grants, TRF’s flagship programme, which were getting immensely popular. Giving numbers, he said that in 2013–14 when GGs were introduced, 868 grants were given worth \$47.3 million; by 2019–20, the number of these grants had risen to 1,359 (worth \$95.6 million)! “While global grants funding increased by over 100 per cent, the corresponding Annual Funds contributions did not keep pace, increasing by only 6 per cent during that period.”

So “corrective action” was taken “to ensure that GGs will be sustainable for years to come, even, as we predict, that the demand for them will grow further. And we are not stopping there; TRF has been exploring avenues to raise more funds from outside agencies. This year we obtained \$5million from USAID to fund Italian Covid-related projects.” he said. ■



Breathe India, breathe, says RC Queen's Necklace

Rasheeda Bhagat

These are times when millions of Indians have been hit by loss of jobs with the worst affected being daily wage earners, migrant labourers and the homeless. To mitigate the hunger pangs of those who cannot afford their meals, Rotary Club of Queen's Necklace in Mumbai, RID 3141, has launched a project titled *Community Fridges*.

This 35-year-old club with 181 members has installed several community fridges across Mumbai in areas such as Andheri, Bandra, Parel, etc which are stocked by the local people with fresh food, leftovers, fruits and vegetables. "Those in need of food can walk up to a fridge and take whatever they require. There are no eyes watching them and no one judging their helplessness. Preserving dignity of those in need is the philosophy of this initiative and it helps remove the stigma of begging," says Sneha Pathak, club president.

There are two crucial factors which are making this project work; so far five fridges, each costing about ₹45,000, have been placed. "The first factor is the location of the fridge, because they have to be close to both

the contributors and the receivers. The second, of course, is that somebody, preferably an organisation on whose premises the fridge is kept, has to take responsibility for it. Temples, mosques, churches, schools and even restaurants have proved to be successful locations, she says. Two members — Asif Porbanderwalla and PP Sanjiv Mehta — are in charge of this project to ensure that the fridges are kept well stocked with food, there is no stale food and the fridges remain clean.

Sneha says that the ultimate idea is to set up 50 such community fridges across Mumbai, but "we have to ensure that the local resident groups take the onus of ensuring these fridges are always stocked with food". On the kind of food available in the fridge Porbanderwalla says, "It is largely bananas, packets of *dal-chawal*, or *khichdi*, some people put loaves of bread, while others might buy some *samosas* or *vada-pao* and place those packets there. A very thoughtful gesture is putting water bottles in these fridges."

It is interesting to know that those who pick up the food are not only the daily wagers or homeless,



A little boy picks up a food packet from the Community Fridge installed by RC Queen's Necklace.



Preserving dignity of those in need is the philosophy of this initiative and it helps remove the stigma of begging.

but also local policemen patrolling the street, or the *safai karmacharis*. “We’ve even had students picking up some food from our fridges. One of them is kept at a convent school and the nuns have taken the responsibility of ensuring that the fridge is well stocked and is kept clean too,” says past president Sanjiv Mehta.

Raising money for its charitable projects has never been a problem with this club. It may be recalled that during the first lockdown, when Mumbai’s homeless, street dwellers, migrants and daily wagers were struggling for sustenance, RC Queen’s Necklace raised a whopping ₹14 crore to supply one crore fresh, cooked meals through April and May 2020 to needy Mumbaikars.

Sneha adds, “we customise every fridge, which has a glass door, by branding it with the Rotary Wheel and if it’s a donation by a member in the memory of a loved one, his/her name is also displayed on it. We want to expand this project to put 50 community fridges but are going slow with their installation, as we want to ensure that first of all the local people take ownership of

the project, no stale food remains in the fridge and it is cleaned regularly. During the second wave, as cases were going up, and there was more demand for food, the club itself was stocking at least 150 meals in every fridge, to meet the shortfall on demand.

During times of such huge demand, what prevents a person from walking away with several packets, I ask her. She smiles and says: “We haven’t had a single negative experience like that yet. I was there for the inauguration of a couple of fridges and saw people taking only what they need. Yes, occasionally someone may take not one but two meals, for a person at home, which is okay.”

Another commendable project of the club appropriately titled *Breathe India Breathe* is to provide oxygen concentrators to those infected by corona and gasping for breath. This was started three months ago, even before the second wave of the pandemic hit Mumbai and other places in India. “A commander who is the

We haven’t had a single negative experience like people walking away with several food packets; they take only what they need.

recipient of the President’s Gallantry Award for his bravery in the Taj Mahal hotel terrorist attack on 26/11, called seeking an oxygen concentrator (OC). A woman from Bhiwandi called to say she has no money to pay a deposit for an OC, but a family member needs it urgently,” says Sneha.

Those getting discharged from hospitals required to take oxygen at home for 15 days, and because oxygen was not available, even the HNIs who could remain in home isolation and get well with oxygen support, were rushing to hospitals, taking up beds required for the more seriously sick patients, because OCs were not available even at a premium.

Hospitals in Palghar, Mahad and Nashik also reached out for support, showing the seriousness of oxygen shortage.

Team Miracle, the service arm of the club swung into action and started this project to give out OCs on loan, free of cost, to needy patients. “We asked no questions about caste, class or creed; our only aim was to help patients stabilise and remain at home and in doing so reduce the demand and pressure on hospital beds. We soon built up a bank of 40 machines, acquired at an average cost of ₹50,000, to ensure that we never had to say no to anyone,” says Sneha.

Admirably, the money required for this project was raised through the club’s members. In this project the oxygen concentrator is loaned free of cost for 10–15 days, and about 35 concentrators are constantly in circulation, and over 200 people have already benefited from this scheme.

Awareness about availability of these OCs was spread through social media “and our message went viral. We also put up posters in hospitals and spread the word to doctors,” she added. With a club member, who has a spare



This & facing page: Covid patients get oxygen support with the help of oxygen concentrators rented out by the club.



house in Bandra giving the nod, the OCs are kept there and two tele-callers hired by the club, answer calls. A three-member core team — comprising Rima Shah, PP Manoj Gursahani and Anne Shefali Mehta — then decides on the genuineness of the request, and tracks the patient. “We ensure that the concentrator is returned in a good condition, so it can be cleaned and made ready for the next patient. So far, we haven’t had a single bad experience,” says Rima Shah.

Barring two cases where the patient had to be hospitalised due to

existing comorbidities, all the people who availed this facility from the club, did well through home isolation, and “hence our intent of reducing pressure on hospital beds was well achieved,” says past president Manoj Gursahani.

Another significant service project of the club is helping patients from interior villages, that are about two hours of driving distance from the district headquarters hospitals. “They

were in dire need of advanced life support ambulances. They often found that even after travelling this distance, the admission itself at overburdened hospitals was taking hours,” says the club president. Seven such well-equipped ambulances are being organised for use in the rural areas of Maharashtra at a total cost of **₹1.4 crore**. Half of these funds were raised through CSR,



A volunteer providing a food packet to a needy person.

the other half came from club members. The ambulances are fitted with oxygen supply and ventilators, along with other monitors and are capable of supporting a critical patient from remote villages till she reaches the nearest hospital. This project is being done in conjunction with the National Health Commission, Maharashtra, which will be maintaining and managing the ambulances.

We put up a Whatsapp message the previous evening at 8 pm, and in three hours we raised ₹34 lakh for 4,000 grocery ration kits from our club members.

Next it was found that medicines were required for thousands of people in “rural and government hospitals as well as daily mushrooming Covid centres. We provided the same”. Medicines worth ₹7 lakh were supplied by the club to Covid treatment centres at Nehru Centre and Poddar Hospital, besides government-run hospitals such as St George, KEM and GT Hospital, as well as hospitals in Mahad.

An oxygenated van was donated by the club to be stationed at the Quepem Covid care centre, Goa, and it ferried patients within the city of Goa to hospitals and back and provided oxygen in the interim hours before a bed was found.

As May 2021 saw Mumbai reeling under the second and more lethal wave of the Covid pandemic,

and the city was locked down, the club decided to supply 3,100 ration kits, each enough to feed a family of four for a month. Raising money has never been a problem for this club, where at least 70 per cent of the members donate money for community welfare projects, and money is often, and speedily, raised on the club’s Whatsapp group. “Each ration kit costs ₹850; we wanted to start the distribution on June 3, and put up a Whatsapp message the previous evening at 8 pm, and in three hours we raised ₹34 lakh for 4,000 grocery ration kits from our club members. An outside donor chipped in with 1,000 kits.” So a total of 5,000 grocery kits were handed out, says Sneha.

Proving that it really cares, during the last lockdown, as the supply of food to the community fridges dried up, the club raised money to place 150 cooked meals every day in the five community fridges. ■

Creating a Rotary-Rotaract synergy

Jaishree

At the Rotary virtual convention Yichun Elyse Lin, charter president, RC Taipei Daylight, Taiwan, highlighted how Rotarians and Rotaractors can work in harmony to achieve Rotary's common goal — transforming communities.

After the 2019 CoL voted to officially recognise Rotaract clubs as a membership type, the Elevate Rotaract Task Force appointed by the then

RI President Mark Maloney recommended an update in Rotaract policies to reflect this new status and create an inclusive, innovative and flexible membership experience.

Elyse, a dual member herself, extolled how this elevated status can benefit both Rotarians and Rotaractors. “At club level, while developing a service project or event, when Rotaractors come up with good ideas, invite them to take the

lead and manage the project as well. Rotaractors are great leaders,” she said, addressing the Rotarians and, to the Rotaractors, she suggested, “if you have a service project, you can turn to Rotarians for help. They have the professional experience and resources through their well-developed network.”

Rotaractors are good with social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. Having a Rotaractor in the team can help Rotarians expand their reach. Elyse recommended inviting Rotaractors to be part of Rotary's district committees. “Their knowledge of technology will help in developing effective district training events,” she said, adding that her district committees benefited immensely with contributions from both, Rotarians and Rotaractors. “We triggered an amazing chain reaction when we invited Rotaractors to participate in our training seminars. Chairs of several youth district committees started inviting Rotaractors to join and serve on their committees. The DRRs, in turn, sought help from Rotary clubs to develop district service projects.” There are still so many ways to develop a synergy for Rotary and Rotaract to work together. “It benefits not only the people we serve, but ourselves too. The more connected we are, the more opportunities we will have. In the long run, we are also opening opportunities for Rotary,” said Elyse. ■



Medical Google of RID 3232

Rasheeda Bhagat

All of us have seen pictures of ambulances queueing up outside hospitals during the second wave of the Covid pandemic. We were all under tremendous pressure to find hospital beds with oxygen, and even ventilators. A former Rotarian called to say he was waiting outside the GH in Chennai. ‘There is a queue of ambulances, my son-in-law is sick and his oxygen saturation level is only 80’,” recalls RID 3232 DGN and eminent maxillofacial surgeon Dr N Nandakumar.

By this time, thanks to the initiative of IPDG G Chandramohan during his year to bring the doctors in his Rotary

district together in a group, to help Rotarians with their healthcare needs, RID 3232 had a robust group of 193 healthcare professionals, including 165 doctors. The “doctors’ group”, which Dr V Sriram, community services chair for the district, refers to as **Medical Google** — as it has not only specialists and super specialists, but also professionals from hospital management, the pharma industry and medical equipment manufacturers, was further strengthened by DG S Muthupalaniappan, as he saw the pandemic taking a firm grip over the country.

On getting the SOS, Dr Nandakumar immediately reached out to the doctors’ group, saying “we need a hospital bed urgently. DRFC M Ambalavanan

responded saying there is a bed available in MMRV Hospital, and we immediately shifted him there. He had left Rotary but I was still in touch with him. The son-in-law got treatment, recovered and was discharged.”

A fallout of this help was that the grateful man has returned to Rotary, “saying that thanks to help from Rotary, my son-in-law is alive today.”

A great gesture

There are so many such cases. DG Muthu relates two interesting anecdotes. Dr S Suresh, a member of this doctors’ group, and secretary of the Voluntary Health Services (VHS), a flagship hospital in Chennai which caters to the middle and lower

From L: RID 3232 Covid Task Force chairman P Sathish, DGN Dr N Nandakumar, IPDG G Chandramohan, DG S Muthupalaniappan, district community services chair Dr V Sriram and disease prevention and treatment chair Dr Vasudha Rajasekar.



classes, which Rotary has been helping upgrade for decades now, shared with him a heartrending tale. A Rotarian from Thiruvannamalai lost one of his parents in the pandemic and his Covid-positive wife admitted in a hospital, was very sick and was brought to VHS in a very critical condition. "They tried their best but couldn't save her. The couple had two young daughters. The bill came to ₹3.8 lakh, and the relatives were trying to raise the money, "but because she had left behind two young daughters, Dr Suresh decided not to collect any money from the family. Such wonderful gestures have happened during this pandemic."

The DG related one more incident from VHS. Dr Sriram, the community services chief, had referred a patient, and his family had expected a huge bill, but got a small one and they insisted on paying ₹30,000 above that bill. Dr Suresh called to complain that they are not vacating the bed because they want to pay more!"

Thanking the doctors' group, he added: "This group of doctors has rendered remarkable service to save so many people's lives. There are instances when I have passed on a request at 10 pm, and this group has worked till 3 am to do the needful. District 3232 would not have handled this pandemic so well without their help. Hats off to Dr Sriram, Dr Nandakumar and Dr Vasudha Rajasekar, the district disease prevention and treatment chair, for working tirelessly."

Genesis

Giving details of the genesis of this group, IPDG Chandramohan said that in March 2020, when the coronavirus hit and a lockdown was announced, "everybody was at sea, we had no knowledge of this virus and even doctors were not totally aware what

Secret behind their success

Dr Nandakumar says that if Chennai and Tamil Nadu never really went into a crisis in oxygen supply, it is thanks to the TNMSC (Tamil Nadu Medical Services Corporation) MD P Umanath. "Thanks to his planning and action, we had access to an adequate supply of oxygen. Another thing which helped is Tamil Nadu's robust healthcare delivery system, which helped our doctors' group to be effective." Almost every hospital, be it government or private, or non-profit, has a Rotarian doctor in it, he adds.

His goal, he admits, was to put at least one representative from each hospital in the doctors' WhatsApp group, and say: 'Hey, we don't do this in normal times, but these are extraordinary times and your help will make a huge difference in getting vital information in getting beds.'

Dr Vasudha adds that even though RID 3232 created a large number of beds, "the TN government itself had already added

15,000 Covid beds. What they didn't have was the infrastructure, oxygen cylinders, concentrators, nurses, PPEs, etc."

She recalls that there was a time during the second wave when Stanley Hospital, one of the biggest government hospitals in Chennai, ran short of drugs. "This, not because they didn't have money, but because the stocks weren't coming in. They reached out to us Rotarians, because they saw the work we had done in the first wave. We had classmates and friends in all government hospitals and they would ask our help to see if private suppliers had drugs which we could buy and give them. This included even the most common drugs such as blood thinners to prevent blood clots."

Adds Dr Sriram, "Oxygen concentrators were needed in many places and DG Muthu asked my club to ensure people requiring oxygen support at home after discharge got the OCs."

it really meant. I thought even for ordinary ailments like flu, malaria, typhoid etc, the district's 5,000-odd Rotarians (20,000 with their families) need medical consultation. And RID 3232 has so many wonderful doctors, a doctors' group to provide general healthcare was started. Then the pandemic hit us."

What began as a 60-member group has now expanded to 193, including 165 doctors; the rest being from allied healthcare fields. As the pandemic worsened, the group helped with consultation, advise and hospitalisation.

DG Muthu added that this group has also been helping each other "by sharing knowledge, helping to acquire

the right equipment at the right price. They have many brainstorming sessions which I attend, even though often what they discuss is like Greek and Latin to me. Their involvement and application of knowledge is exemplary."

He added that RID 3232 has donated to the Chennai Corporation 15 mobile vans for vaccinating visually challenged, differently abled and senior citizens. Four vans have been donated to visit traffic signal points and check policemen on duty for vital parameters, to ensure their good health. "All this has been done with the guidance and leadership of Dr Sriram. Eminent doctors with whom an appointment is often difficult, are available for consultation

to Rotarians thanks to this group. Other districts should also emulate our example,” the DG added.

Enormous demand for beds

Dr Sriram, an ENT surgeon who is now more into healthcare management, and runs his own clinic in Chennai, said that during the month of May, as the second Covid wave hit India, “there was an enormous demand for hospital beds, lack of oxygen supply and medicines like Remdesivir. For a month, we were getting from early morning to late night, desperate calls pleading for a hospital bed. Money was no criterion, people just wanted to see their dear ones get some medical treatment.”

It was decided to get oxygen concentrators (OC); “we’ve started mobilising 100 OCs and have tied up with a partner for 100 more, which we will be lending free of cost. There are several patients who get discharged from hospitals but still need O2 support at home, and for such people OCs are a big help.”

On the funding, Dr Sriram says, “While 100 OCs were donated by Portea, the online doctor’s consultation app, the other 100 were procured with the funds raised by RCs Vadapalani, Chennai Temple Towers, Chennai Central and my own club RC Madras West.”

The long dance for a bed

Vasudha Rajasekar, an anaesthetist and trained health management expert, said

This group has been helping each other by sharing knowledge and helping to acquire the right equipment at the right price.

S Muthupalaniappan
District Governor

in the last couple of weeks the pressure had reduced (May-end). “But it was sheer madness while it lasted.” Confessing that she sleeps late and wakes up late, she said one morning she got a call at 5.45 am from “Rtn Suryanarayan Rao, from RC Madras Central. He said, ‘one of my staff members is going from hospital to hospital in an ambulance, not able to find a bed, and her saturation is down to 82. She is only in her ’40s and she is going to die’.”

The patient couldn’t afford a “posh hospital, and the only place I could think of immediately was the Government Hospital of Thoracic Medicine in Tambaram.” Last year, her club (RC Chennai Temple Towers) had done a ₹1.25 crore ICU project for them. She called the hospital superintendent Dr Sridhar, who said it would be done. The additional medical superintendent was also roped in. “But from then to 9.45 am, I got a call every 10 minutes, saying ‘nobody is there’, ‘we went to the Covid ward, nobody is attending to us’ etc. So I called Dr Sridhar again and said please do something, I can’t take this stress anymore.”

She added that Dr Sridhar had to directly call the ward and “I could hear this normally patient man, tell the sister in an agitated tone: ‘Admit that patient now, take a picture and send it to me, so I can share it with Dr Vasudha.’ It took four hours to finally get her on the bed. She got discharged after a week and is doing very well.”

There are so many such cases and Dr Nandakumar says that despite working for long hours late into the night, pooling resources, compiling lists and giving referrals depending on the condition of the patient, whether he needed a bed with oxygen, or an ICU bed with ventilator, sometimes their help comes too late. “Most of the calls came from Rotarians asking for help for their families or friends. I think 90 per cent of the time we were successful in finding suitable beds in time.”

He says that what really helped this group to render effective and timely help was “that we already had a doctors’ group in place as the pandemic hit us. In January 2020 itself we knew something bad was going to hit us. Thankfully the district leadership is well connected to



A line up of Covid patients in ambulances waiting to be hospitalised.

this group and DG Chandramohan asked me to prepare a list of all Rotary doctors and get them into the group.”

With so many seniors being in the group, “from RC Madras to the junior-most club, the “younger doctors were reluctant saying we won’t fit into this group, but I said we have to do this during Covid times, and many came on board. Some didn’t, but they still help when we ask.”

The group realised the need to connect very swiftly with equipment manufacturers, suppliers, doctors and hospitals, “right from the government to the private sector and in all aspects of the healthcare industry. We worked particularly closely with the government because we know that anything largescale can be handled only by the government.”

Luckily the group has some Rotarians very well “connected with the government and at the drop of a hat we can reach the seniormost people in government in doing a project or programme,” he adds.

Dr Vasudha adds that apart from helping out with Covid cases, right

from its inception this group also refers Rotarians to the right specialists. “When we get a call, we refer patients for cardio, neuro, ortho, gynaec and other cases. This ensures that not only do the Rotarians get effective treatment, Rotarian doctors too get an adequate number of cases and some professional benefit through this networking.”

Early vaccination

P Sathish, a past president of RC Madras North, who owns a pharma company, is the chairman of the Covid Task Force for RID 3232 in the current year. “And everybody who got vaccinated early in the district, owes it to him; he took them to KMC, and all the PDGs in the district got vaccinated well before anyone was looking seriously at vaccination. We pushed them, they said why are you pushing us, and we said you as leaders ought to set an example. So, everybody from RIDE Venky and Vinita got vaccinated as well as my wife Dr Sumedha, who is also a member of RC Chennai Temple Towers as Vinita,” says Dr Nandakumar.

He added, “he also helped in the procurement of critically required medicines and organised the supply of the much-wanted Remdesivir within a week.”

Quips Dr Sriram: “I told you, this group is a **medical google**... anything you require, from an ICU/oxygen bed to medicines, you will get a solution quickly.”

Sathish explains how at the peak of the second wave, “when ambulances were waiting in long queues at hospitals... and the patient would spend a whole night hooked to oxygen supply, in an ambulance outside a hospital, we moved fast to create additional beds with oxygen.” He started a dialogue with the president of CREDAI (Confederation of Real Estate Developers Association of India), Tamil Nadu, Suresh Krishna, a past president of his

The government reached out to us Rotarians, because they saw the work we had done in the first wave.

Dr Vasudha Rajasekar
Chair, District Disease
Prevention and Treatment

club, “and they promised to sponsor the beds. We quickly called TN health secretary J Radhakrishnan and told him we want to help with additional beds.”

Within a short period, the entire state government administration started rolling, with “all the required departments such as health, PWD, and entire hospital management team of KMC doing whatever was required and within one week we had set up 250 beds; 50 ICU beds and 200 with oxygen supply.”

Next on his radar were another 250 beds in Omandurar, Annanagar Peripheral and Saidapet, all government hospitals. A total number of 500 beds were created in 10 days. It worked so fast as CREDAI was involved and they know the system,” smiles Sathish. Next, beds were added in Madurai, Salem and Coimbatore.

He adds: “I’d like to add that there was never any paucity of funds for whatever we wanted to do in terms of creating beds, additional oxygen supply or other equipment because the money that came in was unbelievable. Indians living overseas, after seeing pictures of desperation from India, were just pouring money into the country. And so many clubs individually have done global grants to help in Covid relief work.”

There was also CSR money; “Dr Vasudha’s club did a ₹1.25 crore project to create 40 ICU beds for VHS, thanks to a partnership with the Cognizant Foundation.” ■



A mega ₹300-crore Rotary project to treat Covid patients

V Muthukumaran

Here is another example of RIPE Shekhar Mehta thinking big and taking quick decisions to help thousands of Covid patients in rural and urban India.

An MoU was signed between Rotary India Humanity Foundation (RIHF) and United Way Bengaluru, an NGO with patrons from the US, UK and other countries, for delivery of 100,000 oxygen concentrators, setting up of 100 PSA plants to generate medical oxygen; and supply of 5,000 Bipaps (non-invasive ventilators) and 50,000 oximeters at a cost of ₹300 crore (\$40.4 million). Speaking at the virtual sign-in ceremony, Mehta recalled the telecon he had with PDG G Olivannan, RID 3232, and the

sense of urgency he noted among the partners in taking forward one of the largest Covid projects so far in the country.” While in the first wave of the pandemic, Rotary clubs have done projects such as setting up Covid centres, distributing PPE kits, sanitisers and food grains, all worth ₹150 crore, at the grassroots-level to fill the gaps in relief work by the governments, Rotarians have once again risen to the challenge during the second wave, he said. The district governors had led the clubs in the distribution of oxygen concentrators and other medical equipment to hospitals and rural PHCs, he added.

The Rotary national committee of the Covid Task Force acted quickly and worked on artificial intelligence

and algorithms to find out places in need of medical oxygen and other supplies, and these were delivered promptly. “Rotary will track and monitor the usage of oxygen concentrators given under this project over a one-year period,” explained Mehta. In the first phase, district hospitals and PHCs in Tamil Nadu and West Bengal will get these machines. In the second phase eight more states — Rajasthan, Karnataka, Delhi, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Chhattisgarh, Goa and Haryana — will benefit from this partnership, he added.

An exciting journey

Sharing his experience of the last two weeks, when the first phase was being implemented, RIDE AS Venkatesh



Mayiladuthurai MLA S Rajkumar (centre, left) hands over oxygen concentrators to Dr R Rajasekhar, CMO, government hospital in the presence of DG R Balaji Babu (third from R), RC Mayiladuthurai president K Durai (R) and project coordinator V Raman (fourth from L).

said, “In the last 15 days, we had delivered over 2,300 machines across PHCs, community health centres and district hospitals in TN and West Bengal.” Around 7,500 units would be delivered by June third week covering eight more states. As the Covid situation was dynamic, “we have to make real-time assessment based on the needs of hospitals and the rise in Covid cases,” he said.

PRID Ashok Mahajan, chairman, Rotary India Covid Task Force, said that over 150,000 Rotarians are involved in setting up Covid centres, holding vaccination camps and disbursing medical equipment to hospitals across the country. “By mid-June over 300,000 people were vaccinated under the Rotary banner. We will continue to play the advocacy role, support vaccine drive and deliver equipment to hospitals in the coming months,” he said.

PRIPs Rajendra Saboo and Kalyan Banerjee complimented Mehta for speeding up this mega Covid project which would help India to get ready for the third wave too, apart from revamping the healthcare system.



Members of RC Trichy Metro handed over 100 concentrators to the government hospital in the presence of K N Nehru, minister for municipal administration, urban and water supply.

Rajya Sabha MP and PDG Vivek Tankha said, “This was a fantastic initiative under Mehta’s leadership wherein a coalition is formed with NGOs to lessen the hardship of the second wave and get ready for the third wave. I will pass a ‘thank you’ motion in Parliament to commend Rotary for this initiative.”

PDG Olivannan said in his 27 years of experience in Rotary, “this is my greatest moment, as for the first

time I saw RIPE Shekhar Mehta in action from the concept to the implementation stage at close quarters, right from the zoom call on May 15 when I took up this project with him.”

RIDs Kamal Sanghvi, Dr Bharat Pandya, Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty, RIDE Dr Mahesh Kotbagi and RC Madras North president Venkataraman Visveswaran, who took up the initiative with Mehta, along with Olivannan, spoke at the sign-in ceremony. Speaking to *Rotary News*, Biswajit Ghosh, chief operating and strategy officer, RIHF, said, “so far we have supplied 18,000 oxygen concentrators and are expecting 32,000 more in the coming days. Due diligence is being carried out across states to set up PSA plants at district hospitals. Also, we may expand our delivery list of critical equipment if the need arises based on our assessment, hence the project value may go up.”

While **United Way** signed the agreement with Rotary, there are other implementing partners including **Swasth, Sequoia Capital, Sattva, Capillary Technology, ACT (Action Covid-19 Team), 24/7.ai** and **Zomato Feeding India**. Around 420 Rotarians including DGs, PDGs and Rotary leaders were present at the virtual event. ■



RID 3232 coordinator N S Saravanan (L) hands over oxygen concentrators to Dr Gupta, Director, Voluntary Health Services, Chennai.

Jalna Rotarians do exemplary Covid work

Rasheeda Bhagat

On April 21, 24 Covid patients died in a hospital in Nashik, Maharashtra, when their oxygen supply was disrupted thanks to leakage from an oxygen tanker. Even before this incident, a group of Rotarians from several Rotary clubs in Jalna, engaged in Covid prevention and relief work, were looking at ways to maintain and repair piped oxygen supply in hospitals.

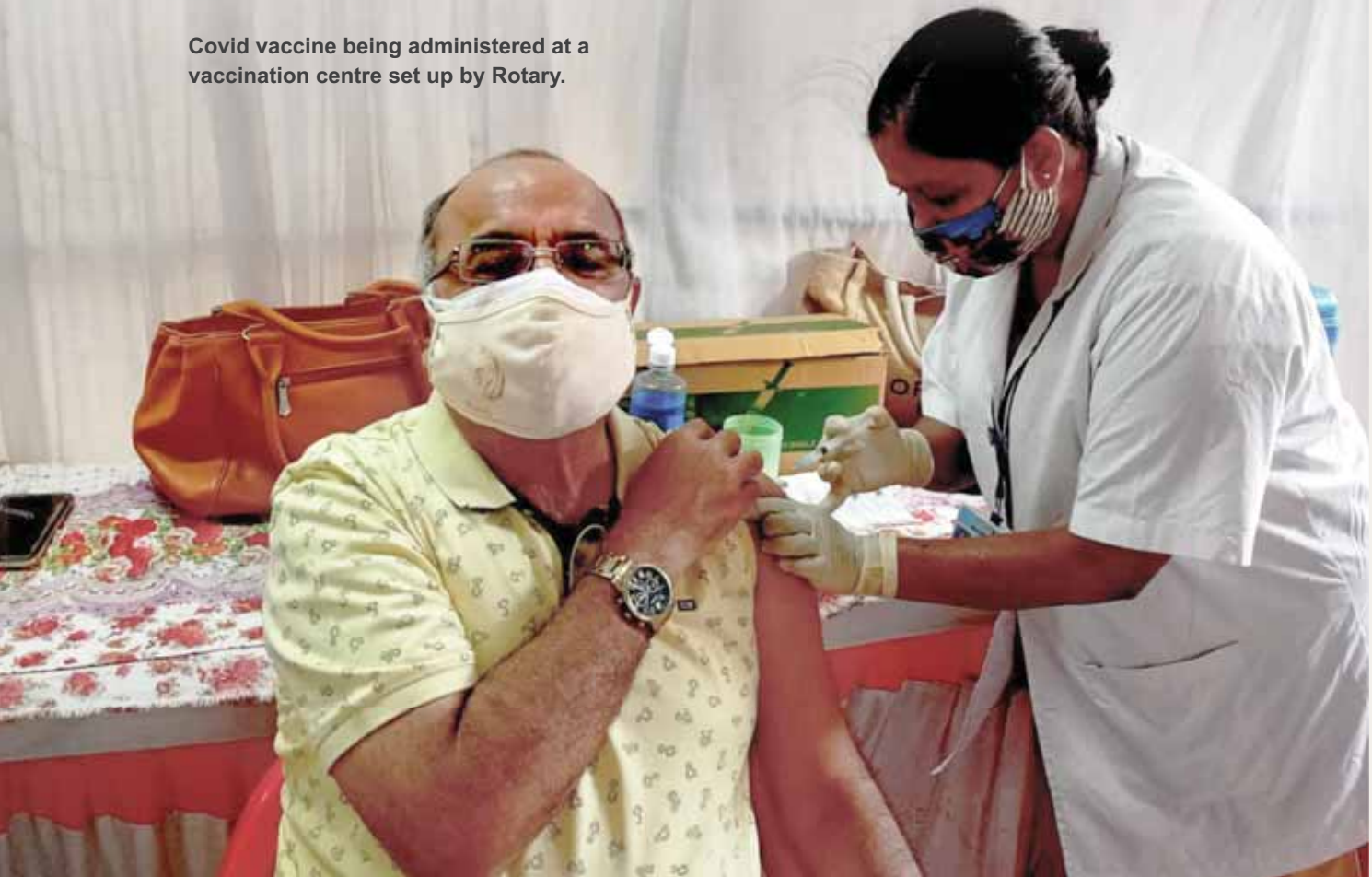
These included members from Rotary clubs of Jalna, Jalna Central,

Jalna Rainbow, Jalna Midtown and Ambad. Even before this tragedy, as the second wave of Covid surge was coming on, in an online meeting of the Maharashtra government chaired by chief minister Uddhav Thackeray, with district collectors and hospital representatives, Dr Hitesh Raithatha, a Rotarian from Jalna and a club director of Rotary's Covid Task Force (RID 3132), who owns a hospital in the city, gave a valuable input. He suggested that all hospitals

should make sure that their oxygen pipelines are performing optimally and without leakage. "The CM liked his suggestion and the district commissioner suggested that Rotarians take this up as a pilot project," says Govindram Mantri, assistant governor and regional coordinator of the Rotary Covid Task Force, RID 3132.

The task force in Jalna swung into action and undertook a crucial and timely exercise to ensure proper maintenance of oxygen pipelines at

Covid vaccine being administered at a vaccination centre set up by Rotary.



the Government District Hospital, Government Women’s Hospital, the Jalna Mission Hospital and four other private hospitals. “We knew that doctors and hospital administrators, already under so much pressure, have no time to do this, so we undertook this responsibility.” Ultrasonic machines were used to detect leakage.

He explains that the cost involved in plugging the leakage of oxygen from piped supply is merely ₹3,000–4,000 per hospital. “Normally to repair a leaking oxygen pipe you have to suspend the supply and cut the pipeline. But at this critical juncture, when people are dying for lack of oxygen, this is not possible. So we use machines which allow plugging the leakage without stopping or disrupting oxygen supply.”

He adds that by this simple initiative at least 20 to 30 per cent of this life-saving substance can be saved.

This team of Rotarians also came together to set up a helpdesk for Covid vaccination at five places in Jalna, along with 10 selfie points. Working diligently at 17 vaccination centres, the Rotarians distributed over 12,800 stickers for those vaccinated. Reacting speedily to the second wave causing acute shortage of oxygen, the Rotarians have given 18 oxygen concentrator



An ultrasonic machine being used to detect and plug leakage in an oxygen pipeline.

machines to needy patients free of cost. Once the patient is better, the concentrator is given to somebody else, and totally 121 patients have benefited. District 3132 funds helped to buy five of these.

They also undertook the responsibility of keeping the vaccination centres clean and hygienic, and provided chairs for the people coming for vaccination, apart from distributing masks, sanitisers and ensuring social distancing.

Realising the crucial need for vaccination, particularly in those areas with lower levels of literacy and awareness, the Rotarians did public announcement through hired rickshaws in slum areas and by organising roadside meetings. “This was done to remove any fear of vaccination,” said Mantri. Hoardings shaped like masks were also put up at vantage points carrying messages about the benefits of taking a Covid vaccine.

Apart from awareness, there was concrete action too — mega vaccination centres were set up at the Roopam Hall and Karwa Hospital, and these

provided free vaccination, covering till April-end, over 2,700 people. “Covid-immune passports will be issued to all Rotarians who have completed both the doses of the vaccine,” he added.

A former member of RC Jalna, Rajendra Barwale, now a member of RC Bombay Midtown, RID 3141, who is an industrialist, had put up an oxygen plant in Jalna at a cost of ₹2 crore. This was inaugurated by Maharashtra health minister Rajesh Tope “who is from Jalna. This is one of the reasons we all know him well and get good cooperation and speedy response from the government for doing community service projects,” says Raithatha.

Mantri adds that all these initiatives were undertaken by the collective club leadership, and relentless work put in by Rotarians such as Dr Raithatha, Dr Rajiv Jethaliya, Dr Ravindra Bedarkar, Dr Pratik Lahoti and Dr Rohit Bhala. As for the money required for this work, he smiles: “Oh, there are many good people in Jalna and there is no dearth of donors for worthy service projects.” ■

Normally to repair a leaking oxygen pipe you have to suspend the supply and cut the pipeline. But at this critical juncture, we use machines which allow plugging the leakage without stopping or disrupting oxygen supply.

Rotary, Tatas come together for mega projects

V Muthukumaran

It is a perfect match between the two legacy organisations — Rotary in the field of community service for over 116 years and the Tatas, a 130-year-old corporate group — as they come together to execute grand projects across the RI's seven focus areas of action throughout India over the next five years, said incoming RI president Shekhar Mehta, presiding

over an MoU signing event between Rotary India Humanity Foundation (RIHF) and the Tata Trusts on a virtual platform.

It will be a 50:50 partnership between Rotary and the Tatas to implement work across a wide spectrum of projects. While Rotary is targeting to achieve 10 per cent of GoI's projects in water, sanitation and hygiene, among others, "we can

strike a great synergy with Tata Trusts as they are also into construction of check dams, WASH facilities, rejuvenation of water bodies, setting up RWH units, providing toilets and tap water connections to rural houses, community toilets and PET bottle crushing units." In some fronts, Tatas have bigger ambitions than Rotary as in the case of tap water connections. While Rotary

is aiming to provide tap water to 1,000 villages, the Tatas are planning to cover 1,500 villages in the next five years, he said.

Rotary is also into distribution of saplings (five crore distributed in 2020–21), and had done 25,000 heart surgeries so far. "In the next five years, we aim to do five million health camps, set up 50 eye banks and 3,000 dialysis machines. We are



trying to send 1.25 lakh dropouts back to school, set up 12,000 Happy Schools and 24,000 libraries across the country.” Rotary clubs have it ready 14,000 shelter kits which will be rushed to disaster sites for rescue operations. “Joining hands with Tata Trusts will enable 1.75 lakh Rotarians in India led by their district governors to plan and do mega projects. RIHF will facilitate the clubs to partner with Tata Trusts in identifying



Joining hands with Tata Trusts will enable 1.75 lakh Rotarians in India led by their district governors to plan and do mega projects.

Shekhar Mehta
RI President

and jointly executing projects,” Mehta said.

Both Rotary and Tatas shared a common vision, value systems and worked for the larger well-being, said Srinath Narasimhan, CEO, Tata Trusts. “Like Rotary, we are also working in the areas of

health, nutrition, water and sanitation, education, environment and betterment of rural livelihoods.” With a considerable overlap of interests and convergence of activities, “we are coming together to enhance the scale and impact of our projects across India.”

large-scale transformation is ₹100 crore. “While Telangana government is giving us a subsidy amount, the balance will be shared between the two partners.”

Tata Trusts manager (partnerships) Swapnil Chauhan said, “a lot of engagements are under discussion such as augmenting the income of small, marginal farmers, scaling up of NCD and cancer-screening programmes and setting up artisan clusters.” RIHF chairman PRID Ashok Mahajan and Tata Trusts group CFO Mehrab Irani signed the MoU. RID Kamal Sanghvi, RIDEs A S Venkatesh and Dr Mahesh Kotbagi and PRIP Kalyan Banerjee welcomed this valuable partnership that aims to change the rural landscape of India. ■

Maiden joint project

In a presentation, AG Uday Piani from RC Lake District Moinabad, RID 3150, said Bhupalpally district of Telangana will be the first district to have the Rotary-Tata projects over the next three years. “We have chosen 100 villages for taking up literacy, nutrition, WASH and livelihood projects. The target is to raise the average annual income of farmers from ₹40,000 to ₹1 lakh in the next three years,” he said. The budget for this



RC Nasik saves 35 infants in three months

Team Rotary News



An infant being treated on a bubble CPAP machine.

The rising infant mortality rate at the Civil Hospital, Nashik, gave sleepless nights to Dr Pankaj Gajare, head of paediatric department of the hospital. Covid virus

was yet to take a monstrous surge in the beginning of 2020, but the average infant mortality rose to around 25 per cent at the hospital. Soon, he found out that mothers with their newborns wasted

precious few days before reaching the hospital, a major provider of healthcare in this district which has a large number of Adivasi hamlets lacking in basic medical services in their neighbourhoods. “Mothers with their infants were forced to reach this hospital as there is no hospital or health centre with good medical facilities to take care of them in the remote and far-flung *padas* (hamlets),” said Vinayak Deodhar, a member of RC Nasik, RID 3030.

Time running out

Despite Dr Gajare and his team striving hard to save the newborns, lack of modern equipment and facilities at the neonatal ward had made their valiant attempts a ‘losing fight’. Also, the mounting cases of attending to newborns, rising to over 350 admissions a month was the last thing they wanted to take on, apart from coping with the existing challenges, said Deodhar.

At this time, a RC Nasik president Mugdha Lele, visiting the hospital for a different reason, had



DG Shabbir Shakir (second from right) felicitating Dr Pankaj Gajare, head of paediatric department at the Civil Hospital, Nashik. RC Nasik president Mugdha Lele is on the extreme left.

a chance meeting with a staff of the neonatal department who briefed her about the crisis facing them with rising deaths of newborns. “The CSR team of the club swung into action and roped in a couple of corporates with the idea of funding the necessary equipment for the paediatric ward.” But then Covid struck with ferocity and for some months, the club had to take up only pandemic-relief work.

However, the CSR team was determined to find a corporate sponsor and got the final nod from Autocomp for funding equipment worth ₹12 lakh. “After consulting

the hospital, the club decided to donate four bubble CPAPs (a non-invasive ventilator for newborns with respiratory problems) and a portable x-ray machine,” recalled Deodhar. The project team convinced the manufacturers to give annual maintenance for five years to the equipment and the orders were placed in January this year.

With the cooperation of the hospital staff, all the machines at the paediatric department were commissioned within few weeks of placing the purchase orders. DG Shabbir Shakir and Autocomp executive director Anil Ramdas

Sali inaugurated the new neonatal machines in February. In the last three months or so, till May, the refurbished paediatric wing of the hospital brought joy to over 35 parents as their infants were saved with timely intervention by Dr Gajare and his team, thanks to the new equipment. The mobile x-ray unit was used more than 200 occasions during this period.

“Our project has not only brought down the infant mortality rate at the Civil Hospital, but was able to bring smiles on the faces of underprivileged people from Adivasi hamlets,” added Deodhar. ■

Dialysis machines at Mangalore hospital to help the underprivileged

Two dialysis machines costing ₹11.8 lakh were installed by RC Mangalore, RID 3181, at the Wenlock District Hospital. Speaking at the hand-over ceremony, club president Archibald Menzies pointed out that the new facility will augment the availability of dialysis machines at the hospital as it caters to people from lower economic backgrounds who cannot afford the cost of dialysis at private hospitals. “These machines will not only enhance the healthcare infrastructure at the hospital but will be of timely help for those in need of a dialysis.”



DG Ranganath Bhat inaugurating a dialysis machine at the Wenlock District Hospital.

The hospital’s existing dialysis unit had been “stretched beyond its capacity and patients have to wait long hours for their turn. We believe that this initiative will not just offer affordable dialysis but also the

convenience of time as they no longer will have to wait in long queues for their turn,” he said.

DG Ranganath Bhat appreciated the club for its efforts. The club partnered with Zeus Biotech, Mysuru, who

had contributed ₹4.5 lakh from their CSR funds for a dialysis machine. While club member Satish Kamath and his spouse Prabha donated ₹5.8 lakh the balance amount was funded by the club’s charitable trust. ■

Apply yourself

As members of the family of Rotary, we are people of purpose, people of influence, and people of action. Each year, committees that support Rotary and The Rotary Foundation focus on putting Rotary's strategic priorities into action, challenging us to increase our impact, expand our reach, enhance participant engagement, and increase our ability to adapt.

Would you like to contribute to Rotary's success?

The following committees are searching for qualified Rotarians and Rotaractors to serve as members and apply their leadership skills to advance our organisation. Although the number of openings is limited, they offer an opportunity

for you to share your vocational expertise and help ensure diverse perspectives within each committee.

All committees correspond via email and on virtual platforms, and some involve at least one mandatory in-person meeting per year. Dual members of both Rotary and Rotaract are especially encouraged to apply.

To be considered for committee membership or to recommend someone for an appointment, visit on.rotary.org/application2021. Applicants must be registered on My Rotary at rotary.org/myrotary and should make sure their My Rotary profile includes current contact information. Applications are due by Aug 15 for appointments starting July 1, 2022.

Committee	Function	Prerequisites	Commitment
Communications	Advises the board on communication with key audiences	Professional background and experience in a communications-related field	Two positions for three-year terms; annual in-person meeting in Evanston; virtual meetings as needed
Finance	Advises the board on Rotary's finances, including budgets, investment policy, and sustainability measures	Professional background in a finance-related field; nonprofit experience preferred. Candidates should have experience in financial matters at the club and district levels	Two positions for three-year terms; one or two in-person meetings per year in Evanston; virtual meetings as needed
Leadership Development and Training	Advises the board on Rotary's leadership training programme for Rotarians, clubs and districts with a special emphasis on training for district governors	Must have significant training or education experience with a preference for leadership development	Two positions for three-year terms; annual in-person meeting in Evanston; virtual meetings as needed
Operations Review	Monitors the effectiveness, efficiency, and implementation of operations and all internal systems; advises the Executive Committee on compensation matters; and performs other oversight functions as requested by the board.	Experience in management, leadership development, or financial management, and a thorough knowledge of Rotary's operations. Appointments will be limited to past RI directors	One position for a six-year term; two in-person meetings per year in Evanston; virtual meetings as needed



Committee	Function	Prerequisites	Commitment
<p>Rotaract</p>	<p>Advises the board on Rotaract; develops the Rotaract Preconvention programme</p>	<p>Rotarians: Experience working with Rotaract; direct experience as a mentor or Rotaract adviser or district chair. Rotaract alumni are strong candidates</p> <p>Rotaractors: Leadership at the club, district, or international level. Strong candidates who have served as a district Rotaract representative, organised projects, or attended a Rotaract Preconvention</p>	<p>Rotarians: One position for a three-year term; meets virtually or has annual in-person meeting in Evanston</p> <p>Rotaractors: Three positions for one-year terms; meets virtually or has annual in-person meeting in Evanston</p>
<p>Strategic Planning</p>	<p>Reviews Rotary’s strategic plan and associated measures; advises leadership on other matters of long-term significance</p>	<p>10+ years of experience in strategy development, monitoring and implementation, and strong understanding of RI and Foundation programmes and services</p>	<p>One position with a four-year term; one or two in-person meetings per year in Evanston; virtual meetings as needed</p>

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran



From an Interactor to a Rotary Governor

Jacintha Dharma

Educationist, RC Nagercoil,
RID 3212

Her rendezvous with Rotary began when she was in Class 11 in 1974. “I was charter president of the Interact club at the St Joseph’s Higher Secondary School, Nagercoil, and later, a Rotaractor at the Holy Cross College during my UG and post-graduation,” recalls Jacintha Dharma. She vividly remembers her stint as staff advisor to Interactors for over 35 years. She became a member of RC Nagercoil in 2008. “It was a natural evolution as I have love and admiration for this club which sponsored my earlier Interact and Rotaract clubs.” Her husband AI Dharma

is a veteran Rotarian from the same club, while her son, D Mohinth, is the charter president of RC Nagercoil Surpeme, formed last year. Both the father and son are major donors to TRF.

Jacintha is the first woman DG from the district, and second in Tamil Nadu after PDG Rekha Shetty.

Girls’ education and empowering women through vocational training will be her priority. “I want to open at least 250 small dispensaries in government schools with the help of parent-teacher associations. Each club can start such health-screening clinics in schools nearby,” she says. E-learning centres and providing drinking water in schools through RO units will be other priorities done through global and district grants.

She has devised a flagship district project called *Healthy and Happy Students* which will conduct around 1,000 programmes, events and workshops to improve physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual quotients of schoolchildren and college-goers.

One of her pet projects will be *Family First* which is based on the concept that children will excel in studies and school activities only if they have a ‘happy family’. “We will conduct seminars, workshops for parents each month and encourage clubs to hold similar events in their localities.” Jacintha is fond of RYLAs since her college days and plans to conduct “this youth conclave every month. I will encourage each club to hold club-level RYLA at regular intervals.”

Chartering 100-plus Rotaract clubs, taking its number to 175, and more than doubling the strength of Rotaractors to over 9,600 are her other priorities. She hopes to add 15 new Rotary clubs, and 1,000 Rotarians, half of them women, taking the clubs to 150 and total Rotarians to 6,000 by the end of the Rotary year. For TRF giving, she has a target of \$800,000.

50 ambulances for Delhi

Anup Mittal

Industrial automation, RC Delhi Chanakyapuri, RID 3011

He will appoint 50 club advisors and entrust them with the task of forming 50 additional clubs to the prevailing 112 in the district. “We will be adding 1,500 new members to the existing strength of 4,200 in our district and those instrumental in forming a club will be given a Paul Harris Fellow status,” says Anup Mittal. He has formed two district chairs for institution and community-based Rotaract clubs — each panel will have a chairman and three members — to increase the vibrancy and strength of district Rotaractors. At present, there are around 2,500 Rotaractors and he wants to raise this to 10,000 during his tenure.

By July-end, he will be flagging off *Life on Wheels* Project (₹3 crore) in which 50 ambulances will take care of the emergency medical needs of people in Delhi

and NCR. “The project funded by a mix of TRF and CSR grants will come with a Rotary health helpline. We already have commitment for 20 vehicles.”

Medical camps will be held throughout the year to take care of avoidable blindness in 360 villages, “which we will make 100 per cent adult literate.” For TRF giving, his target is \$1 million. A third generation Rotarian, “I was inducted into Rotary by my father B P Mittal in 2008. My son PDRR Manuj Mittal is past president of RSAMDIO.” Rotary should take efforts to spread the message of good work it is doing all over the world, he says, so that “people queue up to join Rotary clubs.”



Pandemic is a blessing in disguise for clubs in coastal Andhra

M Rama Rao

Chartered accountant, RC Vizianagaram, RID 3020

The Covid pandemic has been a blessing in disguise with Rotarians taking efforts to reach out to remote villages to distribute food, medicines, Covid-relief kits and donate oxygen cylinders and concentrators to hospitals and PHCs, says M Rama Rao. “Our emergency work lifted the public image of Rotary in rural areas of Andhra where people had not heard of Rotary earlier. Also, we can now meet and discuss on projects through virtual platforms.” He is planning to start four new clubs taking the total number to 80 across the six revenue districts of coastal Andhra. He is confident of inducting 600 new members taking the headcount to well past 5,000 by the end of the Rotary year.

“The district clubs will be holding 200 blood donation camps to collect at least 10,000 units of blood in residential areas and apartment complexes,” he says. All the clubs were told to make full use of district and

global grants for implementing a host of WinS projects, setting up dialysis centres, blood banks, revamping crematoriums, and other need-based programmes. Three more blood banks will be added by the end of the year to the existing five in the district.

“We will install 24 RO plants (GG: \$67,500) across the district in the next two months, and provide sewing machines to 300 women (GG: \$60,000) after training them through tie-up with garment manufacturers,” Rao explains. He wants to double the number of Rotaract clubs and Rotaractors to 100 and 5,000 respectively. For TRF giving, he has a target of \$500,000.

He was inducted into Rotary by his classmate VVS Prasad in 1992. His club, RC Vizianagaram Central, is the youngest in the district, with over 150 of its 264 members below 45.



Improving the livelihood of farmers, villagers

R Jeyakkan, realtor, RC Star Madurai, RID 3000



Village adoption projects will be given top priority for “we want to improve the livelihood of farmers and underprivileged families in rural areas. Our clubs will adopt 25 villages and include initiatives such as drinking water supply to houses, skill training for women, laying of roads and organising de-addiction camps to wean people away from liquor there,” says Jeyakkan. He wants to do at least 50 Happy Schools across the district and organise 500 medical camps including *Kannoli thittam*, an eyecare project, breast-screening camps and events under *Project Positive Health*.

Jeyakkan will also be focusing on constructing check dams funded by a mix of global and CSR grants in 10 villages. He aims to start 25 new clubs taking the

total number to 154, and induct 1,000 new members raising the headcount to above 6,000. There are 73 active Rotaract clubs, while around 150 clubs are in a moribund state. “I want to revive the dormant ones and charter new clubs, and increase the total number to 300 Rotaract clubs in the next one year, and double the number of Rotaractors to over 2,000.”

One of his pet projects, Miyawaki forests will see an addition of native species like palm tree and other indigenous varieties as “part of our drive to preserve the natural ecosystem of our villages.” His target for TRF giving is \$1.2 million. In 2001, he was persuaded to join Rotary by his friend working in a bank.

Happy Villages will have transformational projects

S Balaji

Realtor,

RC Kumbakonam, RID 2981



Every single club in the district will adopt a village and all the happy 128-plus adopted villages will have transformational projects like vocational training to empower women, promotion of dairy farming, donation of livestock to provide a secure monthly income to the villagers, desilting of local lakes and ponds, and improving adult literacy, says Balaji.

“Currently there are 128 clubs and my target is to add 12 more clubs, inducting at least 1,200 members to increase the strength to 6,400 by the end of the Rotary year,” he explains.

Toilets will be built at community centres and schools as part of Happy Villages project. “We will also focus

on sending back dropouts to schools and the education of poor children will be sponsored by clubs. These initiatives will lift up Rotary’s public image,” he says. An important project planned is a mammography bus worth ₹1.5 crore, that will screen at least 100,000 women in its first year. “I wish to start eight vision centres to benefit at least 500,000 patients a year.” Balaji firmly believes in this year RI’s motto *Serve to Change Lives*, as “Rotary can truly change the lives of underprivileged families through projects.” He has a target of \$1 million in TRF giving, and plans to become an AKS member. He was inspired by the then RC Kumbakonam president Dr V C Nedunchezian to join Rotary in 2001.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Youngsters learn to work in Tally software

Team Rotary News



DGE J Sridhar (third from left) with club members after inaugurating the training workshop.

RC Madras East has given its vocational training centre at Thoraipakkam, a city suburb, for the Tally training project of RC Chennai Mitra. Yennes Infotech headed by club member NS Saravanan provides technical support, including computers and the faculty. “Trainees must have basic accounting knowledge. Computer usage and training in the software will be provided at the centre,” he said, adding that the students were identified from across the district and other Rotary clubs. The course duration is flexible and students can attend the programme until they are confident with the application.

DGE J Sridhar inaugurated the workshop. ■

Twelve youngsters were trained to work in Tally, an accounting software, thanks to the initiative of RC Chennai Mitra, RID 3232. “The workshop that began in March was going in full

momentum until end-April when we had to press the pause button as Covid’s second wave began rearing its ugly head,” said Rajesh Kumar Natarajan, the club’s public image chairman.

Rotary holds Covid vaccination camp at Payyanur

A mega Covid vaccination camp was organised by RC Payyanur, RID 3202, in partnership with the municipality and the state health department at the Government Boys Higher Secondary School, Payyanur.

Over 7,000 people were vaccinated at the week-long camp under the club’s project *Rotary Aashlesham* which executes a slew of Covid care initiatives in this town. “We thank the Payyanur municipality staff, frontline workers, school authorities, NSS

volunteers, Asha workers, student police cadets, Kudumbasree workers and police officers for their active involvement and support to our vaccination camp,” said project chair Dr Santhosh Sreedhar. DG Dr Harikrishnan Nambiar, DGE Dr Rajesh Subash, DGN Pramod Nayanar, zone-5 coordinator PDG Sunil Zachariah and members of Rotary Covid India Task Force extended their support to the vaccination drive of the club. District coordinator Dr N Mohanan and Kannur revenue district



People registering for Covid vaccination at a camp in Payyanur.

coordinator Venkitesh Pai guided the members in the successful implementation of the camp, said club’s acting president CR Nambiar.

The Aditya Birla Group provided financial support for publicising the vaccination camp through various media channels. ■

Healthy seasonal dishes to cook at home

Sharmila Chand

When you eat well, you feel well. More than ever, in the present tough times, people have realised the importance of healthy food packed with nutrients to build up immunity and improve overall well-being. Here are some healthy dishes to try at home as suggested by chefs. Give these a shot in the comfort of your home!

Roma Tomato Soup and Croutons



Rajesh Wadhwa, *executive chef*
Taj Palace, New Delhi

This is an easy-to-make, light yet wholesome soup recipe that is packed with flavour. The roasting process helps bring out robust flavours, and lends a wonderful, mellow depth to the soup. The recipe requires simple ingredients that we stock in our home kitchens and makes for a delicious, nourishing treat.

Ingredients

- ◆ 500 gm peeled tomatoes
- ◆ 8 garlic cloves, peeled
- ◆ Salt
- ◆ Pepper
- ◆ 1 large onion, chopped
- ◆ 2 tablespoon tomato puree
- ◆ 4 cup stock
- ◆ 1½ cup torn crusty bread
- ◆ Olive oil
- ◆ 2 tablespoon butter

Method

- Preheat oven to 425°C. In a large baking dish, crush tomatoes with hand, scatter garlic cloves, drizzle olive oil and season with salt and pepper. Roast for around 35–40 minutes, tossing the ingredients halfway through, until the garlic softens and tomatoes become jam-like. Once done, using a

potato masher or fork, mash to break up the roasted garlic and tomatoes.

- In a large pot, heat oil. Add onion and saute. Season with salt and pepper and cook until the onions soften. Add tomato puree, roasted tomato mixture, stock and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and allow the soup to simmer for around 15–20 minutes.
- To prepare the croutons, in another baking sheet, lay out the crusty bread. Drizzle the oil and season with salt and pepper. Bake until golden brown for around 6–8 minutes. Puree the tomato soup mixture with hand blender or in a mixer grinder in small batches.
- Transfer the soup back into the pot and bring it to a bowl. Adjust the seasoning as desired.
- Serve hot, topped with butter and croutons.

Baked Prawn Sesame Toast

Vaibhav Bhargava
consultant chef

This appetiser is a healthy twist to the classic Chinese dish which is generally fried but we have baked the dish to reduce the calorie-count and can be made with multi-grain bread or brown bread as per choice.

Prep time : 30 min
Cooking time : 10 min
Serves : 4

Ingredients

- ◆ 200 gm prawns C grade, peeled and cleaned

- ◆ 10 gm ginger chopped
- ◆ 10 gm garlic chopped
- ◆ 1 egg
- ◆ 5 gm breakfast sugar
- ◆ 5 gm salt
- ◆ 3 gm white pepper powder
- ◆ 3 ml light soy sauce
- ◆ 10 ml oyster sauce
- ◆ 5 gm broth powder
- ◆ 20 gm butter
- ◆ 5 ml Chinese wine
- ◆ 30 gm spring onion green chop
- ◆ 4 pieces brown jumbo bread slices
- ◆ 5 ml sesame oil
- ◆ 80 gm sesame seeds

Method

- ◆ Clean the prawns and chop them very fine with a chopper or use food processor to make a coarse paste.
- ◆ Wash and clean vegetables. Finely chop the ginger, garlic and spring onion and keep aside to be used for making a mixture.
- ◆ Take a bowl. Put the prawn mix, add chopped ginger, garlic, spring onion, egg white, sugar, soy sauce, salt, white pepper, melted butter, oyster sauce, Chinese wine, broth powder and mix very well so that all ingredients mix well. Cover and chill for 30 minute.
- ◆ Brush the bread with sesame oil and spread the prawn mixture on top of it. Brush the beaten egg carefully on top of the prawn mix and then sprinkle sesame seeds on it all over.



- ◆ Pre-heat the combi oven at 200 degree or use salamander for baking the bread. Pre-heated oven will take 8 to 10 min to cook and gives a golden colour to sesame seeds.
- ◆ Cut the sides of the bread and then cut them into rectangles or triangles as per your choice.
- ◆ Serve hot with sweet chilli sauce or sriracha sauce.

Tip

- You can use any white wine for this dish if Chinese wine not available, wine brings a distinct and enhanced flavour from prawns when mixed together and it brings that little acidity and sweetness which is required in the dish.
- Don't churn the prawn mixture too much in food processor. It will get cooked because of its own heat.



- ◆ 1 small red onion, peeled and very thinly sliced
- ◆ 3/4 cup white vinegar
- ◆ 1/2 small cabbage, very thinly sliced into long strips
- ◆ 1 medium carrot, peeled and julienned
- ◆ 2 tbsp fresh coriander and mint, finely chopped

Method

- ◆ For the dressing: Crush chilles, garlic, sugar, and salt into a fragrant, rough paste with a mortar and pestle. Scrape paste into a small bowl, then stir in vinegar and fish sauce (optional). Set dressing aside.
- ◆ For the chicken: Put chicken in a medium pan, add enough water to cover by 1", then bring to a simmer over medium-high heat. Reduce heat to medium-low and gently simmer, partially covered, until chicken is just cooked through, 10–15 minutes. Drain and set aside to cool. Tear chicken into small strips, discarding any cartilage or fatty pieces. Set aside.
- ◆ Meanwhile, put onions and white vinegar in a large bowl. Set aside to marinate for 15 minutes, then drain. Add cabbage, carrots, reserved chicken, and fish sauce (optional) to onions and toss together. Shortly before serving, toss to mix well, and adjust seasonings to taste. The salad will wilt slightly.

Spicy Cabbage & Chicken Salad

Vikramjit Roy, *founder and executive chef, Hello Panda*

Perfect fresh and crunchy salad for the summers which has the right protein and enough spice oomph!

For the dressing

- ◆ 2 small, fresh red chili
- ◆ 1 clove garlic, peeled and chopped
- ◆ 1/2 tsp sugar
- ◆ a pinch of salt
- ◆ 6 tbsp white vinegar
- ◆ 3 tbsp fish sauce (optional)

For the chicken

- ◆ 1 boneless, skinless whole chicken breast

Beetroot, mushroom and avocado salad

Siddhartha Sankar Sarmah

executive chef, Holiday Inn, Mayur Vihar, Noida

This leafy vegetables salad is definitely recommended for its healthy quotient.



Ingredients

- ◆ 4 medium mushrooms
- ◆ 1/4 lemon juice
- ◆ 3 tbsp olive oil
- ◆ 1 small shallot, finely chopped
- ◆ 20 gm baby spinach
- ◆ 20 gm pre-cooked beets, chopped
- ◆ 1 ripe avocado, thinly sliced
- ◆ Salt and crushed pepper for taste

Method

On a large rimmed baking sheet, spray non-stick cooking spray on mushrooms and sprinkle half teaspoon salt on it; roast at 450°F for 20 minutes or until tender. Whisk lemon juice, olive oil, shallot and 1/4 teaspoon each of salt and pepper; toss half with baby spinach, rocket leaves and beets. Divide among serving plates. Top with avocados and mushrooms thinly sliced. Serve with remaining dressing on the side.

Insalata di legumi

Ivan Chieregatti, *executive chef, Hyatt Regency, Delhi*

A healthy high fibre salad, Insalata Di Legumi is packed with proteins, it is a hearty salad, perfect for the warmer months. Fresh and full of flavour, it is a vibrant and satisfying meal.

Ingredients: (serves 4)

- ◆ 100 gm barley
- ◆ 100 gm black lentil
- ◆ 300 gm tomato sauce
- ◆ 300 gm pumpkin roasted
- ◆ 20 leaves basil leaf
- ◆ 30 ml extra virgin olive oil
- ◆ 4 tomatoes blanched
- ◆ 100 gm celery
- ◆ 100 gm carrot
- ◆ 100 gm green zucchini
- ◆ 10 gm salt
- ◆ 4 gm pepper crushed
- ◆ 3 gm chilli flakes
- ◆ 5 gm chopped garlic
- ◆ Mix cress

Method

- Soak the barley overnight before cooking. Take water

and salt in a pot. Add barley and cook for 10 minutes.

- Then add lentils and cook for 20 more minutes.
- Drain water and keep aside to cool down.
- Cut zucchini into brunoises after removing the seeds, similarly cut carrot, celery and tomato. Blanch the vegetables separately in salted water and immediately cool down in iced water to preserve the colour. Drain and keep in the fridge. Heat a pan and add olive oil, chopped garlic and chilli and cook till medium golden in colour, add tomato sauce and reduce the heat to cook for few minutes. Keep it aside.
- In a large pan, add olive oil with the rest of chopped garlic, add the lentil and barley, season with salt and pepper and reduce the flame, add few spoons of water during the cooking process to absorb the flavour.
- Now add now zucchini, carrot and celery, cook for few minutes more until the consistency is right enough. In a tray season the pumpkin (with or without skin as per your choice) with salt, pepper and olive oil.
- Put it in the oven with some herbs and roast for about 35–40 minutes until it is cooked.
- In a serving plate, put the tomato sauce, using a square mould, add all the vegetables together and press it all a little bit to give a nice shape even after removing the mould.
- Garnish with baked pumpkin, herbs and few drops of extra virgin olive oil.



Designed by
Krishnapratheesh S

RC Puttur honours a late Rotarian through dialysis centre

Team Rotary News

It was a proud moment for members of RC Puttur, RID 3181, when its dream project, a dialysis centre, was inaugurated by Union chemicals and fertilisers minister DV Sadananda Gowda in the presence of DG Ranganath Bhat, local politicians and past district governors on Feb 20 this year.

Rotarians were shaken when their colleague, who graduated from Rotaract, suffered a kidney failure in 2016 and passed away at 49 despite undergoing dialysis at a private hospital in Mangalore. First, he approached a government taluk hospital in Puttur, but it had limited dialysis units which were already overbooked. Then he tried his luck at a private hospital, but in vain. “Hence, he had no choice but travel to Mangalore with a companion, wait for his turn, undergo dialysis, return home and recover. He had to endure it twice a week losing two working days. His income dwindled, expenses shot up and health deteriorated,” said Rtn N Shrikanth Kolathaya, a club member. After his demise, the club members made a resolve to do something to help people suffering from kidney ailments in and around this town.

A godsend PDG

However, the club was unable to immediately work on the dialysis project for at that time, “we were preoccupied with the implementation of a cell separator system, an upgrade for our Rotary-Campco Blood Bank at a cost of around ₹1 crore,” he said.



Union chemicals and fertilisers minister DV Sadananda Gowda inaugurating the dialysis centre in the presence of DG Ranganath Bhat.

Luckily, a chance meeting with PDG Vinayak Kudva from the US at a fellowship meet gave the club members a good opportunity to take up their pet project of dialysis centre with him. Kudva was the one who got the matching partner for the cell separator project and when he asked, “what next?” the Rotarians chorused “dialysis unit”. He readily said, “go ahead”.

In an initial study, they found that around 60 patients were regularly travelling to Mangalore, about 52km from Puttur, due to lack of dialysis facilities in this town. When the club thought of setting up the facility at the local government hospital, they found the supply and running of machines were outsourced.

Past president Dr Ashok Padival offered space at his hospital, Mahaveer Medical Centre, and the club, with the support of matching

donor, RC New Tampa Noon, US, RID 6890, set up the dialysis centre at a cost of ₹50 lakh, along with contributions from members and district fund. The facility has a capacity to do 250 dialysis a month. “We have tied up with AJ Hospital and Research Centre (Mangalore) for the smooth running of the dialysis facility. We offer concessions from our charitable trust to BPL card holders and poor patients,” said Kolathaya.

Proven expertise

The club has got rich experience of running a blood bank and has 15 doctors working in five multi-specialty hospitals as members. In the near future, the club is keen to flag-off a blood donation vehicle and cardiac care ambulance to provide quality healthcare to needy patients who can't access medical services. ■



K L Saigal **the only singer** **who appealed to** **heart & mind**

S R Madhu

In 1937, a Bombay business wanted the best and most prestigious singer to perform at a family event. Kundan Lal Saigal was offered ₹25,000 for a few hours. But he preferred to keep his promise to a poor lighting assistant, whose daughter was getting married. Saigal sang all night there, ignoring the ₹25,000 offer. “The *badshah* of singers had the voice of an angel and a heart of gold,” said Naushad.

Saigal’s was “the voice of the century”, a voice so powerful that it could break recording needles! He was the first great singer-actor and the first superstar of Bollywood music.

His god-like status as singer is remarkable for many reasons.

He was active for barely 15 years (1933 to 1947) and sang just 185 songs (including 142 film songs in 39 films in six languages) in rudimentary sound recording facilities. He had little music training. But he held a whole nation in thrall. Classical maestros like Ustad Faiyaz Khan were stunned by the elemental force of his music. In 1932,

a non-film song of his, *Jhulana jhulao ri*, sold half a million records, in an era when few people owned record-players.

Lata Mangeshkar as a kid was so besotted with Saigal, she said she wanted to marry him! In his spectacular stage shows, Kishore mimicked everyone — but never Saigal. That would be a sacrilege. Said Talat Mehmood of Saigal — “What pronunciation, what throw of voice, what depth of feeling, what voice control — I couldn’t



touch him!” Suraiya was so overawed at the idea of singing a duet with him in the 1947 *Parwana* that the composer had to drop the duet!

During the 1930s and 1940s, Bollywood believed that a singer had to sound like Saigal to be effective: he was the sole barometer of quality and impact. Mukesh began his career with the haunting *Dil jalta hai to jalne do* (*Pehli Nazar*, 1947), a song so Saigal-like that Saigal remarked “I don’t remember singing this song”! CH Atma adopted the Saigal style for the immortal *Preetam aan milo* (sung for a private album in 1945), so did Surendar in that iconic duet with Nur Jehan, *Awaaz de kaha hei* (*Anmol Ghadi*, 1946).

For some 45 years (starting from the mid-50s), the most important time of the day for thousands of film music fans was 7.57am, when Radio Ceylon would play a song of KL Saigal, and this had an incredible nationwide appeal. People arose not to the twittering of birds but to the

Saigal’s was the voice of the century, a voice so powerful that it could break recording needles!



KL Saigal in the film *My sister*.

sound of Saigal’s voice, says film historian Manek Premchand.

Saigal was born on April 11, 1904, in Jammu, the third of four sons. His father Amarchand Saigal was the tehsildar of a small town. The boy showed a keen interest in singing and could copy any song he heard. He often accompanied his mother Kesar Devi, an accomplished singer of bhajans, to religious gatherings. He would pick up music from folk singers and wandering minstrels and even from dancing girls of Jammu being trained in their *kothas*. At 10, he played the role of Sita at Ram Lila functions.

But his father regarded him a wastrel, often scolding and spanking him for his laziness, laxity in studies, poor performance in exams,

unkempt appearance and craze for music.

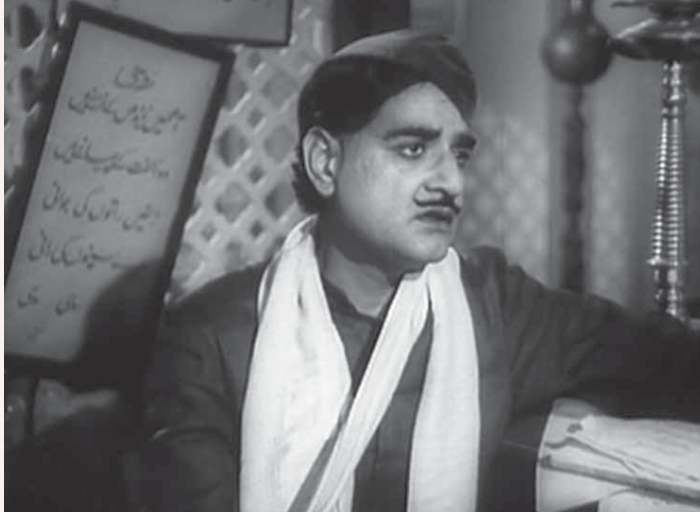
The young boy was distraught when his voice cracked at 12, and he was unable to sing. His mother took him to a mystic Sufi who had blessed the boy at birth and later predicted a bright future for him. The mystic asked young Kundan to practise two secret chants of his sect, *zikh* and *riyaz*, which would ensure spiritual enlightenment and enable him to transform emotion to song. Kundan stopped singing for two years but perfected the *zikh* and *riyaz* to obtain a rich, nasal baritone.

Saigal once told a close friend “I was born at the age of 12 in a peer’s hut one windy evening in Jammu.”

When his father retired, the family moved to Jalandhar.



Saigal lore musical and personal



Saigal singing *Jab dil hi toot gaya* in *Shah Jahan* (1946).

In 1937, Prithviraj Kapoor took Saigal to watch a hockey match in Mumbai featuring hockey wizard Dhyhan Chand and his brother Roop Singh. But till half time, no goal had been scored, and Saigal expressed his disappointment. The brothers asked him if he would sing a song for them for every goal they scored in the second half. He agreed. They scored 12

When praised for his music, he would say, “I have not killed a lion, just sung a song, forget it”.

goals! Two days later, Saigal sang 14 songs for them and gifted them expensive watches.

At his peak in 1938, he was invited to a large musical conference in Allahabad. Giants of classical music like Omkarnath Thakur, Ustad Faiyaz Khan, Vinayak Rao Patwardhan and others were present. Saigal stole the limelight as the audience clamoured for him to sing and asked for more and more. Carrying his mother in the audience in his arms, he said “They want me to sing more and more.” She shed tears of joy that her son who used to get mercilessly thrashed by his father was a public hero.

Generosity and humility were part of the Saigal legend. He never turned away any

needy person. He once gave away his clothes to a beggar shivering in the rain and came home in shorts and vest. He parted with his diamond ring to a widow in distress he met in Pune. His wife told producers to hand over money due to Saigal only to his driver. An introvert, he shunned publicity. Fame left him unaffected. When praised for his music, he would say, “I have not killed a lion, just sung a song, forget it”.

Like Ghalib, Saigal was fond of the bottle. It is said that he suffered from sciatica, and liquor was recommended. It became a habit, then an addiction. Saigal often had a dose of “Kaali panch” before a song. Naushad says he persuaded Saigal to record *Jab dil hi toot gaya* both before and after a drink. Saigal was amazed that the pre-drink version was better, and wished he had met Naushad earlier.

In December 1946, Saigal’s health deteriorated (he suffered from cirrhosis of the liver and diabetes). He moved to his home town of Jalandhar, and passed away on January 18, 1947, driving out politics, communal riots and Pakistan from newspapers for a whole week.

He was just 43 when he died. But he lent soul and magic to Bollywood music. If today it is regarded as an awesome example of India’s soft power, it owes more to Kundan Lal Saigal than anyone else.



Passionate about music and stifled by life in that city, Saigal left home. He took up sundry jobs and listened to music and sang whenever possible. He wandered about in several cities. He served as a timekeeper in the Railways, sold Remington typewriters and saris, and was manager of a hotel in Shimla. During these years of wanderlust, he often charmed people at homes and soirees with his exceptional music.

In Calcutta, Saigal got introduced to BN Sircar, who had just started New Theatres. He was not impressed by the lanky gauche man nervously clutching his kurta. But he was astounded when Saigal sang. Result: a five-year film contract, on a monthly salary of ₹200.

Saigal's first three movies with New Theatres flopped. However, fortunes turned with the 1934 *Chandidas* — its pathos-filled romantic song *Prem nagar* was a hit. The 1935 *Devdas* was a national sensation. *Balam aye baso more man mein* was a romantic gem that charmed one and all. *Dukh ke din bitat nahin* was the cry of a person sunk in the abyss of despair. Millions wept with Saigal, said Baburao Patel.

Success followed success (with films like *President*, *Street Singer*, *Dushman* etc). Those who had

scoffed at the unkempt youngster from Jalandhar — he was described as Frankenstein when he first entered movies — vied with each other to tap the gold in his throat. During a 1937 visit to Lahore for a stage performance, Saigal was lionised by adoring

crowds. Cries of *Kundan Lal Saigal zindabad* rent the air.

He got married in 1934 to Asha Rani, a girl chosen by his mother. They had three children.

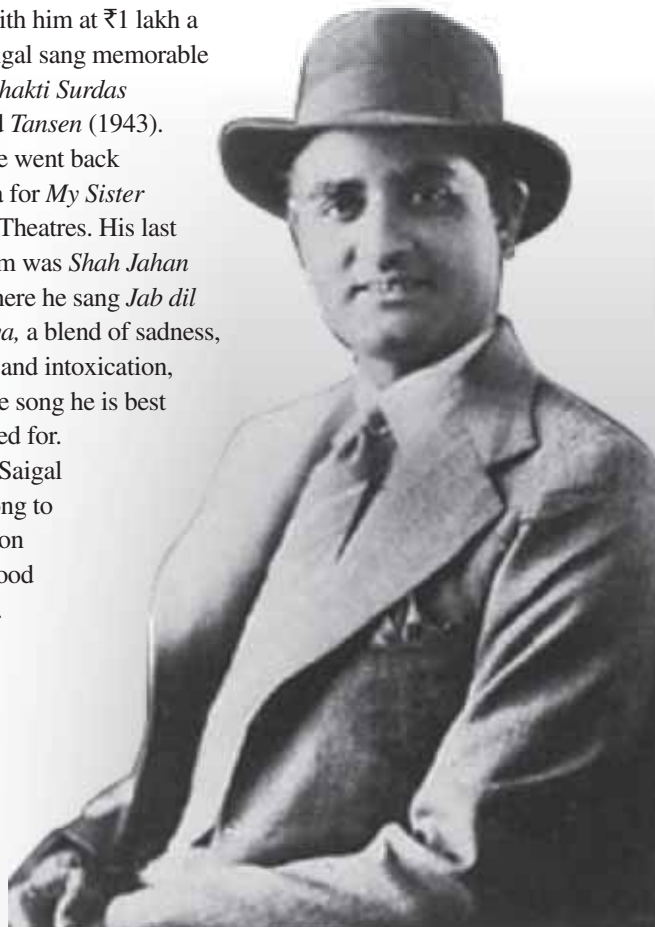
In 1941, an exodus occurred of film personalities from Calcutta to Bombay, and Saigal too made the switch. Chandulal Shah of Ranjit Movietone signed a three-movie contract with him at ₹1 lakh a movie. Saigal sang memorable songs in *Bhakti Surdas* (1942) and *Tansen* (1943). In 1944, he went back to Calcutta for *My Sister* with New Theatres. His last famous film was *Shah Jahan* (1946), where he sang *Jab dil hi toot gaya*, a blend of sadness, sweetness and intoxication, perhaps the song he is best remembered for.

Many Saigal songs belong to the pantheon of Bollywood immortals.

Examples:

- *Ek bangla bane nyara* (*President*, 1937)
- *Babul mora* (*Street Singer*, 1937)
- *Karoon kya aas niras bhaee* (*Dushman*, 1939)
- *Mai ka janoon kya jadoo hai* (*Zindagi*, 1940)
- *So ja Rajkumari so ja* (*Zindagi*, 1940)
- *Aye katib-e-taqdeer mujhe itna bata de* (*My Sister*, 1943)
- *Do naina matware tihare* (*My Sister*, 1943)
- *Jab dil hi toot gaya* (*Shah Jahan*, 1946)

Each of these masterpieces merits detailed analysis; here are just a couple of factual



glimpses. *In Ek bangla bane nyara (President)* Saigal sings and jigs, elated at the idea of owning his own house. Millions of aspirational Indians empathised with this song. It was a favourite of Lata Mangeshkar, she often hummed it.

Through *Mai ka janoon kya jadoo hai* and *Do naina matware*, Saigal paid effervescent and melodious tributes to his screen sweetheart. *Gham diye mustaqil* and *Jab dil hi toot gaya* were heart-wrenching melodies. *Babul mora (Street Singer)* was historic. He insisted he would walk and sing, live on the street, like street singers, not in a studio. The mike followed in a truck. Music director RC Boral was astounded with the impact.

Saigal has been lauded as the “ghazal king”. He did more than anyone else to popularise



romantic Urdu poetry, particularly at private events. And won recognition first as a ghazal singer. It is said that he immortalised Ghalib by singing his best ghazals in his own inimitable style, being well-versed in Urdu literature and a poet himself.

What made him such a phenomenon? It is said that he was the only singer who appealed to both mind and heart. Some attribute his power to the secret

Sufi rituals he practised for two years which showed the path to God through music. Some critics have highlighted his tonal variations, and the way he caressed certain words while singing. He had 20 ways of singing a word!

Kanan Devi remarked that Saigal had a perfect pitch sense. He didn't need the help of a veena or tanpura to set the right pitch. In fact, at recording sessions he would sing out a note and musicians would set their instruments accordingly. An amazing phenomenon!

In an illuminating interview with Kirit Ghosh, editor of the film magazine *Jayathi*, Saigal said, “I have no clear understanding of the grammar of music. I manage to sing because of a strong feeling about how certain sounds should feel in a given *raga*. I do not use ten notes if I can manage to do the same with one. That's because I know very little.”

He said his “favourite *raga* is *bhairavi*. To know *bhairavi* is to know all the *ragas*.”



The author is a senior journalist and a member of the Rotary Club of Madras South.

From RI South Asia Office desk

Data privacy alert

Club and district directories may contain Rotarians' personal data. Directories should never be distributed to the general public or posted on web pages accessible to the public. Digital directories should be password-protected or require a login to access. When collecting personal information, let your members know in advance how their information will be used.

PAN mandatory

Indian donors must submit their PAN number for contributions made online/by cheque/draft, irrespective of value or the donor's intention to claim tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act, 1961. Tax exemption certificate u/s 80G will be issued only on providing PAN number.

Revised communication assets

With the start of the new Rotary year, access the brand centre by signing in or registering to your My Rotary account and download the following revised documents:

- Rotarians must use the redesigned PowerPoint template for their club presentations. It includes step-by-step

instructions on customising presentation slides with their own text, charts, images and club logos. There are links to Rotary resources, such as official logos, photos, videos and brand guidelines. Rotarians can choose colour and layout options, all in keeping with the Rotary style guidelines for brand consistency. The new template replaces all previous versions on the Brand Center, including TRF's PPT template. To access, login to the Brand Center, go to Materials, Club Resources and then Presentations.

- Download the new Voice and Visual Identity guidelines from the Brand Center. It provides essential information to help you build Rotary's brand and helps you understand the difference between Rotary's Masterbrand Signature and Masterbrand Signature Simplified, how to write in Rotary's voice and follow Rotary's colour palette while designing various new club documents and assets.

It has also been updated to include references to People of Action; the new vision statement and guidelines for using the Mark of Excellence, Masterbrand Signature and Simplified Rotary Masterbrand Signature. ■

Renovated sanitation facilities for a Dharwad school

Team Rotary News

RC Dharwad Central, RID 3182, renovated toilets and added a handwash station at a government school in Dharwad.

When PDG Ganesh Bhat was invited to preside over an event at the school, a chance visit to the toilets there "made me cringe. When I commented about their poor maintenance one of the teachers nonchalantly informed me that the students will relieve themselves at the large vacant plot adjacent to the school." Upset over this, Bhat, a WinS national recognition committee member, decided to revamp the facility at the school and RC Dharwad Central volunteered to get the job done.

After the lockdown is lifted the children visiting the school will be in for a huge surprise. With financial assistance

from Rtn Nagaraj Tayannavar the club renovated the toilets and ensured continuous water supply. A wash station has also been installed on the premises. "We have instructed

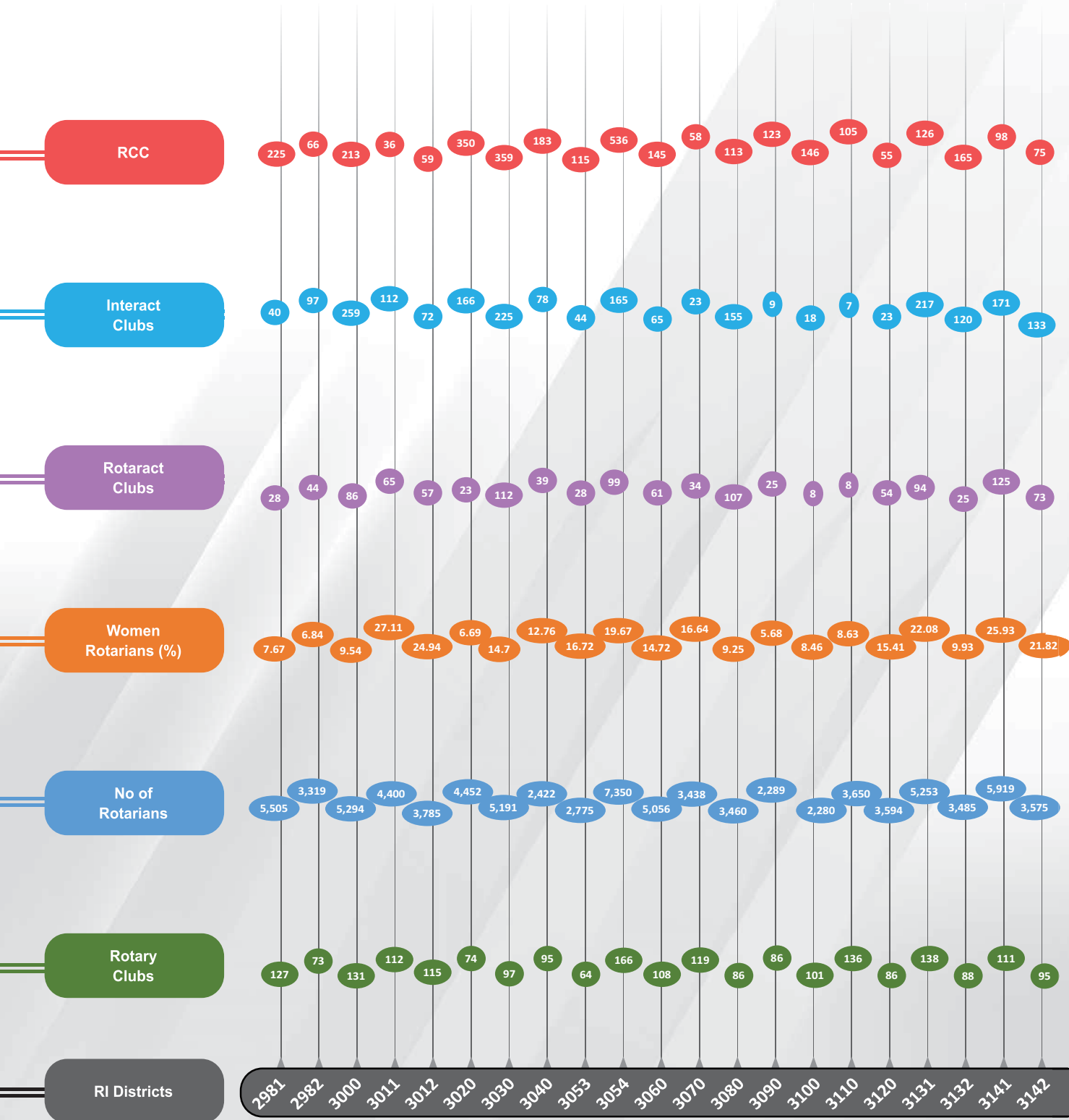
the school management to take proper care of the structures and informed them that we will be conducting surprise checks," said Anand Nayak, club president. ■



Students using the new handwash station at the school. PDG Ganesh Bhat (second from right) is also seen.

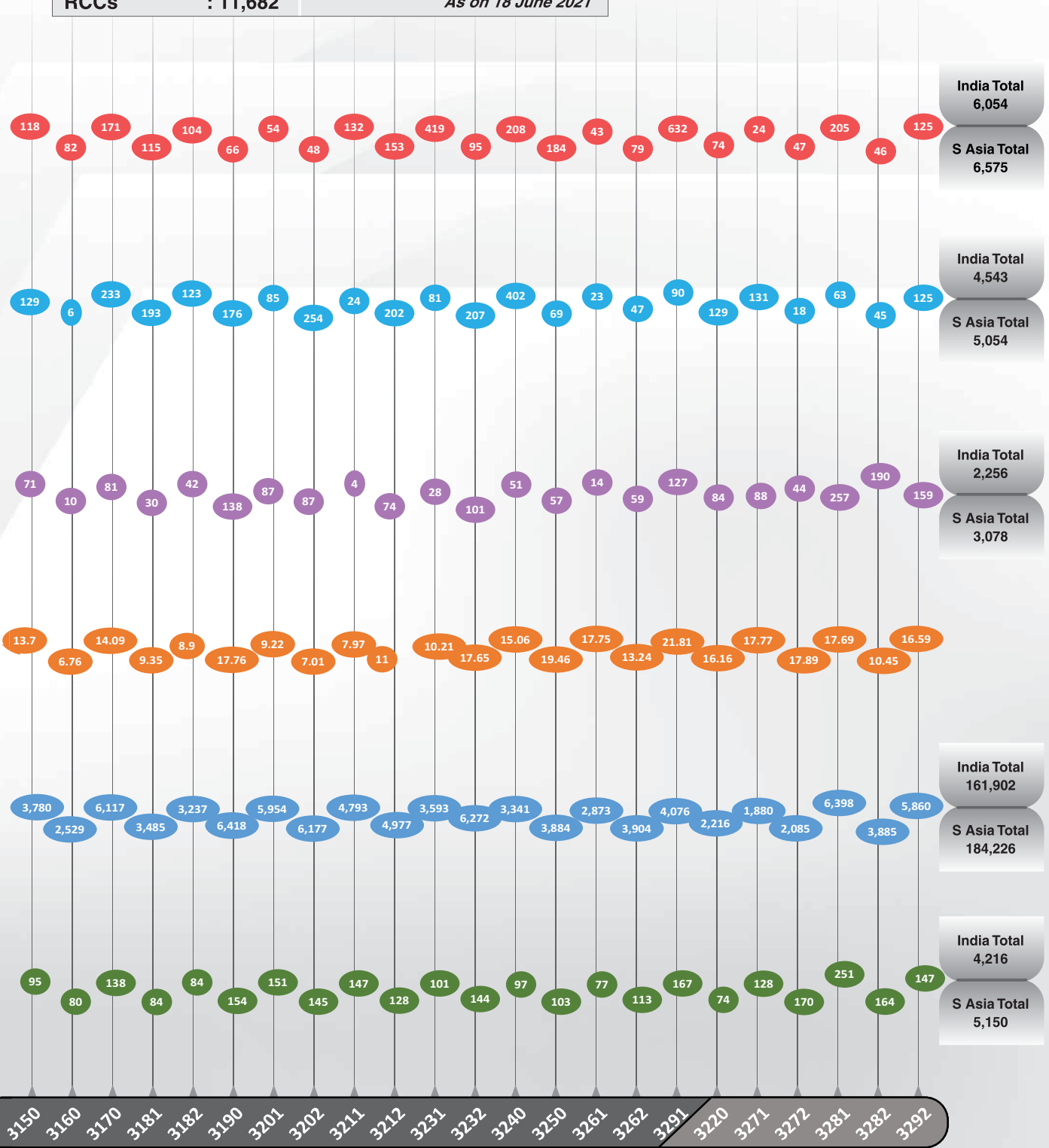
Membership Summary

(As on June 1, 2021)



Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,932	Rotary members : 1,197,984
Rotaract clubs : 10,214	Rotaract members : 220,703
Interact clubs : 16,163	Interact members : 371,749
RCCs : 11,682	<i>As on 18 June 2021</i>





Make your home energy-efficient

Preeti Mehra

Energy efficiency is not just a catchphrase, it is doable to a large extent.

Among other things, a new millennium home must be energy-efficient. This is the unwritten code and includes all constructions, new and old. Since reducing the carbon footprint is the

goal of every environment-friendly citizen, charity, as they say, begins literally at home.

For a start, to make our dwelling energy-efficient, we need to upgrade our home. While the first move is to replace incandescent bulbs with LED bulbs, as covered in the previous

column, the next step is to check everyday appliances. If some of them are due for replacement, it is best to do some homework before you go in for new ones.

In the past decade, the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE) in India has invested much effort in developing



energy-efficient standards for electrical equipment and labelling them to help consumers make their choice in an informed manner. This has helped enhance the cost saving potential of the products and reduce your energy bill every month. It also boosts your green quotient on the home front.

Thanks to BEE, all quality electrical equipment and appliances display energy performance labels and have minimum standards laid down for them. The more the stars the better the energy efficiency. Included in the list of star-rated appliances are those considered essential for city life — the air conditioner, washing machine, refrigerator, computer, microwave, solar water heater, LPG stove, ceiling fan and the deep freezer. For larger operations, BEE has also labelled induction motors, pump sets, DG sets and chillers, among others.

According to experts, apart from the appliance you choose, it is how you use them that also makes a difference. For instance, many electronic devices if left on “standby” or “sleep” mode draw power to work clocks, timers and remotes. This low-level use can account for five to 10 per cent of your electricity bill. It is also recommended that if you want to replace a desktop computer, it is

better to go in for a laptop as it uses almost 80 per cent less electricity. Though the laptop is more expensive when you buy it, it is greener in the long run.

Enormous amount of energy can also be saved by the way you cook. For instance, microwave ovens are said to consume 80 percent less energy than conventional ovens which have to be pre-heated. So, if you are merely heating or last-minute browning, using the microwave may be a better option. Similarly, good cooks swear by the time and energy saving pressure cooking provides. They also say that if pots and pans are covered, food gets cooked faster, reducing the use of whatever cooking medium you are using.

In the same way, tweaking the way you launder clothes can help lower the power bill. First and foremost, when using a washing machine, wait for a full load of clothes and avoid using the medium setting on the washer. Second, avoid high temperature settings for water if the clothes are not too soiled. Third, if you put the laundry on a clothesline on a sunny day, you could save on the drying function altogether.

However, energy efficiency is not achieved only by using star-rated products, energy saving devices and by following relevant tips. Going green is a holistic concept that encompasses other areas as well — home construction is one of them, and crucially, introducing renewable energy for domestic consumption.

If you are refurbishing your home, or building a new one, there are many important aspects to keep in mind, especially those to do with light and air. In case you are replacing windows or doors, make sure you choose ones that are made of eco-friendly material, give you the right insulation, ventilation and help to

Electronic devices if left on “standby” or “sleep” mode draw power to work clocks, timers and remotes, and can account for 5 to 10 per cent of your electricity bill.

flood the house with as much natural light as possible. This itself enables less use of artificial energy.

In case you are redoing the roofs of your house, or adding another storey to it, as often happens with stand-alone homes in a city, make sure that the roof structure is designed to support solar panels (the subject of my column next month). An investment in renewable energy can pay off for years to come. Needless to say, it would be expedient to call in a solar expert who will help identify a location for the inverter and batteries and tell you how the electric conduit will run for making the connection to solar panels.

In cities that are hot for most of the year, considering the best kind of roofing and flooring helps in controlling the temperature inside the house. To make roofs cool, it is recommended that you use reflective material that absorbs less heat from the sunlight. For the floors inside the house, it is best to avoid carpeting as it adds to the heat. Instead, go in for flooring that is tiled or made of natural material that can be swabbed to bring down the temperature. It is bringing all these elements together that make a house more energy-efficient.

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

To make roofs cool use reflective material that absorbs less heat from the sunlight. For the floors inside the house avoid carpeting as it adds to the heat.



Surrounded by sounds

Sandhya Rao

Languages tell us who we are and where we may have come from.

Let's start at the very beginning, a very good place to start...' says Maria in *The Sound of Music* as she strums her guitar in the gorgeous outdoors of Austria in an attempt to teach her seven Von Trapp wards how to sing. In the case of Peggy Mohan's book, *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants: The Story of India Through its Languages*, let's start at the very end, the last chapter, 'Chapter 8: Confluence'.

No, this is not a gimmick, just a practical suggestion that makes the motive clear when put in context. But before that, a small digression: I love the idea of languages, the sound of different languages, and am not shy of trying my tongue at them. I believe that we Indians possess naturally twisted tongues that empower us to be multilingual with varying degrees of fluency. Although this may be a generalisation, we can claim that a 'typical' Indian tends towards unself-consciousness, which makes it easier for her or him to take informal shots at unfamiliar languages. It works differently in a formal set-up such as school

or workplace, but on the informal platform, there's little to stop Indians from talking.

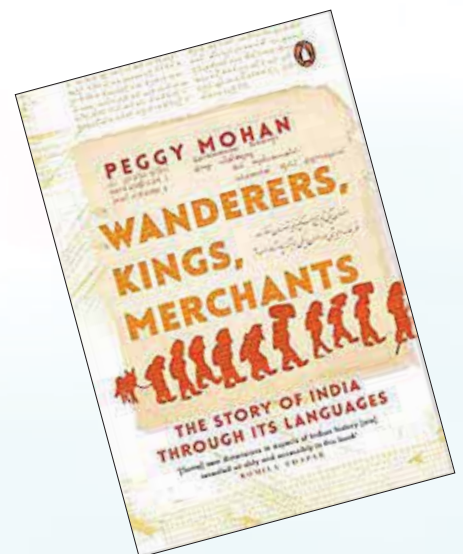
Okay, so why the last chapter first? Simply because it more or less plots the journey undertaken in the rest of the book and makes it easier to then follow the detailed route and take in some of the sights. *Wanderers, Kings, Merchants* (WKM) is not an easy read, and is perhaps not even for everybody. Despite my interest in the subject, for instance, it was a bit of a challenge. But once you get past (or skip!) the technical bits, the rest of what it says is bound to interest everybody. After all, who doesn't want to know who they really are, where they came from, and which way they may be headed? At once philosophical and scholarly, the argument presented in the book is persuasive particularly because it is placed in a highly relevant historical context.

For instance, over the years there's been so much discussion around Sanskrit. Old language, oldest language, root language, complete language, elitist language, caste-ist language, mother language, dead

language, time-to-revive-it language... It probably has as many labels as it has adherents. There's even a village in India where the language of communication is Sanskrit; this is Mattur (aka Mathur) in Karnataka. (I often think that living in Mattur would seem to a dunderhead like me as if I were a permanent actor in a perpetually running Kalidasa play!) The decision to adopt Sanskrit could not have arisen spontaneously; it must have been a deliberate choice.

Sounds make a language and Sanskrit is a prime example of this, with all its soft, hard, sibilant, aspirated, dental, alveolar and other syllables. According to one theory, human beings make around 500 different vowel and consonant sounds with the mouth. And these sounds lead to thousands of languages, each distinct, some existing only in oral form, and some with few or no speakers remaining. The internet throws up lists of languages that include those that are extinct and vulnerable.

As Peggy Mohan points out, languages don't die, it's the people speaking them who do. More importantly, the languages and their variants tell us about who carried



these languages and dispersed them, who absorbed them, who rejected them and whom they met and mingled with to create other languages, when and where and how. Wrapped up in all this is the moment — moments strung together in a seamless passage of time, leaving historical records in their wake. This is the path WKM explores, offering fresh and, for me, curious perspectives. For instance, it theorises that retroflexions — the hard and doubled-up tt/thh and dd/ddh for example — were actually Dravidian sounds that found their way into the Rig Veda. It points to the phenomenon that when invasions or conquests or even trade took place, the groups that came into new territories with the sounds of their own languages were largely male-dominated. At a time when campaigns and journeys tended to be long and often undertaken on foot, it was common for the men to settle with local women. The women gave their progeny their own, local languages and slowly, over time, these were the languages that began to gain currency. Where the settlers or conquerors were dominating, their language, too, dominated. English is a classic example of this.

The hegemony of the English language in India is a political work that has made great progress: most readers will find the second last chapter, 'Indian English as an Invasive Species' very illuminating. The author makes this telling observation about language as political strategy: 'Independent India chose to keep and extend its large sector of elite private schools, which were English medium, instead of going the socialist route like most other countries — including the USA — which had neighbourhood schools, where rich and poor children sat in mixed classes studying at government expense in the local language.' Over 70 years

Sounds make a language and Sanskrit is a prime example of this, with all its soft, hard, sibilant, aspirated, dental, alveolar and other syllables.

after independence, we continue to simultaneously politicise and struggle over our approach to education.

There are two words used in the book that are important in this context: 'bilingualism' and 'diglossia'. Peggy Mohan explains bilingualism as being 'about two languages you know having essentially the same functions, such that it is easy to translate from one to the other.' The same stretches to as many languages as you know equally well. With diglossia, 'what you find is a child first learning one language and speaking it at home, and then later on, maybe at school, transitioning to another language which is used for less basic things. The end result is not two separate languages that exist in parallel, but a single competence, where ground-level things are done in the first language and things to do with school, or the modern sector, in another.' In other words, the language used at home comes with a vocabulary that is different from the vocabulary of the language used at school, making translation mutually impossible. If the speaker was bilingual, on the other hand, s/he would have sufficient vocabulary and equal and/or the required facility in both languages; mutual translation would be possible.

'A language is viable,' Peggy Mohan writes, 'when it is capable of expressing the sort of things a child that age needs to express. This does ultimately involve words and grammar, but it is not an assemblage of structures like a child learning a second

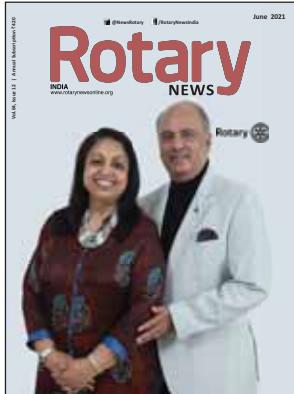
language in the classroom would pick up. These is something organic and native-like about it.' It took a while for this to sink in, but understanding this enables a better appreciation of the difficulties educationists and policy-makers face with regards to 'making India literate' or even ushering in social reforms. Chapter 7 brings the reader up close with the whole business of English in India: 'English has stayed because elite Indians wanted to preserve the old idea of a ruling class that lived far above in the stratosphere. And it continues to spread because the dream of independence and self-rule has inspired the poor, who see in this language the surest way to rise above sea level and gain their share of the sunlight.'

Continuing to read the chapters right to left, we get glimpses into the way languages evolved under Magadhan and Nagamese influence, the link between Turkic, Persian and Urdu/Hindi, the birth of Indo-Aryan languages, what happened with Malayalam, and the behind-the-scenes story of Sanskrit. We see what happens to 'pure' languages, if indeed they were pure at all, how they blend with each other, creole and pidgin, and a whole lot more. In the process, more importantly, we see what events influenced or triggered these changes.

Tamil is believed to be the oldest surviving language and one of its more challenging sounds is 'zh' as in 'Tamizh' or 'Kozhikode'. Some Tamil speakers themselves have it from their sound store and replaced it with 'easier-to-enunciate' equivalents. As a child, I remember being schooled by my father to say 'vazhappazham' hundreds of times in order get the 'zh' just right. And he wasn't even Tamil speaking! Try it. Or 'kozhakkattai'. See what you bite into!

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

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A Jaipur limb camp in Guwahati helps people walk

Kiran Zehra

A distant voice crackles over phone in broken English: “Me Sat Singh Tamong, the ‘one-legged man’, as the children here call me.” Two years ago, Tamong, a forest guard at the Kaziranga National Park in Assam, was

attacked by a rhinoceros. He was critically injured on head and chest, and lost a leg. When he regained consciousness after several days of treatment, he realised that “losing a limb doesn’t mean you have lost your life. Although I can’t go back to being the same, I was ready for a new and different experience. Challenging, but never dull.”

At the Jaipur Foot fitment camp organised jointly by RC Guwahati Metro, RID 3240, and Shree Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, Dispur, 15 amputees were fitted with artificial limbs; Tamong was one of them. While the Viklang Sahayata Samiti helped the club identify the beneficiaries, four club members — Arun Sharma,

Shekhar Agarwal, R P Sureka and club president Uttam Kothari — sponsored the Jaipur limbs costing ₹60,000.

“It’s better than crutches. But I still need to get used to it,” says Tamong. Mira, 54, another beneficiary from Nagaon, 121km from Guwahati, says “this will help me carry on with my daily chores and activities like household work, bathing and getting dressed on my own.”

An amputee himself Dr Sushil Surana, the limb fitment in-charge and technician at the Samiti, says, “it can take time for amputees to finally accept their limb loss. With a positive mindset, along with physical rehabilitation and the prosthetic limbs, they can show tremendous improvement in their quality of life. Of course, it is crucial that family and friends support them while they struggle to cope with the change.”

For DG Subhasish Chatterjee who inaugurated the project and

Forest guard Sat Singh Tamong with his prosthetic leg.



fitted the limbs for a beneficiary, “nothing beats the smile on their face. Instead of posing for pictures along with us, one beneficiary who had lost both limbs, stood up after getting his prosthetic feet fitted and took pictures of us. I was stunned at his enthusiasm.”

With a strength of 26 members who are all Paul Harris Fellows, this club has been doing a variety of projects to support the local community and also contributes to TRF in these challenging times. “They must partner with a few other clubs in the district to

do larger community projects to reach more beneficiaries,” says Chatterjee.

Kothari, a second-generation Rotarian, says despite Covid constraints and challenges, “we are finding ways to carry on with humanitarian projects by observing the necessary protocols.” For him changing the life of an eight-year-old amputee by fitting her with a Jaipur foot was ‘most satisfactory’. The club will be continuing with the artificial limb fitment camp each year to empower the physically challenged, he says. ■



Dr Sushil Surana, limb fitment in charge at the Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti, checking out on the beneficiaries.

RID 3132 holds national symposium for Interactors

Team Rotary News

Interact chairs from 15 RI districts came together to share notes and showcase their projects at a one-day symposium organised by the district Interact chair of RID 3132 Dr Bindu Shirsath and her team. RIDE Dr Mahesh Kotbagi gave a talk on RI’s diversity, equity and inclusiveness (DEI) principles and appreciated the



efforts of district Interact chairs (DICs) in making this programme a success.

PDG Ravi Vadlamani spoke on innovative ways to strengthen Interact clubs and urged DICs to continue their efforts in organising similar programmes. DGs Harish Motwani, RID 3132; Chinappa Reddy, RID 3160; and Dr Bindu spoke on the occasion. DIC Virendra Parrikar, RID 3030, gave a presentation on various projects of Interactors.

The convener Bindu received a letter of congratulations from RI President Holger Knaack for hosting the “the first ever symposium for Interactors at the national-level.” Praising the DICs, he said, “the future of Rotary depends on leaders like you. We want you to feel empowered to imagine new opportunities for Rotary. This is the only way we will adapt in these rapidly changing times — through meaningful collaboration with young, energetic people.”

Interactor Stuti Salvi of Interact Club of Priyadarshini Buds rendered a special song to heal the world from the pandemic situation. ■

Adapt to disruptions, and breathe!

Bharat and Shalan Savur

We've rallied so far and we will continue to do so. For if, as Eckhart Tolle says, 'Life is designed for disruptions,' then it is a sure thing that we are designed to ideate, create and overcome. We've come up trumps already, haven't we? From working from home to working out to strengthen our immunity to vaccinations to staycations to virtual conferences and parties and doing our stuff online, we've covered a massive area with our innovations.

The next question is: how do we proceed? The answer is very simple: we adapt and keep adapting. The story goes: A village called Land had never seen the ocean. As the ecology changed, the sea expanded and began encroaching on the Land. The villagers panicked. 'We will drown!' they cried. Only one person called Shams remained calm. He quietly walked to the shore and went into the shallow water. He stayed there. Then he looked back and told the anxious villagers, 'I have walked into the Ocean. It is very comfortable. Why don't you leave your fears behind and join me?' And the whole village did. And everybody agreed that it was really quite comfortable and enjoyable.

The breath that builds. These villagers had an inbuilt skill that we all have — the skill to adapt. In adapting, we go through three phases: in the first phase, the body reacts acutely to a stressful stimulus. It secretes adrenalin and other stress hormones. They quicken our heart rate, breathing and raise our blood pressure. Before we get to the second phase, let's pause here.

We can control our body-reactions by taking control of our breath. Sitting where you are, consciously inhale through your nostrils to a count of 8, while allowing your stomach to swell. Then exhale through your mouth to a count of 8, allowing your stomach to subside. Do it comfortably, slow and easy, 20–30 times until you feel calm. By doing this simple exercise, you are letting go of fear and anxiety and allowing calmness to govern your system. And now, you voluntarily step into the next phase.

Normally, in the second phase, the acute fear can sharpen or dull down leading to high anxiety if you are a high-strung kind of personality or depression if you are prone to quick lows and pessimism. What this 8-8 breathing does is that it helps you manage your reaction and guides you into a state of readiness to respond to the situation. This state can be enormously productive — it gives us the beautiful urge, the positive impetus to ideate, create, overcome and progress. There's a wonderful feeling of: 'We cannot let ourselves down!'

And that brings us to the third phase which is a 'let-downer' — a continuous high-energy state which brings on chronic exhaustion and then illness. However, our 8-8 breathing mellows it, keeps it balanced yet beautifully lubricated.

There's much wisdom here. When we cannot change the environment, we change our reaction to it with our breath. Tip: Do the 8-8 breathing at bedtime when the lights are off. You will slip into a lovely, restful state.

Make trying times, caring times.

Thomas Paine sighed, 'These are the times that try men's souls.' He was, of course remarking on a different concept, but the sentiment holds true today. And we can, at a personal level, make them less trying. There's a timely, humane reminder making the rounds. It says, 'We all need each other. Take care.' Perhaps, initially, we needed the shrill negativity of the media to shock us into wearing masks, sanitising our hands and maintaining social distancing. At the same time, while we need to continue these practices, we now need to keep away from such shrillness. For these are also times that can numb our souls.

So, please do minimise watching news channels and give your mind the space to breathe, to trust that things are



working out. Distrust is a slow, unpleasant destroyer of our inner cohesiveness. As Theodore Roosevelt said, 'The poorest way to face life is with a sneer.' Many speakers on news channels do. Interestingly, I find channels that specialise in economics more positive, very upbeat about the state of affairs. Their analysts speak in measured tones, they don't suffer from 'future block' — where it's all fog, no future — they see disruptions as opportunities, they plan for the next six months and beyond, they walk the stocks through thick and thin, they see the future in all its brightness where others don't.

Be interested, be passionate. That's an important pointer — do things that you wouldn't have time for in the old normal. Spend an hour or so on something you are passionate about. As a cardiologist said, 'Be interested in something and you will be interesting to others.' This is how we allow the present to interact intimately with us, it comes alive in our doings. Rainer M Rilke puts it beautifully, 'Don't search

for the answers which could not be given to you now because you would not be able to live them. The point is to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps, then, some day you will gradually without even noticing it, live your way into the answer.'

Live everything with grace and enthusiasm. A few days ago, a thought floated into my head, 'When you accept life as perfect in its imperfections, you rise above life-situations.' Stillness does that. It teaches. It points you in the right direction. Emotions don't give you direction but they give you a certain drive, a flair, so that you live everything.

Live the pause too. Maybe you've had to put some big plans on pause. That's okay. Live the pause too. It gives space to re-think, re-plan and be more flexible in your approach. Allow your eyes to open to the multiple, multi-coloured routes your life could take. Who knows what secrets were hidden from you before the corona virus came along? As Somerset Maugham

said, 'The secret to life is meaningless unless you discover it yourself.'

Telling takeaways. The virus has given a greater emphasis and deeper meaning to the words 'health' and 'immunity'. These are compelling takeaways for our present and future. The key is to exercise regularly — walk briskly half an hour five days a week or CAH — cycle at home at 70–80 rpm. A study was conducted before vaccines came on the scene in California. It followed 48,440 people who had Covid and found that the active ones did not need hospitalisation.

Lift the greyness. Mental immunity and strength are equally important. Three of the most heart-lifting words I heard recently were from my cousin Pramod who was hospitalised after testing positive and feeling breathless as his oxygen level fell. 'I am recovering!' he messaged all of us on the first day itself. It's amazing how the greyness lifted. That's what we need — a feeling of being on top of our ailments, for that's where adaptability springs from. The secret taught by sages is to never underestimate your energy. When I heard Nayaswami Jyotish thunder, 'We live in a sea of powerful energy!' I felt a wave of strength in me. It's true. Each of us is powered and we live in an environment powered with energy. That's how millions of us are alive and the world functions 24/7. Have trust, faith, conviction that everything is working out. We will vaccinate ourselves, we will all get well and stay well. As Yogananda said, 'All challenges are challenges of our willingness!' And by God, are we willing! Not just willing but ready and roaring to go!

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



RC Chinnamanur — RID 3000



Dresses were donated to an orphanage and an old age home. A sewing machine was given to a widow and meals were provided to all the inmates. The project cost ₹70,000.

RC Anjar — RID 3054



A Rapid Antigen Test camp was organised with support from the health department. As many as 2,980 people were tested and ayurvedic medicines were given to Covid patients. Project cost ₹2 lakh.

RC Nasik Grapecity — RID 3030



The club, along with Green Revolution, an NGO, planted over 500 saplings at Chunchale Shivar, a neighbourhood. Club president Kavita Dagaonkar handed over the plants to the volunteers.

RC Surat Roundtown — D 3060



An oxygen cylinder was donated to a hospital with the help of past president Vimal Zaveri. Club president Esmayeel Saherwala coordinated the project.

RC Burhanpur — RID 3040



Seven clubs jointly organised a mobile cancer-screening camp for women through a mammography bus. In all 460 patients were identified with breast and uterine cancer through mammogram and Pap smear tests.

RC Palampur — RID 3070



The club, in partnership with a veterinary hospital, is providing free anti-rabies vaccine to stray and owned dogs in the city. Over 2,500 dogs have been vaccinated so far.

RC Ambala Industrial Area — RID 3080



A Covid vaccination camp was held in a slum colony. Health workers were awarded with Corona Warrior certificate.

RC Kushinagar — RID 3120



Blankets were distributed for needy families residing in the slum localities around the Kasia neighbourhood.

RC Malerkotla — RID 3090



A BiPAP machine was donated to the Hazrat Halima Hospital, Malerkotla, for treatment of Covid patients. The project was done in the presence of PDG Amjad Ali.

RC New Panvel — RID 3131



The club is supporting the government's Covid vaccine programme by offering its premises and volunteering for the programme. Rotary clubs around Panvel have helped in vaccinating 15,000 people so far.

RC Brahmavarat Kanpur — RID 3110



The club sponsored the marriage of a bride from an under-privileged family and donated household items including bed, fridge, TV, washing machine, cupboard and kitchen utensils to the newly-wed couple.

RC Solapur MIDC — RID 3132



An oxygen concentrator was donated to a PHC at Chapalgaon village in Akkalkot tehsil under the disaster management fund. Club president Vitthal Vanga and members were present at the handover ceremony.

RC Hyderabad East — RID 3150



A second breastfeeding kiosk was inaugurated by ACP Shikha Goel at the Nampally railway station in the presence of DG N V Hanmanth Reddy. The project was done with the support of SC Railway.

RC Shoranur — RID 3201

DG Jose Chacko inaugurated a rainwater harvesting unit at the KVR High School under Project *Ripples*. This is a GG project with RCs Cochin Harbour, Palm Springs, California and TRF. PDG Vinod Kutty and project chair Anil Menon were present.



RC Shimoga Central — RID 3182



Thirty-one front-line workers who had reached out to Covid patients across the 24 wards of the city corporation were felicitated in the presence of DG Rajaram Bhat.

RC Kasaragod — RID 3202

A Covid awareness campaign through a public address system mounted on a mini tempo was launched during lockdown. Disinfectant spraying machines were donated to the wards.



RC Bangalore Vidyapeeta — RID 3190



The club distributed cooked food and water bottles to over 100 conservancy staff of the Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagar Palike at a project cost of ₹20,000.

RC Chengannur — RID 3211

IAS officer PH Kurian handed over eight laptops to the flood-affected Metropolitan School, Chengannur. The project was done with financial assistance from RCs Willodale, Canada, and Kalamassery.



RC Tirunelveli Town — RID 3212



Dress material and a sumptuous dinner were provided to the mentally-ill inmates at the Deva Home. Club president Ramasamy, AG Thiruponraj and Rtn Senthil, the sponsor, were present.

RC Tagore Land — RID 3240

A dental camp was held at Madhu Pukur Par village near Bolpur in association with RCC, Dharmarajtala Naba Jagaran Sangha. A total of 105 patients were treated.



RC Pernambut — RID 3231



Five jumbo oxygen cylinders were donated to the government hospital, Pernambut, in the presence of district revenue officer, club office-bearers and past president Elangovan.

RC Mahanadi Vihar Choudwar — RID 3262

E-learning project was expanded to five more government upper primary schools following good results from its first such school in Cuttack. The project is financed by CSR funds.



RC Chennai Mugappair — RID 3232



A metal barricade was installed on a culvert at an inner ring road junction in Chinna Nolambur for easy passage of vehicles without falling into the trap below. Rtn A Prabakaran sponsored the initiative which cost ₹45,000.

RC Joka — RID 3291

A special camp for thalassaemia patients was conducted with the support of Rotaractors and local RCC members at a village in South 24 Parganas district.



Compiled by V Muthukumar

Madrassi, Mohajir, Eyeranian or Punjabi?



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

The other day, when I went for my vaccination the young nurse said something that a Punjabi friend, who grew up in Kerala and Tamil Nadu, had told me just the day before, namely, that I didn't at all sound like a Tamilian. I told her I had been living in the north since I was born, 70 years ago — and in Delhi for 63 of those. She said you don't look like a Tamilian either. I apologised. What else could I do. She was soon going to poke a needle into me.

Actually the same thing happens everywhere including at Delhi immigration. In the old days, the immigration chap used to struggle with my name while telling me that I didn't look like a *Madrassi*. But one of them did congratulate me saying it was easy to find my name on the system. There was just one, unlike the million or so Ashok Singhs or Rahul Sharmas. Now, with the magnetic strip on the passport, that erstwhile problem of having to key in my name with its 49 characters, has vanished. I once asked my elder brother, who was the chief passport officer then, why the government refused to accept initials. He just looked at me sadly as if to say he always knew I was an idiot.

In the US they thought I was an *Eyeranian* and in the UK, a Turk! Indeed the Bangladeshis there thought I was a Punjabi, which to them meant a Pakistani. The Pakistanis, however,

to give them credit, at least thought that I was an Indian. They had never heard of Tamil Nadu, but *Madrassi*, yes. But you are not dark, they said. I had to laugh it off saying my heart is very, very black.

And that's how it has been. Having lived in the north for as long as I have, I naturally don't sound like the solid Tamilian that I am. But with my name being what it is, the locals think I am a Mohajir from Chennai. A North Indian minister once told me and a colleague, that for him Tamilians were from another universe. "I can't understand their language or the way they think," he grumbled. I then spoke to him in a mix of pure Hindi and colloquial Punjabi. He was quite dumbstruck.

Much the same thing happened to me when I used to be invited to take part on TV talk shows. The upmarket

English channels never called me — no wonder they are all shutting down — but the Hindi ones often did. One day I asked the producer why me. He said the audience loves it when, in the middle of your chaste Hindi, your utterly Tamil name comes up on the screen. When I told my wife this, she said, yes, you are the freak in the circus ring. I toyed with the idea of refusing further invitations but the money was very good and I consoled myself that no one ever remembers anything that comes on TV. When money speaks, they say, no one criticises the accent.

I face the same problem in Tamil Nadu but in reverse. The moment I say something, they assume I'm a Punjabi and try to fleece me. If I speak in Tamil they ask if I have come from *Dilli* — which is how the fellows from UP pronounce 'Dehli' which is the correct name, not Delhi. The H comes before the L. It's humiliating to be spotted and slotted so easily.

My sons, who belong to the post-1980 generation, can barely speak Tamil. I have told them that if they want to be accepted in the north they should change their names by adding a Singh at the end. Or if they want to be accepted in the south, they should improve their Tamil. I don't think they are going to do either. So poor chaps, like me, they are destined forever to be in that amorphous state where their identity is concerned. Being Indian is no longer enough. ■

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In Brief



Acid attack survivors distribute food

Sheroes Hangout Café, run by acid attack survivors in Agra, opened its doors to the poor and needy during

the lockdown under the *Smile Goal Hai* campaign. Supported by Chhanv Foundation, the cafe carried out food distribution drives across the city. The acid attack survivors also carried out food distribution drive for Covid patients. The initiative is providing 200 FSSAI-certified food boxes every day. The meal box includes rice, chapati, vegetables and dal.

Covid vaccine for animals



Russia has registered the world's first Covid vaccine for animals, after tests showed it generated antibodies against the virus in dogs, cats, foxes and mink. The vaccine has been developed by a unit of Rosselkhoznadzor, a

federal service for veterinary and phytosanitary supervision, that exercises oversight over vet medicine and agricultural production. This vaccine was named Carnivac-Cov. Farms in Russia, Greece, Poland and Austria have already requested for bulk supplies of the vaccine. The effect of the dosage is said to last for six months. But experts continue to study the effects and results of the vaccine. So far Russia has only registered two Covid cases among animals, both in cats.

Billionaires in space race

Jeff Bezos, CEO of Amazon and head of the aerospace company Blue Origin, has announced plans to launch the first human space flight. If successful, the 57-year-old would become the first person to ride his own company's rocket into space. Two others — Elon Musk of SpaceX and Richard Branson of Virgin Galactic — have said they also want to ride into space on their own company-built spaceship.



Named after NASA astronaut Alan Shepard, the first American to go into space, Blue Origin's New Shepard rocket plans to take off on July 20. The

Floating city in the Maldives

A Dutch planning and architecture firm is working with the Maldives to create a 200- hectare-floating city as the



archipelago with 25 islands in the Indian Ocean faces the risk of becoming inhabitable due to warming.

The floating city is modelled on the structure of coral reefs

and will be powered by green energy to help fight climate change. A series of canals and flexible bridges will connect its housing modules while docks will allow people to park their boats and access services to facilitate a whole new experience of shopping. The construction, beginning next year, will be completed in five years.

China's new three-child policy



China has announced that it will allow couples to have up to three children, after census data showed a steep decline in birth rate. The country had introduced the one child policy in 1979 to

slow population growth. This was replaced in 2016 with a two-child limit. The latest move was approved by President Xi Jinping. The new policy of having three children by a couple will boost the country's population which is currently at 1.4 billion. The announcement comes after the release of the Seventh National Population Census, which showed that the number of births in China in 2020 were only 12 million, the lowest since 1960.

spacecraft will carry six passengers on a 10-minute flight to about 105km above Earth. Only one ticket was auctioned online and an unnamed bidder won, offering \$28 million. The bidder will join Bezos, his brother Mark Bezos, another guest and two crew members on the ride to the Karman Line, that boundary line the divides the atmosphere from the outer space, where they will experience weightlessness and observe the curvature of Earth.



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