

Rotary News

India

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Rtn. Stephanie Urchick
RI President



Rtn. Meeran Khan Saleem
District Governor



Rtn. AKS V.R. Muthu
District Governor (2022-23)

Rotary District 3212



THE MAGIC
OF ROTARY



Rtn. Rajendra Man Shrestha
District Governor, RID 3292
Nepal and Bhutan

Rotary Club of Bagmati Kathmandu



GLOBAL GRANT GG- 2352110

Prevention of Blindness in Premature Babies

Operation with Fundus Camera and Indirect Laser

- Retinopathy in Premature Babies lead to 'BLINDNESS'.
- 25 % of premature babies have some form of Retinopathy and among them nearly 7% needs urgent treatment.
- Lack of technology for diagnosis and prevention in Nepal.
- Technology Support for diagnosis and prevention to Tilganga Institute of Ophthalmology, Gaushala, Kathmandu.
- Technology (Equipment)
 - Green laser console, only 532nm
 - Laser Indirect Ophthalmoscope (LIO)
 - Handheld Portable Fundus Camera



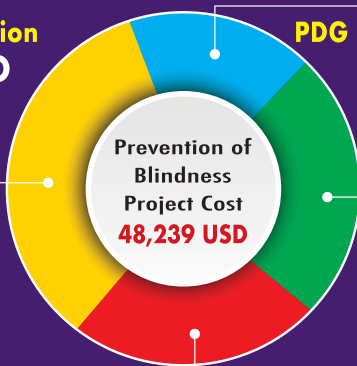
LETS PREVENT & MAKE LIFE BETTER

Current Support From Clubs

RC of Himalayan Golfers	: 3,100 USD
RC of Durbarmarg	: 1,050 USD
RC of Kasthamandap	: 1,000 USD
RC of Thamel	: 700 USD

Cash Contribution
26,639 USD

PDG Rtn. AKS V.R. Muthu
Cash Contribution
3,000 USD



World Fund
9,600 USD

DDF Contribution
12,000 USD



Rtn. Chehab El Alwar
RC of Las Vegas WON
RID 5300



Rtn. Manju Dhamala Thapa
RC of Bagmati Kathmandu
RID 3292



Rtn. ASP. Arumugaa Selvan

LEKHELA 06/Dec 24 / Rotary/FHW

Rtn. Manju Dhamala Thapa, President, Rotary Club of Bagmati Kathmandu
977-9841222254 | manjurotary1234@gmail.com

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Madurai Rotarians inspire youth

Rotary 

A publication of Rotary
Global Media Network

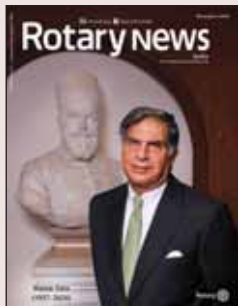
E-version rate Reduced

From July 1, 2024, our E-version subscription has been revised from

₹420 to ₹324

A well-deserved tribute

It was heartening to see the picture of Ratan Tata on the cover of *Rotary News*. After Gandhiji and Nehru, the late icon of the Tata group would be the most loved and respected Indian. I had the rare privilege of meeting him in 2012 to record his foreword for my audio autobiography of Dr V Kurien. Those 10 odd minutes spent with him at the Bombay House, the Tata headquarters, will remain etched deep in my brain and heart forever. His letters and emails apologising for delaying the recording by four months are examples of his down-to-earth, genuine and simple persona.



was the stuff legends are made of.”

Atul Bhide, RC Thane Hills — D 3142

Thanks to Rasheeda Bhagat for giving a special tribute to the late Ratan Tata, India’s Kohinoor. His contribu-

tion to humanity are in alignment with the core objectives of Rotary. For crores of Indians, Tata’s patriotism shone brightest at the times of crises. He was a great philanthropist and contributed a lot in the fields of education, healthcare and other social causes. The tribute given by *Rotary News* is a well-deserved one.

TD Bhatia, RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — D 3012

man who was known for his simplicity and grace. His love and care for the group’s employees were exemplary, and the transfer of a part of his wealth to ordinary people in recognition of their sincerity, loyalty and dedication is impressive. His loss is irreparable not only for Indian industry but India itself.

R Srinivasan, RC Bangalore JP Nagar — D 3191

Ratan Tata is really the Kohinoor of India. I was pleased to know about his association with Rotary International and his famous quotes. The entire nation is shocked over the passing of this iconic gentleman.

Dhirendranath Patra RC Banpur Balugaon — D 3262

It was his greatness that he kept in touch, would reply to my mails for many years, and generously appreciated my work in rural sanitation through my Rotary club. As you so rightly put at the end of your editorial — “Ratan Tata

Thanks for the lovely tribute to India’s Kohinoor — Ratan Tata. He proved to the world that willingness to render honest service enhances the dignity of any businessman. The Tata group prospered under the leadership of the

The Nov issue was a bit heavy on the heart, as we absorbed the grief of losing Ratan Tata. His quotes are so relevant to articles in this issue, particularly this one on Rotary’s declining membership. “Ups and downs are necessary in

A candid interview with RIPE

In a candid interview with the editor, RIPE Mario spoke about the downfall in membership in some countries. Rotary in India excels in membership growth, TRF-giving and global grants, helped by CSR funding. But he said that though India has the infrastructure, we can’t host a convention as Rotary is not at peace here thanks to bogus clubs, inflated numbers and election disputes. We should take remedial measures so that Rotary sheds the image of ‘Male Pale and Stale’. Thanks for the excellent coverage.

VRT Dorairaja, RC Tiruchirapalli — D 3000

It is good to know from RIPE Mario that India ranks top in chartering new clubs, having formed 658 clubs in 2021–23. But he added that though India is doing well, it should not

tarnish its good numbers with bad behaviour. We should heed his warning and not create artificial numbers, and get new members who are active and fully engaged in Rotary.

M Palaniappan, RC Madurai West — D 3000

On behalf of RID 3262, I congratulate the editor and her team for the new look *Rotary News*. RILM giving the gift of literacy to about 800 prison inmates is a heart-touching project. A big salute to the entire RILM team and PRIP Shekhar Mehta. Hope in the next phase, women inmates will be added to the project.

Chinmaya Mahapatra, RC Rajdhani Bhubaneswar — D 3262

The feature story on the ‘Raja of Rotary’ in the Oct issue, along with great pictures, captured the heart of many

LETTERS

life. Even straight lines on ECG mean we are not alive.” The other quote brings to life our partnerships in polio. “If you want to walk fast, walk alone. If you want to walk far, walk together.” This was clearly one of the best issues I have read!

Pallikonda Mohankumar
RC Pallikonda — D 3231

Thanks for publishing the photo of the legend of the century, Ratan Tata on the cover. ‘The man with zero haters’ is the exact phrase to describe him, and the editor has done well to give us some of his famous quotes. Both the article and the editor’s note were fitting tributes to the illustrious man.

While all the senior RI leaders have explained the importance of donating to TRF, RIPE Mario has explained well the reason for falling membership.

Philip Mulappone M T
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211

readers. Other articles, including *Rotarians on a greening spree*, and information on health and education, were very interesting.

Soumitra Chakraborty
RC Calcutta Universe — D 3291

Remarkable project for tribals

I was impressed by the remarkable projects undertaken by RC Bombay Bay View featured in the October issue. Constructing wells to provide drinking water, distributing mango saplings and conducting awareness

sessions on modern agricultural techniques are commendable. The focus on education and the wedding for 35 tribal couples show dedication to improve lives. Their work is inspiring and I wish them continued success.

Col (ret'd) Vijaykumar C
RC Alleppey Greater — D 3211

After getting the Oct issue of *Rotary Samachar*, I couldn’t stop reading it completely at one go. Rasheeda’s article on the tribals of Palghar was superb. RC Bombay Bay View’s work for these tribals is praiseworthy. Wells were dug, mango saplings distributed to farmers, sports equipment provided to schools, smart classrooms built, a digital library constructed and a group marriage organised. Many thanks to this club for their hard work.

Vinod Nema
RC Indore Central — D 3040

The October edit on the brutal rape and murder of a young doctor in a Kolkata hospital brings into focus the Rotary’s DEI mantra. Our girls have brought us glory in Tokyo and Paris Olympics, and every country must respect its women. Hats off to RC Bharuch members for becoming *Sakhis* of sex workers, and giving them a life of dignity.

Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roop Nagar — D 3080

The article on sex workers and the edit on DEI are timely, putting focus on these grave issues. The work of Kerala Rotarians for the Wayanad landslide victims is praiseworthy. The village adoption by RC Aurangabad is a commendable initiative.

S N Shanmugam
RC Panruti — D 2981

The editorial on DEI is really touching as it dwelt on gender disparity issues and rising violence against women. Apart from helping the less privileged, Rotarians need to work on such issues.

R Thayumanavan
RC Cuddalore Mid Town — D 2981

Early morning when I got a call from an unknown number, I picked up after two missed calls. The caller was Mary Kurien, my school friend; we lived in Bhopal then. She had called me after reading my name in the Oct issue of *Rotary News* regarding a project my club had done. As she is a member of RC Mavelikara in Kerala, she got my number from the Rotary directory and called me.

Memories flooded back and we talked for an hour. After five decades, thanks to Rotary and an article in *Rotary News*, we got re-connected. This is the power of Rotary.

Uday Dharmadhikari
RC Pune Central — D 3131

On the cover: An illustration of an AI-integrated anganwadi, a project of RID 3012.

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.

With heart and mind

To adapt, as laid out in Rotary's Action Plan, we must occasionally step out of our comfort zone and try something new. Here are two examples of clubs that adapted — one with heart and one through critical thinking and strategy.

The Rotary Club of Chandigarh Mid Town, India, led with heart earlier this year. To engage members and grow membership, club president Nitin Kapur personally called every former member of the club and invited them to a gathering billed as an alumni meet.

Eight former members attended, and the results were stupendous. The visitors had a chance to connect once more — not only with current members but with the sense of camaraderie and belonging that membership gave them. By the end of the evening, the club welcomed six of the former members back into the Rotary family.

Kapur showed courage when he reached out to the alumni. Not only did he adapt and try something new but he had the strength of character to show the club's alumni how much they still meant to the family of Rotary. That bravery paid off.

People want to feel needed and appreciated. People want to feel that they belong. And they might never feel that way if we don't have the courage to tell them.

Meanwhile, the Rotary Club of Seoul-Hansoo, Korea, has been experimenting with different club models to great effect. Over the past four years, Seoul-Hansoo has created and maintained four satellite clubs — a service club, an interest-based club for musicians, a cause-based club that mentors professionals, and a club for college students.



These satellite clubs are part of a five-year plan the Seoul-Hansoo club implemented to increase membership through innovation.

What's the secret to founding and maintaining so many satellite clubs? Membership between Seoul-Hansoo and its satellite clubs is fluid and synergistic. Many members of the satellite clubs attend the sponsor club's meetings. And many of the sponsor club's members participate in the satellite clubs.

Additionally, the focus of each satellite club is no accident. Each one appeals to different interests of people in the sponsor club and in the community, attracting existing and potential members. This is an excellent strategy to both retain and attract members because it offers flexibility. If someone is interested in joining but they can't make it to the sponsor club's meetings, they have plenty of options to choose from.

These are just two examples of how we can adapt with our hearts and minds. Every club is different, so I encourage you to reach out to members of your club and of the community around you. Ask them about the club experience and what you can do to improve.

Talk to people and you might find ways that you can adapt and spark *The Magic of Rotary* in your club.

Stephanie A Urchick
President, Rotary International



Tackling Delhi's pollution

As I write this month's edit and read the latest alarming update (Nov 18) about Delhi's average air quality index (AQI) at an unbelievable 492, with some areas crossing the dangerous 500 mark, two columns in this issue — *Go Green* and *LBW*—and the house built from plastic waste by Dr Paliwal from RC Chandrapur came to mind. But first let's look at the pollution levels of the NCR (National Capital Region) being so horrific that the Supreme Court had to order serious curbs under Stage 4 of the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) to improve matters. It ordered all the governments in the NCR region (Delhi, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan) to strictly monitor remedial action, including shutting down schools. The IMD had to issue a yellow alert and the visibility at the Delhi airport was a pathetic 600 metres!

Delhiites complained about their air purifiers not working any more (these are privileged classes who can afford air purifiers and live in secure homes; the plight of the homeless and pavement dwellers can be imagined) and experts suggested that people reduce outdoor activities, wear N95 masks, reduce vehicle emissions, etc. This is important, but a major culprit of the pollution in the NCR is the burning of crop residue, commonly known as stubble or *parali*, in Haryana and Punjab. This is done to shorten the time between harvest and sowing the next crop, and farmer find this a low-cost method to dispose of crop residue. But this releases harmful greenhouse gases which cause havoc in the surrounding areas. Statistics from the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy says India generates around 500 million tonnes of crop residue a year; over two-third is used as fodder and fuel for industrial and domestic usage, but 140 million tonnes still remain in excess, and around 92 million tonnes are burned annually.

So what is the alternative to stubble burning? More extensive use for mulching, animal feed, composting, bioenergy production and construction material. It can be converted into pellets which could be used in power plants or construction. In some places an enzyme is sprayed to decompose the stubble into useful fertiliser or improve the soil by burying it in the fields. Interestingly, in China, which produces much more crop residue than India, it is considered a lucrative biomass resource in the production of power, as China tries to reduce its reliance on coal and petroleum by using crop residue to produce bioethanol.

Now linking this pollution to the content in the Dec issue, in *Go Green* Preeti Mehra gives simple tips to make "green habits" a part of our lives and in *LBW*, TCA Srinivasa Raghavan is nostalgic about the Delhi which once had clear blue skies before "it started becoming a gas chamber about 40 years ago." He blames the Asian Games of 1982 for turning Delhi into a boom town which has not stopped booming, and expanding to incorporate the larger NCR, which is "so huge that when you fly into Delhi you can see the pollution the region causes rising up to 15,000ft and extending some 200 miles in all directions.... The Delhi of yesteryear, till the early 1980s, had two outstanding features: clear blue skies and clean air, both of which were free. The sky is still there but it's grey-yellow and not blue," he writes.

Instead of blaming our farmers for burning stubble and adding to the lethal pollution, can the government and Indian industry help convert unusable crop residue into pellets that can be used in the construction of millions of home India still needs?

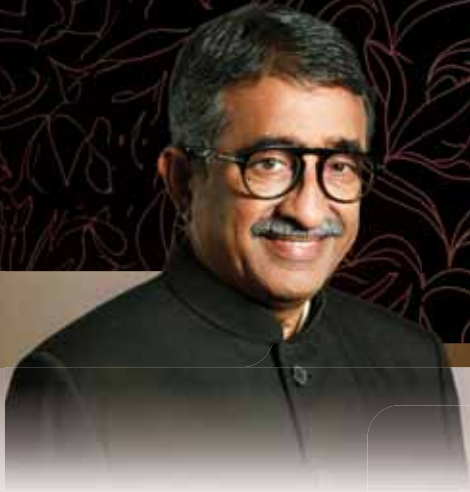
Rasheeda Bhagat

Membership Summary

As on November 1, 2024

Source: RI South Asia Office

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	6,027	5.67	56	106	34	254
2982	94	4,076	5.72	29	388	95	188
3000	148	6,289	11.77	76	940	241	218
3011	139	5,400	31.00	69	1,516	222	41
3012	163	4,030	24.37	53	671	105	61
3020	84	4,911	8.17	33	507	115	351
3030	102	5,657	16.32	59	845	496	388
3040	99	2,386	14.54	34	740	56	216
3053	76	3,187	17.32	23	339	39	131
3055	85	3,439	12.24	47	697	57	389
3056	87	3,776	25.16	21	182	102	201
3060	101	5,088	15.94	51	1,799	76	152
3070	117	3,096	15.31	32	174	65	64
3080	111	4,473	13.62	58	1,406	191	127
3090	135	2,652	7.13	20	351	355	174
3100	117	2,256	10.77	15	81	39	151
3110	138	3,774	11.90	19	164	94	114
3120	90	3,832	15.79	39	533	37	58
3131	141	5,661	35.06	119	2,096	294	209
3132	97	3,809	14.57	28	334	136	226
3141	121	6,466	28.13	111	1,921	196	246
3142	115	4,101	23.09	54	1,475	130	99
3150	108	4,073	12.67	82	1,202	124	130
3160	79	2,534	9.63	24	74	95	82
3170	145	6,679	15.23	87	1,000	180	183
3181	88	3,752	10.87	39	409	100	122
3182	85	3,709	10.76	45	215	110	104
3191	96	3,460	19.25	67	1,493	155	36
3192	93	3,758	22.01	55	1,183	157	40
3201	171	6,672	10.00	101	1,664	107	97
3203	97	5,138	7.38	41	659	145	39
3204	81	2,662	8.19	19	122	17	15
3211	161	5,216	8.84	7	52	26	135
3212	122	4,687	10.69	81	439	208	153
3231	95	3,772	7.26	29	331	68	417
3233	87	3,153	18.36	46	1,296	54	63
3234	81	3,229	24.00	57	1,455	88	41
3240	100	3,592	16.73	41	741	50	246
3250	112	4,434	23.23	33	457	63	192
3261	109	3,504	24.83	18	108	33	46
3262	116	3,878	15.96	82	763	647	289
3291	145	3,899	27.24			86	768
India Total	4,671	176,187		2,000	30,928	5,688	7,256
3220	70	2,057	16.53	79	3,036	137	78
3271	114	1,586	20.74	104	452	275	28
0063 (3272)	83	1,186	20.07	48	306	23	49
0064 (3281)	283	5,911	18.19	190	987	120	211
0065 (3282)	152	3,075	9.20	167	1,147	25	48
3292	161	5,597	19.24	173	5,334	121	140
S Asia Total	5,534	195,599	16.21	2,761	42,190	6,389	7,810



Director speak

Turning the Wheel of hope & service

Dear Friends in Rotary,
As December casts its nostalgic glow, it brings with it a time of reflection and renewal — a season to cherish the bonds of family, friendship and the camaraderie of our Rotary family. In the quiet moments, let us marvel at what Rotary allows us to achieve: the transformation of goodwill into impact, the turning of compassion into action.

This month Rotary's focus on Disease Prevention and Treatment reminds us of the world's inequities in health. It's a stark truth: over 400 million people lack access to basic care. Yet, through our projects — eradicating polio, raising awareness on chronic conditions, and providing vital interventions — we remind the world that Rotary's wheel never stops turning, bringing hope where it is needed most.

Our enduring emblem is more than a symbol; it is a call for action. Every spoke, every cog represents the power of collective effort of individuals who together move mountains. As this year draws to a close, let us reflect on the lives touched and the future brightened by the work we have undertaken together.

Our greatest strength lies in our members. Retention is not a passive process; it thrives on connection,

inclusivity and engagement. A kind word, a thoughtful gesture, or a simple act of recognition can reignite enthusiasm and ensure that no member feels neglected or unappreciated. A wheel turns best when all its parts work together in unison.

December also brings a call to leadership. Clubs must now elect their boards, laying the foundation for the Rotary year ahead. Leadership is not simply a duty; it is a privilege, a chance to inspire and to steer the course of service. To those stepping forward, remember: your success lies not in the solitude of leadership but in the unity of purpose you inspire in others.

Rotary endures because it stands on principles that do not falter — fellowship, ethics, tolerance and service above self. As we look to the New Year, let us reaffirm these ideals, and keep our wheel turning constantly. Collectively, there is nothing we cannot achieve. Let's continue to create magic into the new year and beyond. Vidhya joins me in wishing you and your family a very healthy, happy, joyous and fulfilling 2025.

Raju Subramanian
RI Director, 2023–25

A traveller's convention



When you're already travelling to the Rotary International Convention, why not add on a side trip? Members say they often double up on their travel to visit part of the world near the convention host city. And don't miss the chance to register by Dec 15 before the price goes up.

The timing of the convention in Calgary June 21–25 is just right to see an iconic Canadian event: the Calgary Stampede. Take a vacation or business trip after the convention and return to the city for the rodeo July 4–13 that celebrates the country's West and indigenous cultures. The Host Organisation Committee curated easy-to-book getaways ranging from a one-day tour of Banff and Lake Louise in the neighbouring Rockies to 12 days through the mountains to

Vancouver with a train ride on the return trip to Calgary for the Stampede.

For a coastal experience, Tofino near Vancouver has surfing vibes and rugged landscapes. French-speaking members, in particular, would enjoy Québec City to see its beautiful buildings and

hear the locals' distinct take on the language. Beyond Banff, quaint towns in the Rockies with picture-postcard main streets seem endless.

Visit a famed vacation spot accessible from Calgary, like Toronto, New York City, the Grand Canyon, the Caribbean, Cancun resorts in Mexico, or Los Angeles and Disneyland. Beyond big-name tourist stops, try Oregon's redwoods, Mexico's Baja California Sur for ecotourism, sites that inspired Anne of Green Gables on Prince Edward Island, or the Canadian Arctic for wildlife and the midnight sun that doesn't set. Whatever type of trip you prefer, Calgary is your gateway to North America.

Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org

Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs	: 36,691	Rotary members	: 1,171,376
Rotaract clubs	: 9,139	Rotaract members	: 123,590
Interact clubs	: 15,647	Interact members	: 359,881
RCCs	: 13,694		

As on November 20, 2024

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Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee Chair



A season of lasting giving

December is a time for generosity and reflection when we think not only about our loved ones but about how we can make a difference in the world.

This year, consider giving a gift with an enduring impact, one that extends beyond these holidays, lasting for generations. Gifts to The Rotary Foundation Endowment are extraordinary gifts that create extraordinary change.

By supporting Rotary's Endowment, you help ensure that RI will have the resources it needs to develop and implement sustainable projects today and in the years to come. Members who include the

Endowment in estate plans or make an outright gift support that mission.

Imagine your gift helping to fund the drop of vaccine that prevents the last case of polio, eradicating this devastating disease once and for all. Picture it supporting other health initiatives in 2034, 2044, and beyond.

If you make an outright gift today, you will have the opportunity to witness your support in action, working through clean water projects, literacy initiatives, and economic development efforts. These Rotary Foundation-funded projects touch lives across the globe, bringing hope to individuals you may never meet, but who will know you through your generosity.

Past President Arch C Klumph, who first proposed an endowment more than 100 years ago, would be amazed not only at the opportunities Rotary has to help today but also at the future possibilities Rotary's Endowment provides.

However, our Endowment is only strong when we all support it.

Because it is essential to our success, we have set an ambitious goal: to build our Endowment to \$2.025 billion in net assets and commitments

by June 30 2025. This goal is not just a number; it is a reaffirmation of our belief in Rotary's enduring ability to do good in the world. A fully funded \$2 billion endowment will provide more than \$100 million year after year for Rotary Foundation activities.

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Mark Daniel Maloney

TRF Trustee Chair

Rotary introduces India's first **AI-integrated Anganwadi**

Rasheeda Bhagat

In an ambitious project to apply one of the latest technological tools — Artificial Intelligence (AI) — to revolutionise the learning methods of Indian children from underprivileged backgrounds who attend anganwadis, which are poor children's equivalent to the plush and fun-filled playschools frequented by the rich and upper class urban Indian children, RI District 3012 has launched an interesting and futuristic project in Uttar Pradesh.

Titled the Rotary Viraj Anganwadi Project - *Nanhe kadmo ki udaan* — this project hopes to dramatically change the basic functions of an anganwadi, which is to provide basic learning to children and address the healthcare and nutritional needs of both children and pregnant women. RID 3012 DG Prashant Raj Sharma, who is passionate and fully invested in this project, says it is common knowledge that the average anganwadi in India is lacking in so many ways — indifferent infrastructure, untrained and unenthusiastic teachers and absence of an interesting, interactive environment, resulting in failure to retain students beyond a certain stage.

“The teachers lack the skills required to facilitate engaging and effective learning experiences for

students, particularly in grasping fundamentals. Furthermore, anganwadi schools lack a monitoring system which can tell us about the students' or expectant mothers' progress. In fact, there is little or no information on even the opening and closing hours of these anganwadis,” he says.

To dramatically transform this dismal scenario, this project, launched in partnership with the CSR partner AMU Lines which has donated \$55,000 of the total project cost of \$225,000, aims to bring a transformational change to 100 anganwadis in Uttar Pradesh. In alignment with two of Rotary's focus areas of maternal and child health, and literacy and basic education, the first colourfully painted and embellished anganwadi, complete with spanking new furniture and an interactive smartboard, at Morti village, about 3km from Ghaziabad city centre, was inaugurated by UP Governor Anandiben Patel.

In an interview to *Rotary News*, DG Sharma explained his vision to use various facets of technology, including AI, to ensure that the underprivileged children attending anganwadi schools get



a meaningful learning experience, and the expectant mothers get what they are promised, comprehensive healthcare and nutrition. “Right now, most of the children are sent to the anganwadis by their parents mainly because they get a meal there. What they are taught there hardly matters to them. But all this will change, and is already changing as we have seen after the first Viraj Anganwadi was inaugurated this August in Morti,” says the DG.



Uttar Pradesh governor Anandiben Patel (in grey sari) with DG Prashant Raj Sharma (on her left) and Manu Seth, district Social Media chair, at the Rotary Viraj Anganwadi in Morti village in Ghaziabad.

Medical research has shown, he says, that the optimum development of the brain takes place in a child in between 3 and 6 years, and this is the age group that attends anganwadi classes. To engage the attention of these young children, in this project a smart-board has been specially designed and developed in which interactive learning material is loaded.

“We have developed a dashboard in which all study material, including quiz, stories, play material, poems and jingles, which can hold a child’s interest, and is interactive in nature, is loaded. It is designed in such a way that individual children’s activities can be monitored; supposing there are 50 children in the school, their individual activities... what they enjoy the most,

the way in which they learn and so on, is monitored.”

The digital screen is much more than a smart learning device; it allows the government to monitor learning outcomes, standardise lessons and try to keep up with private playschools to which only the privileged children have access. The dashboard is connected to a state government facility,

where the education officers have access to all the data mined and analysed with the help of AI.

The attempt is to replicate learning that is interesting and fun and is on offer in the best of urban playschools. With the help of the AI tool, the child's overall development — what she has learnt, absorbed, imbibed, finds interesting, the questions asked, and the time spent on each activity, will all be analysed, and a module developed, which can then be applied to anganwadis across the state, or even the country.

“Our primary goal is to provide quality education to young students at an early age, and adopt a holistic

approach to education, ensuring that every aspect of a child's development is nurtured during these formative years between 3 and 6, using technology for quality education. It is crucial to provide high-quality education during this period to strengthen cognitive abilities, enabling children to effectively read, understand, grasp, and retain what is taught to them,” says Sharma.

In the belief that this initiative represents “a significant leap forward in community service,” he and his team have a mega plan to transform 100 anganwadis by making them tech-savvy in the first phase expected to be completed within this Rotary year. Towards this goal 70 clubs from the district have been identified to take charge, equip the anganwadis with the required smart learning and healthcare

tools, and take responsibility for maintaining them in working state for at least three years. The agreement with the vendor ensures an AMC for three years, so that the experience is not a mere flash in the pan. The clubs have also been asked to give the children uniforms, so that they feel they are attending a regular school and would take their lessons more seriously.

While the CSR partner is contributing almost a fourth of the funding required, the clubs will be raising the remaining money, and “whatever they raise will go towards their contribution to The Rotary Foundation,” says Sharma. Apart from sprucing up the



Key features of AI-powered anganwadi

The special attributes of the modern anganwadi as explained by RID 3012 DG Prashant Kumar Sharma include:

- **Enhanced learning experience:** It will provide students with interactive and multimedia-rich educational content, making learning more engaging and effective.
- **Teacher support:** The AI solution will serve as a valuable aid for teachers, enabling them to explain



concepts to students more easily and effectively.

- **Monitoring of centres:** The integration of smart digital boards will enable real-time monitoring of the anganwadi centres and allow supervisors and administrators to track attendance, assess teaching effectiveness, and identify areas for improvement.

- **An intro to digital education:** By incorporating smart digital boards, such an anganwadi will introduce the young child to digital learning tools and technologies, preparing and equipping her for the digital age by providing essential skills for the future.

infrastructure, and providing comfortable tables and chairs for the children, the Rotarians are also taking care of ensuring uninterrupted power supply, by providing an inverter, as in rural areas the supply tends to be erratic. He makes it clear that the Rotarians will not be spending money to build or improve the physical structure of the anganwadis, and will choose centres with decent buildings that can be converted into modern learning centres.

Sharma explains that this project is more than “bringing cutting-edge technology to the forefront of community service and setting a new standard for anganwadi centres across the country.” The application of AI to monitor the data, and tweak it to suit different regions and community groups, will have a far-reaching impact on the way we can reach meaningful learning to less



Children now learn through the digital board at this anganwadi.

privileged children, and equip them to perform/compete better, when they go to primary schools and continue their education. Data will be collected and analysed not only on learning outcomes but also the health and nutritional status

of the children and expectant mothers visiting the anganwadis.

The AI linkage

Once the data is analysed with the help of the AI component, the state's nodal

education officers can monitor the progress of children, and decide what really interests them by studying how much time the children spend on each activity.

Explaining the linkage with AI and the justification for calling these 'AI-anganwadis', Manu Seth, Social Media chair of RID 3012, and a pioneer in introducing new ICT technologies in India, says the integration of the latest technological developments such as AI will help make the learning system in these anganwadis "more robust and up to date with modern education modules across centres through updated dashboards, which in turn will help the education officers in the district or state to take quick, responsive and corrective measures. AI can assess the progress of the children and suggest modifications in the system or curriculum to improve the learning process. The key objective is to quickly bring the benefits of the latest education interactive techniques to the little ones at these anganwadis. Aso, it helps government bodies to keep live track on what is happening at the anganwadis on an as-and-where basis."

DG Sharma says the results of the interactive smart boards where the 'A for apple', other alphabets demonstrated with objects and numbers, come to life in vibrant colours on the smart board, which the children can touch, making learning a fun activity, are already evident.

"The children are excited and the strength of the anganwadi has gone up from 30 to 45 in a short while. In the last one week, not a single student has come late to the centre," says Sharda, a child development officer in Ghaziabad. Adds the DG, "Earlier the parents used to send the children to school only for the noon meal, and that too after the helpers would knock on their doors to persuade them to send their kids to the centre, but now the parents are bringing them ahead of time.



Rotary has kindled a hope in their hearts that their children will henceforth get a quality learning experience."

In a significant signal that the UP government is keenly interested and invested in this project, Governor Anandiben, who inaugurated the first technology-integrated anganwadi at Morti, "spent a lot of time asking us detailed questions and interacting with the students and the teachers. She wanted to know how the state government could expand its reach," says Sharma. The inaugural event was attended by senior state leaders such as UP minister Sunil Sharma, MLAs Ajitpal Tyagi and Manju Shivach, Ghaziabad mayor Sunita Dayal, district magistrate Indra Vikram Singh and chief development officer Abhinav Gopal.

More important, Sharma is excited that the Governor has expressed interest in replicating this project in a few anganwadis in Prime Minister Modi's constituency in Varanasi, which is in UP. "If and when this happens, she has promised us that she will try and get the PM to inaugurate such an anganwadi in Varanasi," he says, hoping that this model will inspire other Rotary districts to explore similar innovations in community service that promise to

revolutionise early childhood education and maternal care.

The objectives are lofty enough; as DG Sharma says, "The Viraj Anganwadi is an innovative AI-driven solution dedicated to delivering quality and fun-filled educational content using technology, which enables interactive lessons, multimedia presentations, and gamified educational experiences, enhancing student engagement and comprehension." The software is designed to facilitate progress monitoring, providing real-time updates on students' learning journeys and generating comprehensive reports on the current status of the anganwadis selected for this project. He adds that through a year-long planned system, these digital boards can facilitate comprehensive lesson plans, interactive activities, and multimedia content tailored to the curriculum, ensuring a systematic approach to learning throughout the year. An impact assessment will be made early next year once all the 100 anganwadis are completed. "I would say such an AI-based anganwadi is more than just a facility; it's hope for childhood care and development." ■



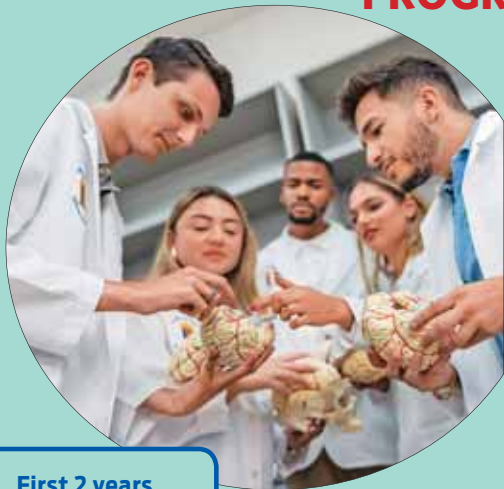
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Strategies for Rotary's growth

V Muthukumaran

As Rotary president, one of the key priorities of RIPE Mario de Camargo will be “to retain you all, keep you engaged as too many — 155,000 Rotarians — are quitting Rotary each year. But we don't own Rotary as we are here for a purpose, and we have to keep it going for the next generation with a good succession plan,” he said, addressing the membership conclave in Hyderabad.

With the average age in Rotary being 62 and declining membership,

“I have a nine-point vision programme to increase our numbers. First, you have to promote new format clubs, and for that let us evangelise the myriad club alternatives Rotary has to offer such as satellite, companion, cause-based, and enterprise or corporate clubs.” He recommended resurrecting dying clubs (with less than 20 members) as they don't have a critical mass to survive. “We need a focused approach to large clubs that have lost a large number of members, with specific programmes to revive their connect in their communities,” he said.

Rotary leaders must engage former members, reach out to the youth through Rotaract, RYLA, GSE and

NGSE professionals, and Rotary Action Groups, develop rapport with professional bodies of lawyers, engineers, architects, businessmen, trade chambers and government officials, and project Rotary's work on social media to boost membership, said de Camargo.

“RI is the best school for leadership training in the world. We spend \$6.5 million at the International Assembly to groom 500 district governors and this is an investment for Rotary's growth.”

A 1.4 billion market

India, with its 1.4 billion population, offers a humongous market for Rotary's growth, even as 450 million joined the country's middle class last year, he said citing a recent report. “We have to identify and map new localities for Rotary to grow. The new DGs must select their AGs who can form new clubs in unchartered territories,” he said.

Every district must set forth three-year goals with the DGs, along with DGEs and DGNs, charting out long-term plans and schedules with unity of purpose, said RID Raju Subramanian. He urged district leaders to hold pre-induction sessions for new members, and identify their needs so that they participate in club activities.

Clubs must do a ‘satisfaction survey’ among members and ensure there is 100 per cent attendance in weekly meetings, he said. RID Anirudha Roychowdhury noted

RIPE Mario de Camargo being welcomed at the Rotary Sadan, Kolkata.





RIPE de Camargo being felicitated by PDGs Rajiv Sharma and Prabir Chatterjee in Kolkata. Also seen are (from L) PRID Mahesh Kotbagi, PRIP Shekhar Mehta, RID Anirudha Roychowdhury and PRID Kamal Sanghvi.

that Rotary has taken a “paradigm shift by embracing digital technology to stay relevant.” He called for identifying the areas of concern such as declining membership, leadership continuity, sluggish adaptability, and the last-mile challenges in eradicating polio from the world.

RIDE KP Nagesh said that through the RAG (Red-Amber-Green) analysis “we are targeting to achieve three lakh in membership in all the four zones by June 2027. At present, there are 1.78 lakh Rotarians across 4,616 clubs in 41 districts in India.”

Rotary must sync with the times

In Kolkata, RIPE de Camargo addressed 600 delegates from 10 RI districts. “In the last 20 years, India saw an explosive growth of 103 per cent in membership (next only to Taiwan, posting 127 per cent), whereas USA, Canada, Great Britain and Ireland, and Australia had a sharp fall in numbers. We need a long-term plan for membership growth,” he said.

Earlier, at a press meet, replying to a question from *Rotary News* about the Taliban regime banning the PolioPlus

drive in Afghanistan, de Camargo said, “In the last four years, the polio battle has had to face challenges of militancy, ignorance, prejudice, logistic nightmare and a porous mountainous terrain in the Pak-Afghan border. Rotary will not give up its efforts to vaccinate children in Afghanistan.” So far there are 40 known polio cases in Pakistan (19) and Afghanistan (21) this year. “Our power is advocacy, not raising money. Out of \$21 billion spent on our polio eradication efforts since 1985, Rotary spent \$2.7 billion, while the balance \$18 billion was raised by our partners such as WHO, UNICEF, CDC and the Gates Foundation.”

Rotary wanted to celebrate a polio-free world in 2005 itself to coincide with its centennial year, he said. “Here we are not just fighting a disease, but also people’s ignorance and lack of public healthcare, hygiene and related social issues.” Rid of polio, countries such as India and Brazil must maintain the vaccination level at 95 per cent children for collective immunity to act as a barrier against the resurgence of wild poliovirus, he added.

The RIPE met the members of RC Calcutta at the Rotary Sadan, and was briefed on their iconic projects.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran



RIPE de Camargo presents a certificate to an adult literate assisted by RC Calcutta Mahanagar president Pramila Dugar. Also seen are PRID Sanghvi, PRIP Mehta, PRID Kotbagi and RID Roychowdhury.

Tackling mental health through **sound, art & dance**

Rasheeda Bhagat



Children from the Interact Club of BNS School with coconut shells filled with seeds from various fruits.

The Rotary Club of Chennai Bharathi, RID 3234, has adopted a fairly new and interesting method to tackle mental wellbeing... by pressing into service a triple combination of sound, art and dance therapies to engage a large number of people, with the special focus being on those who are dealing with various issues related to mental health.

Ever since she began her year as the club president this July, Nisreen Madraswala has been on a “mission to

create spaces for individuals to speak, listen and heal from mental health issues which can later manifest into serious health problems if left untreated or unaddressed.”

Her first project for the year was with the club’s Interact school — BNS School in Chennai — which involved the participating children sowing native seeds. “Prior to the event, we had asked the children to collect during their summer holidays local seeds from fruits such as jackfruit, mango, melon etc, and they



planted them in coconut shells on their school campus.”

But the interesting part is that the planting, done in small groups, was carried out with “sound therapy” in the background. Sandhya, a sound healer from the Aasmaa Studio, which is an alternative and holistic health service provider, was present there with the different objects such as gongs, and different kinds of bowls, striking which sounds of different frequencies are generated. These are meant to create positive energy, calm the mind and soothe frayed nerves. “These sounds reach our inner selves, rejuvenate and even heal us,” says Nisreen.

With these sounds in the background, the children planted the seeds... “they focused, and even meditated.”

The general objective of this project of planting seeds, in which 40 girls and boys participated, was to make them detached from the outcome of their action, and make them realise that they would not enjoy the benefits of what they were doing that day. Somebody else would enjoy the fruits of

the trees they were planting. And this is very important during these “times of instant gratification where kids are exposed to social media handles. If they don’t receive immediate applause, many of them take it as rejection and some of them can feel dejected and turn to substance abuse. Coping mechanisms in the mental realm are not clear or taught as is being done in the physical realm,” she says.

More recently, in a subsequent project done by the club titled *Immersive Experiences*, a ticketed event (charge per person ₹1,299) done to fulfil her “vision to create safe spaces in mental health issues”, in which 40 persons participated, there was a combination of three different therapies — sound, art and dance. In small groups, the participants were put through sound healing by Sandhya, dance movement therapy by Masuma Wagh, who runs a school for autistic children in Mysuru, and art therapy by Aishwarya from



Music being made using various bowls and a gong.





Left & Below: Students preparing to plant in the coconut shells.

Above: Club president Nisreen Madraswala (seated third from left) along with other participants at the Immersive Experiences programme.



Rafiky in Chennai. Each session lasted 40 minutes.

“They created mind-blowing sessions, offering the participants insight into their suppressed emotions by making them talk, draw, move and express themselves in different ways,” says Nisreen, who as a student of Sociology, has studied depression as a subject during her graduation course.

She elaborates that having herself struggled with issues related to mental depression... “otherwise why would I be invested in these projects for my club... I’ve tried all kinds of things over 30 years and found group therapies work the best. Compared to 1:1 counselling, what helped me most was meeting people and understanding their journeys. Till I was exposed

to various narrative platforms, I used to think that I had done something wrong and hence was facing these issues. But after such therapies/sessions, I realised that I was the victim, and wondered why was I feeling guilty. Such sessions helped me get out of the victim mode, and I want the others facing similar issues to have a similar experience. It is as simple as saying I have a cold, and I need to rest and people around me shouldn’t make a big fuss about it.”

One doesn’t blame oneself for catching a cold, so why should people feel guilty or responsible when they face some mental health related problems, is the question to be asked and answered. She herself faced “depression at a time when I was supposed to be very happy. It happens as the brain has different ways of behaving in different situations in different people.”

In the art therapy session, the participants were encouraged to draw whatever came to their mind and asked to pass around the drawing, to which others added and once it returned to that person, “we found many people had answers or solutions to what was buzzing in their minds.”

The guided movements in the dance therapy session are designed to release tension and suppressed



emotions stored in the body. The therapist from Mysuru, Masuma, has conducted several sessions over the years for parents and children with autism, and has found it extremely

beneficial. “In my experience, group therapy works as people shed their inhibitions slowly and in a gradual manner as the therapist guides and motivates them. There is no force to

do any of the dance movements; it’s a flow.”

Her club members, all of them women, “but we are open to taking in any gender”, have embraced this project and will take it forward in the coming days. Projects are planned for entrepreneurs, special children (free of cost) and others. As this club holds both physical and online meetings, the president throws open the online meetings to all members for what is called the ‘buddy call’, during which time every member is given two minutes to talk about the highs and lows of their week. “The members love it, and even those who are usually shy and don’t talk much, participate in it.” At her installation meet, the invocation was replaced by a sound healing session.



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RIPE bats for membership, continuity, and change

Team Rotary News



RIPE Mario de Camargo, RI Director Raju Subramanian and his wife Vidhya (seated, right) with Rotarians at a meet in Mumbai.

Mumbai was one of the stopovers for RIPE Mario de Camargo during his recent India tour, where he addressed Rotarians on critical topics such as membership growth, retention, partnerships and leadership succession. “We need more members, because we are getting old. But don’t go fishing for Rotarians just to boost numbers. Identify people who share our values and collective mindset,” he emphasised, cautioning against indiscriminate induction of members. He urged Rotarians to explore professional and trade associations for potential members. “We must promote new format clubs such

as satellite and cause-based clubs to attract youngsters, and promote Rotary’s good work on social media,” he said, and urged the delegates to revive their connect with former Rotarians.

But for all this to happen, “we must embrace change. If we don’t keep pace with change, we will become irrelevant. The trouble with our times is that our future is not what it used to be. If we want things to stay as they are, things will have to change.”

On leadership continuity, de Camargo stressed the importance of

consultation and coordination. “True continuity comes from respecting and engaging with your successor. It’s not just about handing over a project; it’s about working together. Consult your predecessor and successor before making decisions,” he said.

Hailing Rotary’s partnerships with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, WHO, UNICEF, the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Gavi, The Vaccine Alliance, the incoming president pointed out that while Rotary raised \$2.7 billion for polio eradication, its partners contributed \$18 billion. “Our power lies in advocacy, not raising money. So far \$22 billion has been spent on polio eradication, but we still need \$100 million annually.”

RI Director Raju Subramanian reinforced the need to reconnect with former members. “Please reach out to those who have left Rotary, re-establish connections, and bring them back,” he said.

DG Chetan Desai summarised significant service projects and accomplishments of RID 3141. The event was hosted by RC Mumbai Juhu led by its president Subhashish Mazumdar. Fourteen past district governors, including two PDGs from RID 3142, attended the meet. ■



RIPE de Camargo inaugurates the meet. Also seen (from R) DGE Manish Motwani, DG Chetan Desai and RID Subramanian.

The philosophy of giving

V Muthukumar

Prioritise your health, and never procrastinate when it comes to work and major decisions in life,” advised DGN Ravishankar Dakoju, RID 3192, at a meeting of RC Madras, RID 3234. “Life is unpredictable. We don’t know what will happen tomorrow or even the next moment. So, don’t postpone critical decisions and burden your children. Even though children today are smart and know what to do when, with a clear vision,” he said.

On the larger issues of life and livelihood, he said 80 per cent of people “have same aspirations like studying well,

earning money, getting married, creating wealth and more wealth for their children and family.” The story between birth and death reads the same for most people, “but as Rotarians, we stand apart for our service as we touch many lives in our bid to create a better world.”

Recalling his life’s journey, Dakoju said, “I was below average in school with a low IQ level. In over four decades of business, I have seen many difficulties and challenges... but overcome them all. Now I want to give back to the same society which helped me make money.”

When he announced his decision to give ₹100

crore to TRF, “my elder daughter was annoyed telling me, ‘why can’t you do it without publicity.’ My wife Paola was concerned about the future of our two daughters as we were giving away a good part of our wealth. It took some time for her to absorb the shock of my action.” A Rotarian friend rebuked him in Urdu, “what have you done. Now, mafia gangs will be after you.” But nothing ever happened, he smiled.

He urged RC Madras to partner with his home club, RC Bangalore in the restoration of the Palar river as a major portion of the river “flows through Tamil Nadu before merging with the

Bay of Bengal. We have done extensive plantation at the Palar river basin and the project is under progress.”

DG NS Saravanan said, “the Dakoju family must be applauded for their selfless contribution to TRF. Rotary gives opportunity for everyone to give, and Dakoju has exemplified the joy of giving.”

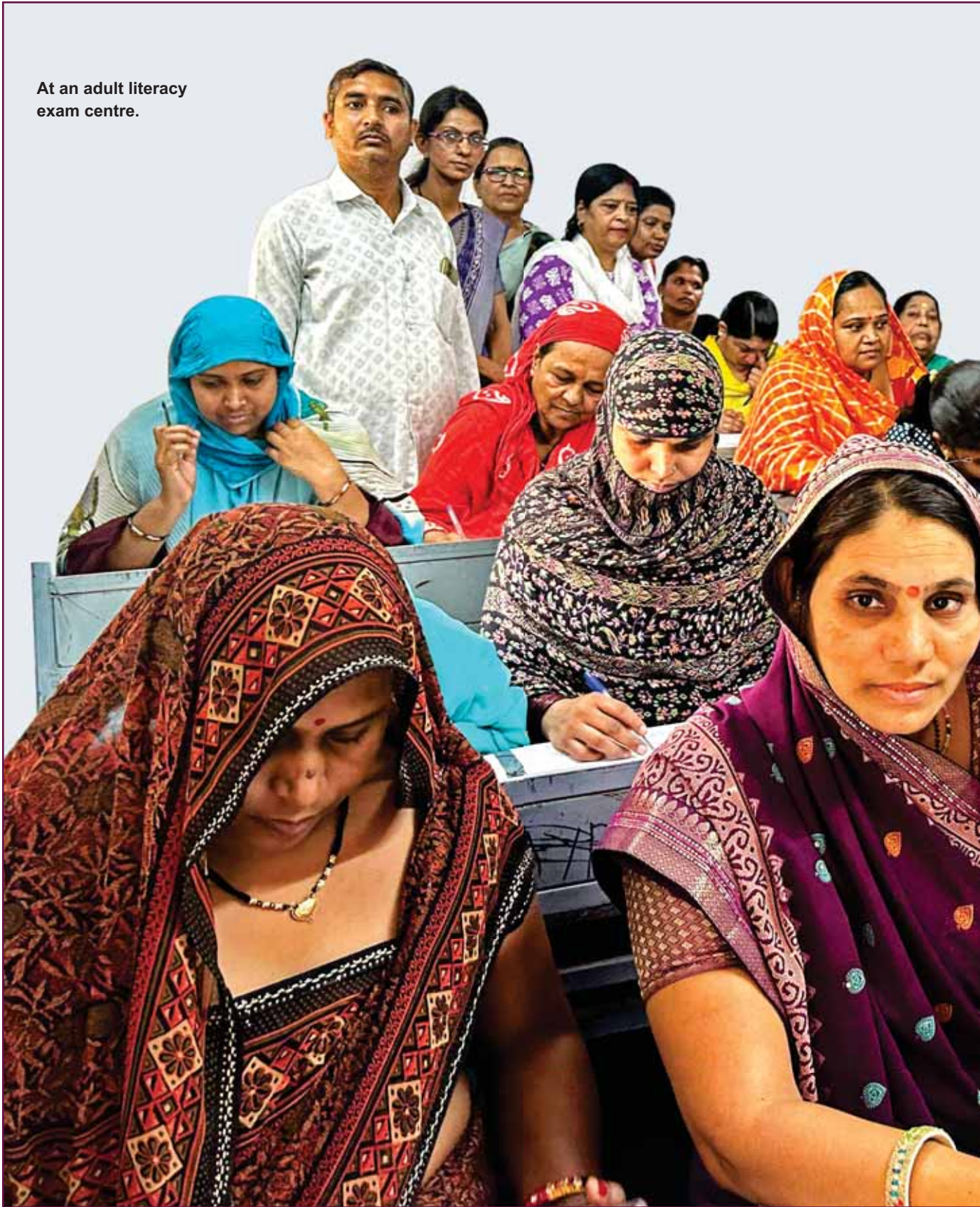
Club president Chella Krishna welcomed the gathering. K Laalithya from RC Adelaide, RID 9510, and Folashade Samuels from RC Wuse Central Abuja, RID 1927, were among the special invitees. DGE Vinod Saraogi and PDG Benjamin Cherman were also present. ■



RID 3234 DG NS Saravanan presents a book titled *A Timeless Legacy* on RC Madras to DGN Ravishankar Dakoju, RID 3192. Also seen are (from L) PDG Benjamin Cherman, club secretary Rajesh Mani, president Chella Krishna, Ranjit Pratap and NK Gopinath.


V Muthukumar

At an adult literacy exam centre.



Rotary's big push to eradicate adult illiteracy in MP

Rasheeda Bhagat



In a massive bid to address the huge problem of adult illiteracy in Madhya Pradesh, where the 2011 census put the number of adult illiterates at 1.07 crore, Rotarians across the state, led by RID 3040 (MP has four Rotary districts), have been working with the state government agencies addressing illiteracy.

In this district PDG Ravi Langer and his wife Nalini, the latter a retired professor of chemistry, and district governor Anish Malik have been passionately and diligently working along with government agencies and programmes such as the Rashtriya Shiksha Kendra (RSK), Ullas Navbharat Literacy etc, in a bid to make a huge dent on the adult illiteracy numbers in the state.

DG Malik said that his district had recently conducted in Ujjain an intercity meet focusing on Rotary's core areas of community service and literacy. "We are working with the state government and supporting the movement to eradicate adult illiteracy in our state. Our programme

was attended virtually by the MP chief minister Mohan Yadav."

Addressing the meet and welcoming Rotary's ongoing partnership with the state's education department, the CM said Rotary members would join hands with the state's functionaries and this joint effort will help to pull more and more adults out of illiteracy. As more people become literate, they will become more aware of their rights, and work together to take the state to higher levels of development.

PDG Langer said that to make over 1 crore adults literate, the total budget earmarked is ₹1,000 crore, of which ₹700 crore will come from the Centre and ₹300 crore from the state government. On its part, the Rotarians associated with this adult literacy programme have printed and made available 10,000 *Akshar Pothis* (literacy handbooks) for which the blueprint has been provided by the MP government.

DG Malik added that the *Akshar Pothi* is an elementary, basic education textbook for those who are

“

*Rotary ka kaam hai sarkar ko asarkar
karna (Rotary's job is to make the
government effective)!*

PDG Ravi Langer



DG Anish Malik (second from left) at an adult literacy class.



totally illiterate. “There was a lot of demand for it and the copies were running short as the government was not able to print the required numbers in a short time. So we in Rotary have undertaken the responsibility for printing and making available one lakh *Akshar Pothis*. Of these, 10,000 books planned for phase one have already been given for distribution in 23 districts of MP that come under RID 3040.”

There are several ways in which illiterate adults are made literate, but the basic common thread is the *Akshar Saathi* or the young companion who undertakes to give the gift of literacy to one person... in a kind of each-one-teach-one programme.

At the Ujjain meeting CM Yadav acknowledged Rotary's cooperation in the UNLP, and drawing a parallel with polio, said that just as with Rotary's help polio was eradicated in India, similarly he hopes the literacy programme of the state would be successful. “We hope that Rotary, along with other NGOs working with us, will become our *Akshar Saathis* in converting over 1.07 crore adult illiterates in MP to literate citizens. Students in both government and private schools are helping the government in this task,” he added.

Giving details of the GoI's literacy programme, which hopes to attain cent per cent literacy, he added that under this campaign those above 15 years in both urban and rural areas, who had missed getting formal or school education, would be made literate with the help of young volunteers.

DG Malik said that in September, under this programme, literacy tests targeted at 25 lakh candidates were conducted in 52 districts of MP. Over 9.3 lakh participated in it and 8.55 lakh were successful and given certificates. “I myself visited a few centres and it was a wonderful sight to see so many adults enthusiastically participating in the tests which were held at the Navbharat Chetna Kendras.”

PDG Langer said the Rotarians were both touched and impressed to see daughters, daughters-in-law, and other female relatives accompanying their elder female relatives who were appearing for the test to get a certificate of basic literacy. Asked about the number of women candidates, he said, “I am not sure about the exact numbers, but I can tell you that there were many more women than men who took this test at the various centres. We were happy to see so many students helping



in this endeavour and thus becoming literacy ambassadors.”

He added that students from Class 9 to 12 were enthusiastically participating in the programme to pull out from the dark shadows of illiteracy the adult illiterates in their neighbourhoods.

RC Ujjain, of which Langer is a member, is keenly involved in this literacy project, and he is hopeful that

“

There was a lot of demand for the *Akshar Pothis*; the copies were running short as the government was not able to print them in a short time. So Rotary printed and made available 10,000 books in the first phase.

DG Anish Malik

with the help of his club president Ishwar Chand Dubey and secretary Pankhuri Joshi, and future club leaders, “we will be able to successfully convert over one crore illiterates in our state into literates by 2030. It doesn’t matter if it takes one or two years more; but we are confident we will achieve this goal.”

Langer explains that the UNLP is a programme under the national education policy which is aiming for total literacy in India by 2030. The programme is being implemented through the Rashtriya Shiksha Kendras (RSK) which have teachers and students within its ambit. The idea is to use the teachers and students who are there in the education system across the country; about 70 per cent of the students are in government schools and only 30 per cent in private schools. The government school students are crucial because most of the adult illiterates come from their neighbourhoods, and hence they can play a crucial role in motivating and teaching them some basic literacy. “It is actually the youth of India who are mostly worried about the prevalent illiteracy in the country, and want to do something about it as the future of India is at stake. So students, particularly those who are

already in organised groups such as the NSS, NCC and so on, are really useful when it comes to teaching adult illiterates,” he adds.

He recalls that about four years ago, the director of the RSK was an IAS officer named Raju, who was close to him. “He was a simple man and would come to my office and we helped in formulating the basic literacy policy for adult illiterates.”

In this scenario, Rotary plays a key role in several aspects, particularly to identify, encourage, motivate and support those government officers who are really interested in carrying forward the adult literacy mission. As DG Malik points out, Rotarians are constantly on the lookout for those teachers, students and government officials who are working hard in this programme, and they use their clout or persuasive power to tell the district officers to recognise such people with an award or certificate during important events such as Independence or Republic Days.

Langer puts it in a nutshell when he says, “*Rotary ka kaam hai sarkar ko asarkar karna* (Rotary’s job is to make the government effective)!”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



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Rotary International President 2024-25



PDG Rtn. T N Subramanian
Rotary International Director 2023-25



Rtn. Anindha Roy Chowdhury
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2023 - 2025



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SAVE THE DATE



Making a difference

Flood relief for Odisha villagers

Around 60,000 people across two villages in Kendrapada and Bhadrak districts of Odisha benefitted from RID 3262's disaster relief project initiated by DG Yagyansis Mohapatra. The district Rotary clubs distributed relief kits comprising groceries, clothes, bedsheets, mosquito nets, water, sanitary napkins, umbrellas and tarpaulin to the villagers affected by Cyclone Dana. The total project cost ₹10 lakh, said Mohapatra. The cyclone had caused extensive damage in the state, resulting in massive crop and property loss. ■



DG Yagyansis Mohapatra distributing flood relief kit to a family.

Addressing addiction

RI District 3191, along with the Bengaluru municipal corporation and NIMHANS, has designed a *Wave against Addiction*. This initiative includes awareness sessions in schools and colleges, and workshops for parents and medical students. Parents are guided on how to support their children if they suspect addiction, while healthcare students learn to deal with addiction cases in a clinical setting, says Ikram Ahmed Khan, chairman of the district's Addiction Prevention committee. Students are educated about the risks of substance abuse, behavioural and digital addiction. The initiative, launched in August, has so far addressed 1,600 students across 16 schools; 150 teachers and 200 parents. ■



Ikram Ahmed Khan, chairman, RID 3191's Addiction Prevention Committee, addressing a session.

Dinner for cancer patients

Seventeen Rotary clubs of Navi Mumbai, RID 3142, partnered to launch the 'All Days Dinner' programme in October to provide full course dinner to 400 cancer patients and their care takers at the Asha Nivas, Tata Memorial Centre and ACTREC, Kharghar. DG Dinesh Mehta handed over ₹4.03 lakh to Dr Navin Khattry, deputy director, ACTREC, towards food expenses for the month. The clubs are committed to continue the project beyond the Rotary year. "Cancer patients and their families endure unimaginable physical and emotional challenges. Our goal is to lighten their load, even if just a little, by ensuring they have a nutritious meal to end their day. We believe that this small act of kindness can bring comfort and hope during such difficult times," he said. ■



DG Dinesh Mehta (L) and his wife Jyoti, along with Rotarians, all set to serve dinner for cancer patients and their caretakers.



Members of RC SPIC Nagar Tuticorin visiting the science exhibition at the SPIC Nagar school.



Igniting young minds

For the past three decades, RC SPIC Nagar Tuticorin, a 50-year-old club of RID 3212, has been organising the annual science exhibition at the SPIC Nagar Higher Secondary School. Around 300 students showcase innovative projects and experiments in mathematics, physics, chemistry, computer science and social studies. Exhibits range from robotic arms and solar-powered vehicles to sustainable farming models and historical replicas. Students highlight their coding skills through apps and games.

This eagerly anticipated event aims to foster creative thinking, problem-solving skills and scientific temperament among students, says club member Rathakrishnan. "The exhibition helped me understand complex concepts in a practical way," says A Shivani, a Class 11 student. ■



Samantha Cristoforetti, a Rotarian, dreamed of space travel as a kid. Now, she's sharing the cosmic awe with her fellow earthlings.



Where no TikToker has gone before

Diana Schoberg

Samantha Cristoforetti's journey to space began during her childhood in a tiny village in the Italian Alps, her taste for adventure whetted by summers spent roaming the woods with cousins and winters skiing. But it was her voyages in books, read in secret under the covers at bedtime, that primed her imagination for her meteoric rise. "I doubt I'd be an astronaut today if I hadn't climbed a ladder to the Moon many years ago, ... if I hadn't traveled all the way to China with Marco Polo or fought epic battles beside Sandokan" the pirate, she recalls in her 2018 book, *Diary of an Apprentice Astronaut*.

When she was 17 and a senior in high school, she travelled to St Paul, Minnesota, as an exchange student. "I was fascinated by space flight already. I was a big Star Trek fan," she says. "All of that was centered in the United States." One day, while eating out with her host mother, the two saw an advertisement for Space Camp in Huntsville, Alabama. Cristoforetti was all in. At Space Camp, she studied the space shuttle and simulated a 24-hour mission. "I got to go and play astronaut for the week," she says. "It got me so much closer to the whole space thing."

When she returned home, she went on a second journey, that of acquiring the skills she'd need to apply to become an astronaut, should that rare opportunity present itself. She studied engineering

and became one of the first female fighter pilots in the Italian Air Force. "I wouldn't say I was obsessed," she says. "I always took pleasure in learning and doing what I was doing at that time. But I always kept the dream in mind."

The European Space Agency had recruited astronaut candidates only twice before, most recently in the early 1990s, when Cristoforetti was a teenager. So when the agency announced it was accepting applications in 2008, she knew that was her once-in-a-lifetime opportunity.

Along with 8,412 other qualified applicants, she toiled through the astronaut recruitment process, which included aptitude tests, psychological evaluations, medical exams and interviews. She brushed up on her Russian language skills using a Harry Potter audio-book. ("I still have a small but enviable vocabulary of Russian magical terms," she writes in her book.) Finally, she received the news she'd been waiting to hear — that she had fulfilled her childhood dream. "When you get that phone call that says you've been selected it's like, Wow, what are the chances of this really happening?" she says.

In September 2009, she began training for missions to the International Space Station. For spacewalk training, she practised underwater to simulate weightlessness. She was fitted for both Russian and American spacesuits; the American gloves alone required 26 measurements.

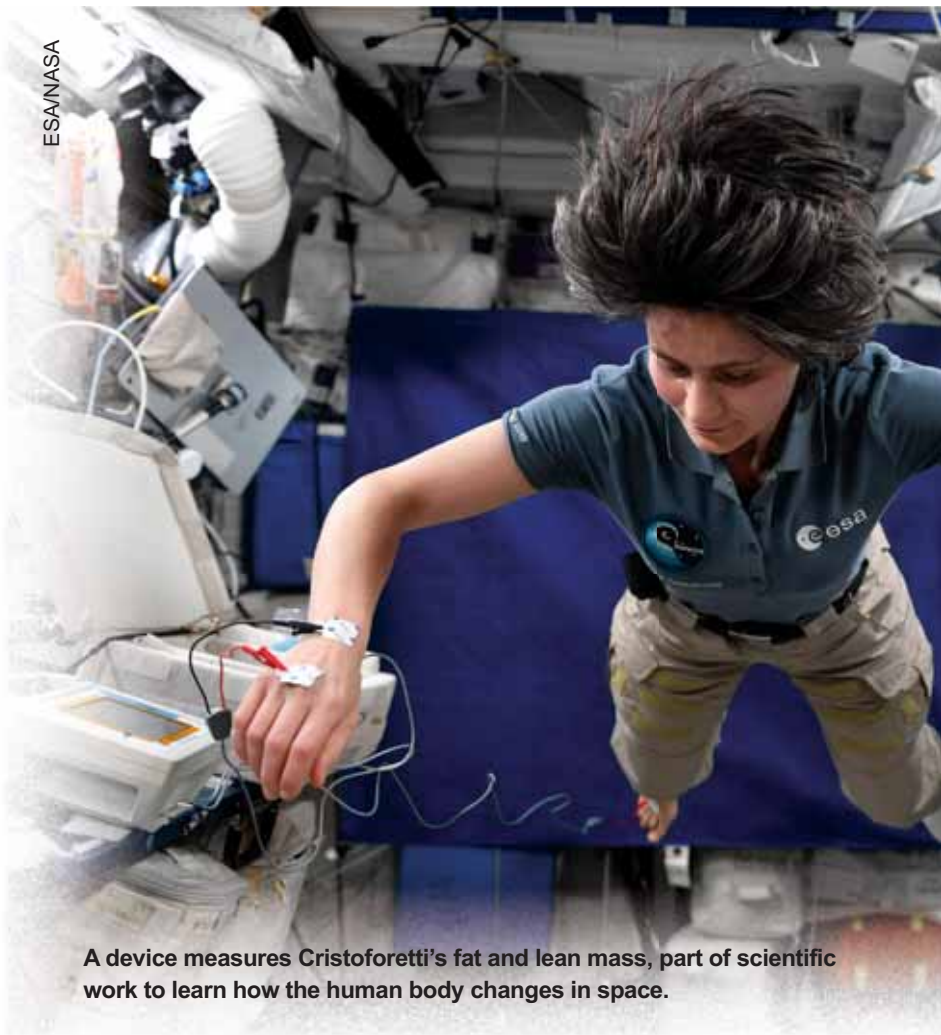
And she prepared for emergencies that she hoped would never happen — just little workplace mishaps like becoming untethered from the space station and floating away.

It was during one of these trainings that Bernd Böttiger, a member of the Rotary Club of Köln am Rhein, first met Cristoforetti. Böttiger, an internationally renowned specialist in emergency medicine, teaches astronauts resuscitation procedures in case of an emergency on the space station. “She impressed me as being extremely positive, extremely tough, extremely straightforward, extremely focused,” he says. “I can easily imagine how they found her among the thousands of applicants.”

In November 2014, after what may have felt like light years of training, Cristoforetti was ready to rocket to space.

Pusk,” comes the voice on the radio at the launchpad in Baikonur, Kazakhstan. Start. Fuel begins to flow into the combustion chambers of the Soyuz TMA-15M Russian spacecraft. “Zazhiganiye.” Ignition. “Poyekhali!” Let’s go! the crew’s commander, Anton Shkaplerov, shouts. Cristoforetti and crewmate Terry Virts join in his cry as they catapult into the air with a sudden jolt. It’s the same thing cosmonauts have been shouting since Yuri Gagarin, the first human in space, did so in April 1961.

Crews flying into space perform rituals that surpass even the long-standing Rotary traditions familiar to members. In the days leading up to liftoff, Cristoforetti details in her book, traditions include a screening of a Soviet-era film, a tree planting in Cosmonauts Alley, and a toast with fruit juice. Crew members sign their



ESA/NASA

A device measures Cristoforetti’s fat and lean mass, part of scientific work to learn how the human body changes in space.

names on their hotel room doors, receive sprinkles of holy water from an Orthodox priest, and walk out to the bus that will take them to the launch site to the famous Russian rock song “Trava u Doma,” or “Grass by the Home”. And this will sound familiar to Rotary members: Once on board the space station, new astronauts may receive a pin, to mark their membership in an elite club.

As the seconds tick by on the Soyuz, Cristoforetti and her crewmates are pressed into their seats with increased force until, about nine minutes later, the engines cut off as they reach orbit. “In their thick gloves, my hands are dangling at about eye level, as if they weren’t attached to me,” she writes in her book of that moment. “In an immediate flip that flies in the face

of millions of years of body memory, I have to make an effort to hold them against my body.”

They reach the space station in about six hours and, after a couple of hours of procedures, the hatch between the Soyuz spacecraft and the research station opens. With a gentle push from Shkaplerov, Cristoforetti squeezes through. It’s “like a second birth,” as she describes it, “one of those rare points of connection between past and future.” With that, she becomes the 216th person to live in the space station.

Since the first crew of one American and two Russians arrived in 2000, the International Space Station



has been inhabited continuously by astronauts from 23 countries in something akin to a relay race, uninterrupted for 24 years. Cristoforetti has participated in two missions, her first from November 2014 to June 2015, at the time the longest ever for a woman in space at 200 days; the second from April to October 2022, which included a couple of weeks as space station commander, making her Europe's first woman to hold the role.

Cristoforetti adjusted to all the space "firsts": her first sleep (she opted not to tie herself to the wall with bungees and instead free floated in her phone booth-sized crew quarters); her first meal (scrambled eggs and oatmeal, which she set afloat so she could chomp it midair); her first trip to the bathroom (because of urine recycling, "yesterday's coffee becomes tomorrow's coffee," she writes in her book). Then she got on with the business of being an astronaut.

Work hours run from about 7am to 7pm and start with a morning meeting. The station is first

In some ways it's just like any other Rotary meeting

Dozens of members of the Rotary Club of Kulln am Rhein gather on a pleasant Monday evening at one of the famous Kranhaus office buildings, architectural gems shaped like upside down L's over the Rhine River with the towers of Cologne Cathedral visible in the distance. The night's speaker, an out-of-this-world member of the club, is scheduled to give the Rotarians a virtual tour of her workplace. The Wi-Fi connection on her end is finicky, and they wait eagerly.

At last, she appears, and that's when this meeting takes a decidedly different turn. Because Samantha Cristoforetti, an astronaut aboard the International Space Station, is floating.

Cristoforetti is four months into her second stint on the space station, a research vessel about the size of a six-bedroom

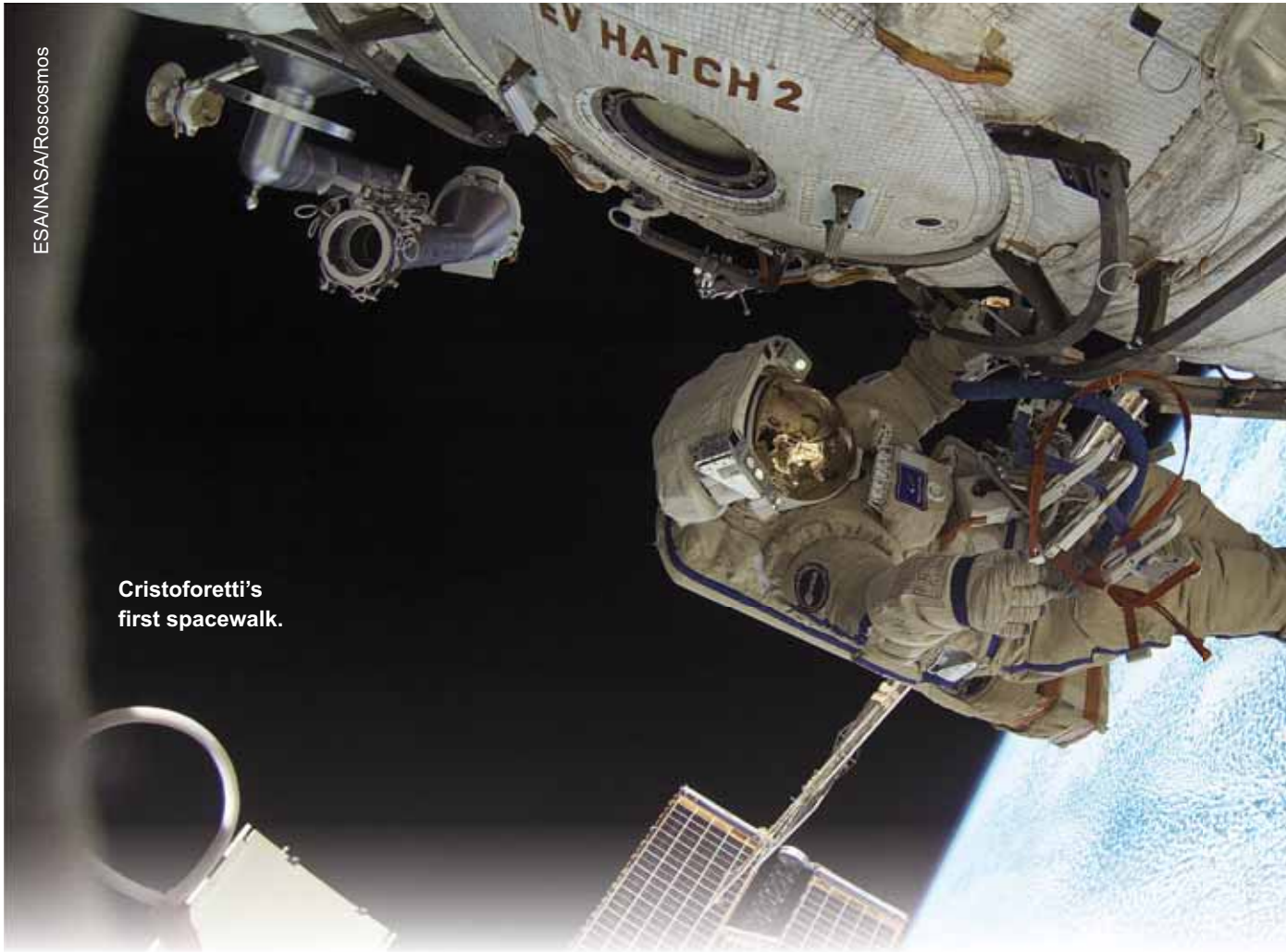
house that orbits the Earth every 90 minutes. Her hair set loose from the confines of gravity in a way that would make an '80s metal rocker jealous, she takes questions and wows club members with the cosmic views. "Most of the time I try to take meetings from the cupola, because then you can show people the Earth from the windows," she says in an interview with Rotary magazine.

Astronauts' personal items are rigorously monitored; they must meet a strict weight limit of only 3.3 pounds total. Among her select few items, Cristoforetti has included the red-and-white banner of the Kulln am Rhein Rotary club. As the meeting closes, her fellow club members thank her with thunderous applause.

She rolls backward away from the camera, leaving the club banner on screen floating behind her. ■



Cristoforetti in the International Space Station.



Cristoforetti's first spacewalk.

and foremost a scientific research vessel. During her missions, Cristoforetti has contributed to research on health topics such as the effect of noise on hearing, the maintenance of muscle tone and osteoporosis, as well as other areas of science like the physics of emulsions and the properties of metals.

Keeping the space station up and running falls to the astronauts, with duties like housekeeping (even in space, you need to vacuum), maintenance, and the loading and unloading of cargo vehicles. They're also required to exercise 2.5 hours daily to prevent the loss of bone and muscle mass. Interspersed are meetings with their manager, flight controller, doctor or psychologist.

When their work is done, they might call home or enjoy the view from the cupola, one of Cristoforetti's favourite pastimes.

"Sometimes there are really busy weeks when you're working all the time and jumping from one task to the next. You literally forget that you're in space," she says. "Floating is your normal way of locomotion. You kind of forget about what it feels like to sit or to walk."

Still, she retained her sense of awe. On one of the final days of her first mission, she remembers spotting noctilucent clouds, a rare type of high-altitude cloud that thrills skywatchers with vivid blue wisps. "I'd been in space for over half a year, so you

might think that you're kind of jaded by then, but it was like, 'Oh my gosh, here they are.'"

On her second mission, Cristoforetti participated in a seven-hour "extravehicular activity," what the rest of us know as a spacewalk, the first by a European woman. She and a Russian crewmate deployed 10 nanosatellites as part of an experiment and did work on a robotic arm attached to the outside of the space station that assists astronauts with maintenance.

"It's overwhelming to carry out — demanding psychologically and physically, especially if you're a small female like me," she explains. "It's sheer concentration and willpower



her colleague as if it would float on its own. A classic astronaut mistake. She caught herself just in time.

Cristoforetti is an astronaut, engineer, fighter pilot — and a TikTok sensation. Her biography on the social media platform reads, “European Space Agency Astronaut boldly going where no Tiktoker has gone before.”

Her TikTok feed runs the gamut from science experiments to space life tidbits. Videos include how to use the space toilet, floating 101, and flying into the aurora borealis. In a clip about how to drink coffee in space, a foil pouch floats beside her as a graphic reading “coffee please” flashes on the screen and the song “Coffee Break” by Jonah Nilsson plays in the background. Incorporating a bit of science into the video, she demonstrates why a regular cup won’t work in microgravity and how her gravy-boat-looking mug uses capillary action to guide the liquid toward her mouth.

“I wanted to try something new and to make sure that we reached the young audience. Everybody was telling me they’re all on TikTok,” she says. “I was like, ‘It’s going to be a problem. I don’t even know how to dance. I’m not sure you can dance in space.’” But she gave it a shot and ended up having a lot of fun.

While the space station work was exacting, Cristoforetti found other ways to spice up life in orbit. Her first mission, the quintessential Italian teamed up with Lavazza to bring on board the first space espresso maker, dubbed the ISSpresso machine. She celebrated its arrival on a Dragon cargo spacecraft by changing into a uniform from Star Trek: Voyager. The espresso maker served double duty as a study in fluid mechanics. And as part

of a UNICEF initiative, she sang the John Lennon classic “Imagine” from the space station cupola, one of many renditions by people all around the world that were included in a video released on New Year’s Eve 2014.

When she’s earthbound, Cristoforetti lives in Cologne with her partner and two children. Impressed with her character, Böttiger invited her to join the Köln am Rhein Rotary club between her first and second missions. “I thought it was a good place to bond with people who want to maybe live life with purpose,” she says. And who doesn’t want to dine with an astronaut? “It is really impressive to sit together with her at a table and eat and drink with her,” Böttiger says.

Beyond space, Cristoforetti’s work has taken her from the ocean floor (she lived 19 metres below the Earth’s surface for nine days as commander of NASA’s NEEMO 23 crew) to Norwegian fjords, where she participated in a field expedition studying lunar-like geology. It was practice for someday soon when astronauts will again explore the moon’s surface.

Having been everywhere from the ocean’s depths to outer space, where’s next for Cristoforetti? She ponders the question. “Will I ever go to New Zealand? I don’t know. It’s so far. It’s such an investment of time and effort. When I was on the space station, I flew over New Zealand every day. It was so easy, right?” she says. “I could just look out the window and, in a way, I was there.

“But at the same time, you’re kind of curious to see how it looks down there, so of course I’d love to go to Patagonia. I’d love to go to the mountains in Chile, all those places that become so familiar to you when you are in space. And yet, they are so far when you are on Earth.”

while you’re doing it, and then once you’re done, you can really let it sink in. It was such a feeling of accomplishment at having finally been able to do that. Just the experience of going out, it was amazing.”

In space, astronauts’ days are programmed by others; there’s no running to the grocery store or fighting traffic. Once they’re back on Earth, they experience something akin to reverse culture shock. And there’s that pesky thing called gravity. When Cristoforetti landed after her first trip, she details in her book, she borrowed a colleague’s phone to call her partner, Lionel Ferra, who also works for the European Space Agency. As she finished, she began to push the phone back toward

©Rotary

A Rotarian builds a house from plastic waste

Rasheeda Bhagat

Remember the good old song by Andy Williams that was so popular in the early 1960s?

Number fifty-four

The house with the bamboo door

Bamboo roof and bamboo walls

They've even got a bamboo floor

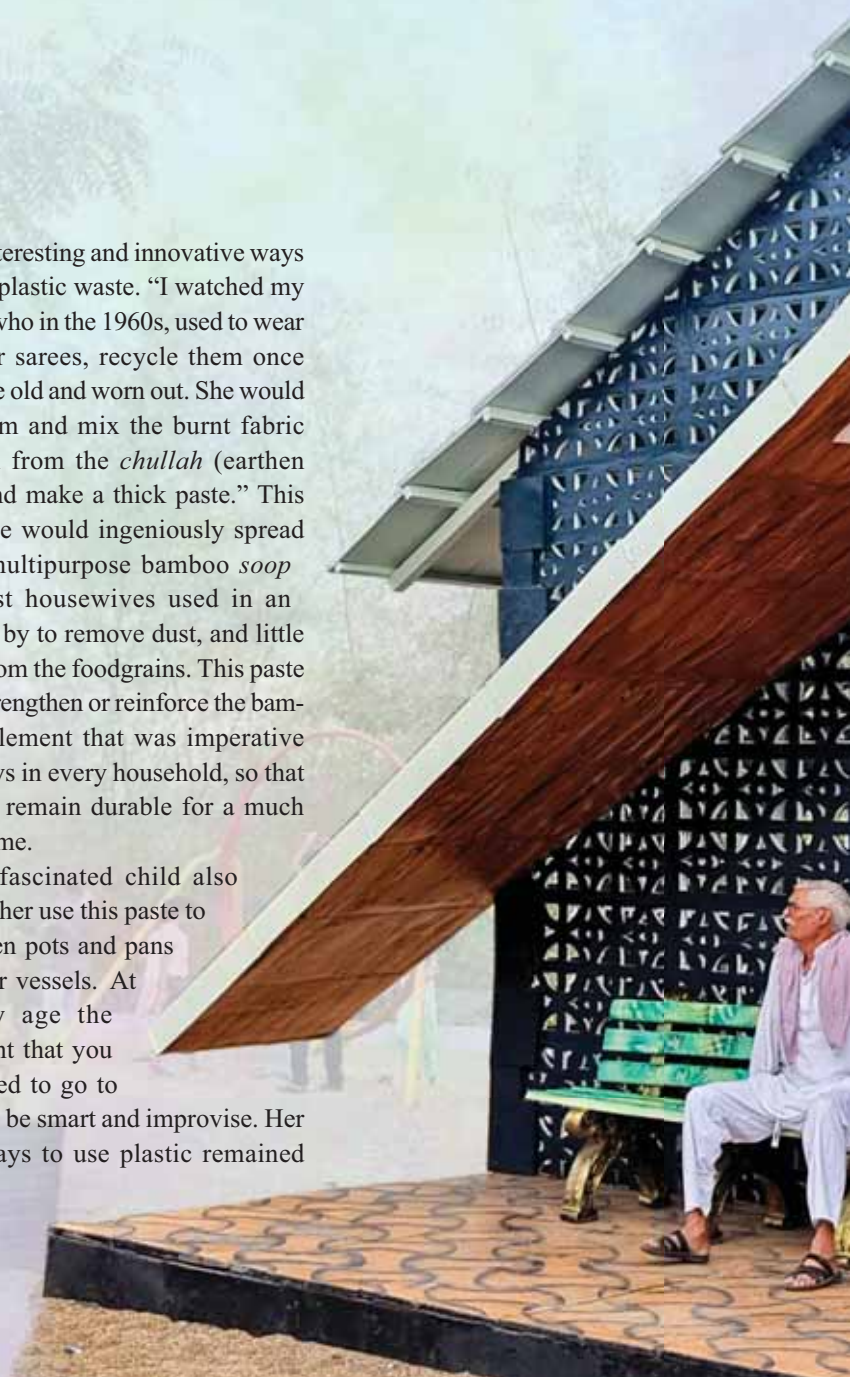
I was reminded of that song when a mail landed in my inbox from a Rotarian from RC Chandrapur, RI District 3030, Dr Balmukund Paliwal, describing how he had built a two-storeyed house of plastic from all kinds of waste material such as discarded chips packets, old shampoo bottles, medicine wrappers, milk pouches, torn polythene bags, cans, and so on. Recycling and reprocessing about 13 tonnes of single-use plastic waste, this passionate environmentalist has created a beautiful, and yet sturdy, prefabricated, rust and termite-proof, fire resistant 625sqft plastic house located in a botanical park in Chandrapur, which is about 180km from Nagpur.

Oh yes, the floor tiles, walls, windows, doors, toilet and the veranda are all made from reinforced and converted plastic waste, using a special process. From the balcony on the first floor, you can get a view of much of the surrounding garden.

An anaesthesiologist by profession, he was greatly influenced as a child by watching his mother's

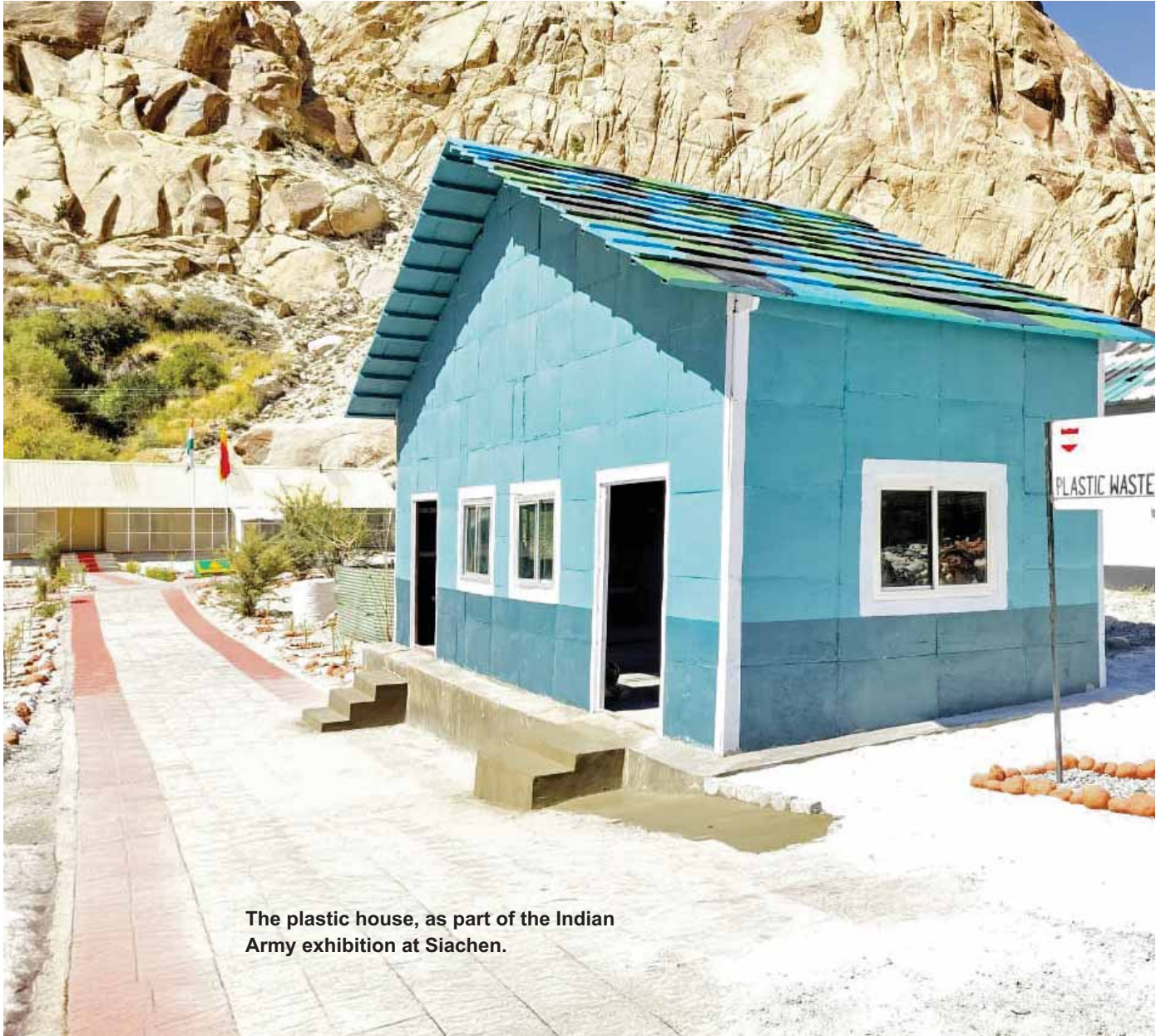
novel, interesting and innovative ways of using plastic waste. "I watched my mother, who in the 1960s, used to wear polyester sarees, recycle them once they were old and worn out. She would burn them and mix the burnt fabric with ash from the *chullah* (earthen stove) and make a thick paste." This paste, she would ingeniously spread on the multipurpose bamboo *soop* that most housewives used in an era gone by to remove dust, and little stones from the foodgrains. This paste would strengthen or reinforce the bamboo implement that was imperative those days in every household, so that it would remain durable for a much longer time.

The fascinated child also watched her use this paste to fix broken pots and pans and other vessels. At an early age the boy learnt that you don't need to go to school to be smart and improvise. Her novel ways to use plastic remained



House constructed using plastic waste in a botanical park in Chandrapur near Nagpur.





The plastic house, as part of the Indian Army exhibition at Siachen.



Flower pot made with plastic waste.





The floor, walls, ceiling and door — all made from plastic waste.



etched in his memory and resurfaced in 2014 when the Indian government launched the cleanliness drive titled *Swachh Bharat Abhiyan*. As he was growing up, he was always troubled by the monumental amount of waste that was being poured into landfills, and discarded plastic bags that were destroying marine life, and choking animals on land.

Over the years, as public welfare schemes were thought of and initiated, the zilla parishad reached out to him when the government housing scheme—the Prime Minister’s *Awas Yojana* — was launched.

In an interview to *Rotary News*, Dr Paliwal, now 68, disclosed that though he has been interested in recycling and reusing plastic waste for 22 years, and has been experimenting with it in some form or the other, he seriously started working with the idea of using/converting plastic waste into a durable and usable residential structure about eight years ago.

Over the years, as he kept churning ideas in his head on what to do with the mountains and mountains of plastic waste that was generated in our homes, he came out with various ideas... on converting plastic waste into benches, containers to grow plants, flower pots etc. “I put together a team and have made over 1,000 benches for the nagarpalika, for the garden, for the use of policemen etc.”

Next, he thought why not convert tonnes and tonnes of plastic waste into durable material for building a house. Asked about the design element, he says that a local artist/craftsman called Santosh Jadhav is a very good sculptor and used to work on different kinds of idols (*moorthis*) using plaster of Paris, but saw his orders slump during Covid.

That is the time he joined Paliwal's team, which has eight people working on different components of converting the monumental heaps of plastic waste into material that can be used to build a home.

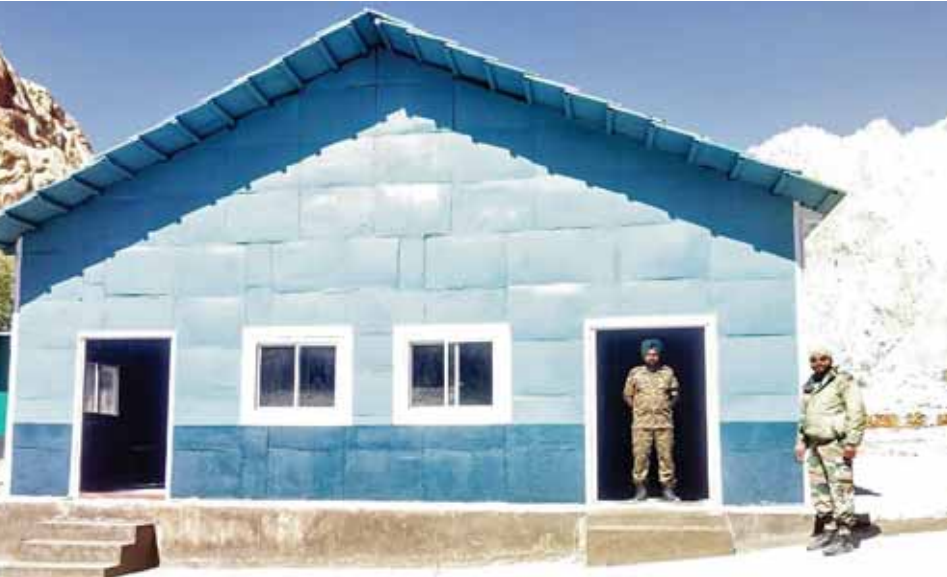
Asked how he zeroed in on the idea to use plastic waste as construction material, Paliwal says that for long he had been thinking about what could replace concrete as the basic building material for houses, offices etc. "Now Santosh is not an architect but he is a very good sculptor and during Covid, when he had no work, he joined me and now handles the entire work."

On the process involved in turning plastic waste into aesthetic building material he says, "First, we get the plastic waste, then dry wash it, shred it into small pieces using machines, and after that melt it in the melting machine. Once this is done the material becomes semi-solid and just like you shape *kumhar ki mitti* (the potter's clay) into any shape or form you want, you can give this material any



Above & Below:
The house was prefabricated, transported to Siachen and put together there by Paliwal's team.





A dustbin, tree guard and a decorative stool made from discarded plastics and other waste material.



A police officer inspects a plastic block; barricades and benches were made with various discarded materials.

shape... the worker working on it can make it either into a *diya* or a statue... depending on what mould you put that material into.”

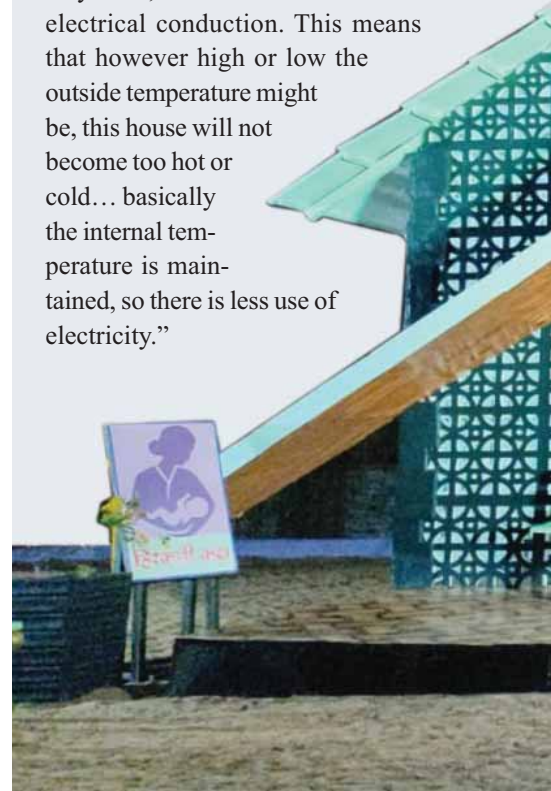
He has a team of 15 people including those who collect the plastic waste material that is thrown out. With enthusiasm he adds: “Now all the members of my Rotary club send the plastic waste they generate to me, as they know it will be put to good use.”

Once he had figured out that the processed plastic material is both sturdy and durable, it was easy to expand his idea of building homes with it. Asked how he finds the time from his profession — he runs his own nursing home in the town — he smiles and says, “I am a full-time anaesthesiologist, but my team has full authority and led by Santosh Jadhav they do this work.”



All praise for his man Friday Jadhav, he adds that the latter has “tremendous knowledge, and can improvise, innovate and deal with all kinds of machinery. His knowledge is practical and useful; it doesn’t come with a degree. He is not an engineer but is much better than the best of engineers I know. I would thank the Covid pandemic for sending him my way; but for Covid I would not have got Jadhav!”

To my constant questioning on how a house made of plastic can be durable, as it is both prefabricated and portable too, Paliwal explains that the foundation is made from cement, steel and concrete but the frame is of steel, which also goes into the walls. In all, about 2.5 tonnes of steel was used in the house, which cost around ₹8–9 lakh to complete. But there are no bricks used. “We have also made a toilet out of plastic, and it is complete with all the fittings required. This house is safe during an earthquake or a cyclone, and there is no thermal or electrical conduction. This means that however high or low the outside temperature might be, this house will not become too hot or cold... basically the internal temperature is maintained, so there is less use of electricity.”



This way the other environmental disaster, excessive use of electrical energy, is also reduced.

The kitchen too is safe, he adds, as it takes a high temperature of 250 deg Celcius to melt this plastic material.

Right now, this model house in Chandrapur is kept in the botanical garden and is open to visitors. "This plastic house has generated a lot of interest," he chuckles, adding, "people are really surprised and curious, many schoolchildren visit it and ask so many questions on its sustainability."

To the important question on whether the zilla parishad which had asked him to build this house will take this scheme forward, and replicate this model, he says, "Talks are going on with the government officers, but as in anything to do with the government it takes a long, long time for something concrete to come up!"

But meanwhile, he continues undeterred. He has already put up a plastic house in Siachen; the occasion was an Indian Army exhibition and the President of India Draupadi Murmu also visited it, "found it very interesting and asked many questions about it."

This house is 15ft by 12ft in size, was prefabricated, and first sent to Chandigarh, "from where it was airlifted to Siachen. My team members went along with it and for 15 days they stayed at the venue to put it together."

So how much did it cost and who paid for this house, I ask him. The good doctor smiles and says, "*Ab yeh mat poochiye ki paisa kitna laga aur kaha se aaya.* (Please don't ask me how much money I spent or from where that money came.) Ishwar has given me a lot and continues to give me. And anyway, recently industrialist Ratan Tata passed away... what wealth did he take with him? I believe that the more you distribute to others, the more God gives you."

He adds that apart from plastic waste, he also converts other waste, including electronic waste, old clothes etc into building material; "whatever waste is generated in our town, it stays in our town and is put to good use."

To the question if Rotarians from his club have expressed any interest in building such a house for any project, he says: "Oh yes, they are quite enthusiastic and are talking about it, saying let's build another such house. Our district governor, who recently visited Chandrapur, saw the house and appreciated it."

Apart from benches for the police and others, he and his team have also made police barricades from plastic waste, they are lighter to transport, more durable than metal ones and more convenient to use, he says.

Here is one sentence you will not come across often.... "Many people curse plastic and say it is responsible for destroying our world. But if we can use our imagination and take a little trouble to collect and convert that waste into useful material and put it to good and creative use, plastic can become a boon. I would say that plastic is the best and most wonderful gift that this world has had in a century. If we give it a chance, it can change our lives!"

So one day will he make his own house from plastic waste?

"Of course; *zaroor banayege!* (We'll certainly do it)," he beams.

Designed by
N Krishnamurthy



Cervical cancer prevention initiative

Supported by a ₹75 lakh donation from club member B D Agarwal, RC Belur, RID 3291, aims to vaccinate 5,000 girls against cervical cancer. Awareness drives in eight schools have reached over 2,300 parents and educators, with vaccination camps already immunising 156 girls at Swaika Girls High School, Howrah.



A doctor vaccinates a girl.

Skill development centre

RIDE KP Nagesh inaugurated the Rotary BOSCH Skill Training Centre set up by RC Chandigarh, RID 3080, in partnership with Bosch India, at the Meher Baba Charitable Trust in Fatehgarh Sahib district, Punjab. The centre aims to empower marginalised communities through advanced skill development.



RIDE KP Nagesh, with PDGs Jeetendra Aneja (RID 3192) and Pinky Patel (RID 3060), watch a beneficiary at work at the skill training centre.

A housing project

RC Alleppey, RID 3211, celebrated its platinum jubilee with a Rotary Village project, providing homes to underprivileged families. Three of the seven planned houses, funded entirely through member contributions and CSR support, were handed over to beneficiaries by PRID Mahesh Kotbagi.



PRID Mahesh Kotbagi handing over a mock key to a beneficiary family. DG Sudhi Jabbar is on the left.

Menstrual hygiene initiative

An initiative by RC Pune Central, RID 3131, and Jagannath Rathi Jagat Clinic Charity Trust, Pune, to promote menstrual health, this project provides affordable sanitary napkins, benefiting 6,500 girls across 31 schools. Two lakh napkins are distributed annually, creating economic opportunities for women in the production and distribution of these napkins.



PDG Prashant Deshmukh (L) with the club's past president Madhusudhan Rathi during the inauguration of the project.



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With Gratitude, **PDG Dr. E.K.Sagadhevan**, Rotary Erode Central RID 3203, Zone 5
Recipient of the International Service Award for a Polio-Free World



When dreams take flight

Jaishree

It was an unforgettable day for 40 domestic and commercial helpers as they boarded a plane for the first time in their lives, a dream-come-true journey made possible by RC Greater Tezpur, RID 3240. The anticipation in the air was palpable as the workers stepped into the bustling airport in Tezpur. “All of them are helpers employed by our club members in our homes/offices. They were all awestruck as they walked into the airport and were totally speechless when they saw the aircraft on the tarmac,” says club president Jayant Tibrewala.

The idea for this extraordinary experience was born in a casual conversation among the club members. “One evening as we talked about our travel, we realised that some people have never ventured outside their hometowns, or even boarded a train, let alone a plane,” he says. This sparked the vision for *Swapnor Udaan* (Dream flight) — a project aimed at gifting these individuals a memory they would carry for a lifetime.

“Whenever an aeroplane passes overhead, my children and I rush outside to watch it in awe, dreaming about being up there one day. When Jayant *saab* told us that we were actually going on one, I was so thrilled I couldn’t sleep the entire night,” says one of the beneficiaries Parth Mohanty.

Tibrewala, along with two Rotaractors Vineet Bothra and Rahul, accompanied the excited

passengers on a 90-minute flight from Tezpur to Lakhimpur on Air India Alliance. “It was the last flight from Tezpur before the airport closed for five years for maintenance,” says Tibrewala. At Lakhimpur, the group bonded over games at the Gandhi Park and visited the Ganpati mandir in a bus arranged by the club. They were then served a traditional Assamese lunch after which they were taken back to Tezpur by road.

The success of this heartwarming experience was also due to the support of the Tezpur airport authorities. “Despite reminders, some of them did not bring their identity cards, but the airport manager found a viable solution,” he says, appreciating the cooperation that allowed everyone to participate.



RC Greater Tezpur president Jayant Tibrewala (third from right) and Rotaractors with domestic and commercial helpers, all set to fly.



RC Greater Tezpur includes a considerable amount of fun element to keep the club vibrant and interesting. Recently, the spouses of the club members organised a four-day fun camp for the Annets and other children in the town. The camp had enriching activities such as yoga, storytelling, hula-hooping, fireless cooking and personality development sessions.

On the last day, the young participants enjoyed a special treat — a hands-on tour at a local Domino's Pizza outlet. They delighted in making their own pizzas, and of course, in devouring them, along with a spread of snacks and fresh juices. "Watching the children have such a blast was the perfect ending to the camp," smiles the club president.

The club has also been installing water booths to ensure safe drinking water for the town's residents. Its most recent installation, costing ₹45,000, is now a lifesaver for around 200 people daily. ■

Skilling children in special schools

Team Rotary News

The Rotary Club of Bombay Queen City, RID 3141, installed vocational skill development centres in three schools for special children managed by the Umang Charitable Trust.

The schools located in Kandivli, Bhayander and Vasai cater to 132 children. The club has initiated training programmes in computer operation, bakery, art and craft, and has also linked the schools with the Rotary-Bosch skill development centres to help the children get better training opportunities. DG Chetan Desai inaugurated this project worth ₹12 lakh. ■



DG Chetan Desai (fourth from left) at the inauguration of a skill development centre in one of the Umang schools.



RIPE Mario de Camargo with RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and DG Rajinder Singh Khurana at the vocational centre in a residential facility for special children in Nagpur. RC Nagpur North president Manisha Manghani is seen on the left.

Nagpur Rotarians work for welfare of specially abled

Rasheeda Bhagat

During his recent visit to India, incoming RI President Mario de Camargo inaugurated a vocational centre at a residential facility put up for special children and adults in Nagpur by RC Nagpur North, RID 3030. The cost of the vocational centre was over ₹4 lakh.

Club president Manisha Manghani said that the club has been working with the NGO Sarvangin Apangvikas Bahuuddeshiya Kalyankari Seekhsan Sanstha that runs a residential facility for special children and adults in Nagpur. “Last year they moved to a new building built on a piece of land owned by the person who runs this NGO. But the living space for the girls and boys was very cramped and uncomfortable, so they asked us to put up two residential floors — one for girls and the other for boys,” she said. This was done last year; the vocational centre was built this year.

The club managed to get a CSR funding of ₹3 lakh from the corporate



Club president Manisha with Rotaractors at a Ganesh puja mandal for an anti-drug campaign.



The club's past presidents Pooja and Jagdish Khatri with children affected with cerebral palsy at Jaipur Foot project.

SSFM, which operates in the infra space, and whose executive director Deepesh Bhartiya is a new member of this club. The remaining ₹1 lakh was raised by the club members, along with white goods such as a refrigerator, kitchen implements and other utilities required. “They wanted a dining area also for the inmates who are in the age group 15–40, so we built that too,” she adds.

The NGO run by Gulab Dullarwar since 2002 in Nagpur manages this programme for about 100 special people — children and adults — under the project titled *Jeevandhara*. About 70 are residents — for whom this club has created comfortable residential space — and the remaining 30 are day scholars. The NGO has a longstanding

relationship with this club and whenever it requires any help or additional facilities or equipment, it approached RC Nagpur North, and its members willingly provide whatever is required.

Jaipur foot

Manisha added that the club is also deeply engaged in providing the Jaipur foot, and this is an ongoing project for the last few years. Now it has really become big and expanded into a district project. Initially the club used to give about 100 to 110 Jaipur limbs a year, “but this year we are going to do it across the district and our target is 1,000. This is possible as we are working in partnership with the Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti in Jaipur which runs the Jaipur Foot programme.”

Drug abuse awareness

The club is also involved in a major project to raise awareness on the dangers of drug abuse and addiction. “Actually, the police commissioner sought our help on this issue as drug abuse is a growing problem among the youngsters in schools and colleges. So we carried out a major campaign during the Ganesh Pooja festival,” Manisha says.

There are over 1,000 Ganesh mandals in Nagpur during Ganesh Chaturthi, and inviting other district club members and Rotaractors to join them, the Rotarians covered as many mandals as possible, displaying posters, playing videos and talking about the danger that comes from drug addiction. A live podcast with the police commissioner was done. ■



RID 3030

RC Chopda

Around 400 youngsters were offered jobs by top companies at a job fair held jointly with three other entities. Prof Arunbhai Gujarathi gave a talk on the transformative power of employment in driving growth.



Club matters



RID 3060

RC Navsari

Nutritious food kits and clothes for newborns were given to around 60 pregnant and lactating women. Doctors also counselled them on taking good diet and the right way to feed babies.

RID 3090

RC Hisar

Club president Mohit Gupta led a plantation drive in which 100 saplings were planted at the Jindal Institute of Integrated Medicine and Garlic Centre, Hisar. It created awareness on protecting the environment.





RID 3110

RC Kanpur

Everyday food is served to over 150 devotees at ₹10 per plate at a local fuel outlet, next to Umrao Hospital, in partnership with Rotaractors, Khushi Foundation and two other entities.

RID 3040

RC Indore Central

A 50-inch smart TV was donated to the Government High School, Daulatabad, in a CSR project. Project coordinator Kamlesh Vyas trained the staff to operate the TV with its software.



RID 3120

RC Balrampur Greater

An adult education programme was started to enable rural women to read and write. In the long run, it will create a sustainable livelihood for them through skill development.



RID 3131

RC Chinchwad Pune

Over 16,000 students (Class 8–10) from 63 schools took part in a three-day state-level essay writing and creative thinking competition held with the support of Jaldindi Pratishthan, Abhivyapti Foundation, Science Park and the municipality. Prizes were given to the winners.

Madurai Rotarians inspire youth

Jaishree

For 22 years since 2002, the Rotary Community Corps (RCC) Tirumalpuram in Madurai (RID 3000) has been coaching rural youngsters to successfully clear the state government’s public service commission exams. “Over 400 youngsters who were coached here have secured government jobs since then. We have had students from as far as Ooty and Tirupur,” says the RCC president Arumugam. The RCC, initially sponsored by RC Madurai Metro, now functions under RC Madurai Metro Heritage, and has 85 volunteers.

During the initial days, this Rotary club assigned a building where the RCC conducted free after-school classes for schoolchildren from across 20 villages around Madurai. These students, most of whom were first-generation learners, were guided by teachers employed from the city schools. “Not one child dropped out of school, thanks to these passionate teachers who kept their interest in academics alive,” recalls Arumugam.

However, the Covid pandemic brought unexpected challenges.

The study centre was demolished by the Madurai corporation for its road widening project. The parent Rotary club recently constructed a two-storeyed, ₹40-lakh study centre to ensure the RCC’s mission is continued uninterrupted. “The RCC volunteers are passionate about empowering youth with knowledge and skills,” says Arun Kumar Amarnath, president, RC Madurai Metro Heritage. The RCC has now expanded the courses to include coaching for bank exams, spoken English, Bharatnatyam and Karate. With around 25 students enrolled

Interactors listening to a tour guide on the foothills of Yanaimalai in Madurai.





A class in progress at the study centre managed by RCC Tirumalpuram.

in each class, competitions are also conducted to keep the students engaged.

With RC Madurai Metro Heritage supporting the RCC with digital accessories, online classes are also conducted at the centre, drawing

aspirants from various parts of the state. Tailoring and beautician courses are included at the new centre to support rural women.

The parent Rotary club takes care of the salary of the resourcepersons, and sponsors lunch

for children attending classes at the centre under its project *Metro Nourish*. “The food is cooked in the volunteers’ homes,” says Amarnath.

More recently, this Rotary club organised a one-day picnic for the members of its five Interact clubs. “We took them to heritage sites in the city and engaged a tourist guide to explain the details. Madurai is steeped in history, including the famed Meenakshi temple. It is a pity that even the locals do not have much knowledge about its treasures,” says Amarnath. Around 400 Interactors were taken to places like the Keezhadi museum which houses interesting archaeological excavations, Yanaimalai (a hill resembling a sitting elephant) and Samanarmalai, both home to Jain and Hindu monuments.

The club is planning a traffic awareness campaign involving Interactors. The students will sensitise road users with placards and flashmobs at traffic signals near their schools. “It is all about inspiring young people to take ownership of their communities,” says Amarnath. ■





DG Mahaveer Bothra and his wife Jayashree, and DGE D Devendran with PDGs ISAK Nazar, S Muthupalaniappan, G Chandramohan and past presidents at the conclave in Chennai.

RID 3233 engages past club presidents for growth

Team Rotary News

In a novel initiative to stress the importance of the vital role of past leadership in Rotary's continued success, RI District 3233 recently organised *Kalankarai Vilakku*, a conclave in Chennai dedicated to past presidents of clubs in the district. The event drew

an overwhelming response of over 450 participants, proving that the district leaders' objective of engaging and leveraging the experience of former club leaders had hit the bull's eye.

In his keynote address, past RI director AS Venkatesh used both wit and humour to engage the audience

and, highlighted the role that past club presidents can play in the district's growth as they comprised a precious group of trained talent, maturity and wisdom. Through their meaningful engagement they can contribute to the growth of not only their own clubs but also the district.

Addressing the meet RID 3233 district counsellor and PDG ISAK Nazar underlined the strategic importance of recognising and engaging past presidents in the newly carved out district's growth path. He said that RID 3233 had set a new benchmark in the Rotary world by organising such an innovative initiative and urged leaders to continue innovating all the time.

DG Mahaveer Bothra urged the Rotary community to always keep in mind the crucial mentorship role that past presidents had played as their clubs' leaders in growing Rotary's membership in India, a feat that made India proud when it came to membership growth. He shared the district's impressive achievement as global number two in membership growth and outlined his vision for taking the district's membership to an impressive 6,000-mark by the year end.

Interactive learning and recognition

A highlight of the conclave was an innovative online presentation titled

Down Memory Lane by DGE D Devendran and DGN Shriram Duvvuri. This interactive quiz on Rotary values and ethics used mobile technology for audience participation, demonstrating how modern tools can enhance engagement in Rotary meetings.

The event featured special recognition for past presidents with over 30 years of service in an acknowledgement of their sustained commitment to Rotary's ideals. A talk show on expectations from past presidents for clubs and district, moderated by PDGs A P Kanna, R Srinivasan, Dr Nandakumar, and J Venugopal, generated active participation and interesting discussion.

District learning facilitator PDG S Muthupalaniappan provided valuable insight into global grants and CSR projects, emphasising how past presidents can leverage these opportunities to enhance community service initiatives.

Setting new standards

The success of *Kalankarai Vilakku*, apart from its impressive attendance

numbers, demonstrated how thoughtful engagement of past leadership can create a powerful foundation for future growth, said DG Bothra. He added that a specially designed photo booth featuring Rotary theme logos from 2010 to the present became an instant attraction, creating a space for participants to reconnect with their presidential year memories. The inclusion of current presidents as special observers, seated on elevated platforms flanking the stage, added another dimension to the gathering.

The event not only celebrated past leadership but also reinvigorated these experienced Rotarians with a renewed sense of purpose and direction. It demonstrated how acknowledging past contributions while focusing on future opportunities can create a powerful platform for continued growth and service, said PDG Nazar.

DG Bothra thanked the event team led by chair Desiga Chozhan, secretary Lakshmanan, additional chairmen Dr S Vetrivel and Aario Babu. ■

From left: PRID AS Venkatesh, DG Bothra, PDGs Nazar and Muthupalaniappan, and DGE Devendran.



Bringing vision and water to rural Karnataka

Jaishree

In July this year, Rotary Bangalore South Parade, RID 3191, in association with optical products manufacturer Carl Zeiss, launched the project *Gift of Sight* to provide 15,000 spectacles and 1,440 intra-ocular lenses (IOLs) to individuals undergoing cataract treatment across Karnataka. The project will be implemented every year at the Sri Sathya Sai Sarala Memorial Hospital located in Sathya Sai Grama, Muddenahalli, in Chikkaballapur, 60km from Bengaluru.

“There is no cash counter at the hospital; it offers free healthcare to everyone,” says club president Ravi Chakravarthy. Highlighting the genesis of the project, he explains, “The

hospital requested our support in supplying spectacles and IOLs for treating people with vision disorders and cataracts. We reached out to our CSR partner, Carl Zeiss, and they immediately agreed to back this noble cause.”

The hospital will coordinate with the club to procure spectacles and IOLs based on requirements identified during their eye screening camps, while Carl Zeiss will ensure timely delivery. Besides, the hospital will extend its care to patients referred by the club from Rotary-organised eye camps.

Quenching the thirst of Devanahalli

The club is committed to addressing another critical need — access to clean

drinking water in Devanahalli, a rural town near Bengaluru airport. With support from Carl Zeiss, the Rotarians recently installed a ₹65-lakh water treatment plant at the town’s municipal office under *Project Ananda Sindhu*. The plant aims to provide clean drinking water to the town’s population of around 38,000, who require approximately 12 lakh litres daily, says Chakravarthy.

Devanahalli primarily relies on deep borewells, but the water is saline and unsuitable for drinking, “forcing residents to depend on public RO plants set up by the local municipal council for their water needs.” Last year, under the leadership of then-president Anand Ramchandra, the club implemented



From L: PDG Jeetendra Aneja, Miguel Gonzalez Diaz, managing director, Carl Zeiss India, and Madhusudan Sai, a spiritual leader, cheer a child who is excited with his new spectacles.

an innovative solution. The members revived a well near the Sihineeru Kere lake and constructed an integrated shallow aquifer and water treatment system. Two shallow aquifers were dug, yielding one lakh litres of water daily. With input from scientists at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), a water treatment plant was developed to remove dissolved solids, bacteria and odour, providing two lakh litres of clean water daily to approximately 10,000 residents (Read *Water divining Rotarians of RC Bangalore South Parade – Rotary News*, Nov 2023).

Building on this success, the new water treatment plant has further augmented the town’s water supply by an additional 6.4 lakh litres. “With these two systems combined, we now meet more than half the total drinking water requirement of Devanahalli. We are continuously exploring ways to expand our support and enhance water accessibility for this community,” says



From L: District secretary Raghavendra Inamdhar, DG Satish Madhavan, Hari Prasad Padaki, operations head, Carl Zeiss India, RC Bangalore South Parade president Ravi Chakravarthy, and Manoj Sharma and KV Srinivasa from Carl Zeiss, at the inauguration of *Project Ananda Sindhu* at Devanahalli town.

Chakravarthy. The GoI has taken note of this project and directed officials from its Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation to study

and replicate it in 10 other cities, including Bengaluru, where 25 lakes have been identified to augment the water supply, he adds. ■

Dental care for special children

Team Rotary News

RC Delhi Safdarjung, RID 3011, along with the NGO Smile India, organised a dental check-up programme for 100 children with special needs at the Vision Special School in the city. Besides complete dental examination by professionals, and lessons in oral hygiene, the camp also included application of fluoride to the children’s teeth to reduce the risk of developing caries. Fluoride helps



Club president Dr Priya Oberoi (seated left) with children at the dental camp.

strengthen tooth enamel, making it more resistant to acid attacks from plaque bacteria and sugars in the mouth, explains club president and dentist Priya Oberoi.

Recognising the financial limitations of the families, the club has partnered with the NGO to support treatment for children identified with cavity or any other dental disorder. ■

Meet



Suresh Saboo
Radiologist
RC Jalna Rainbow
RID 3132

Your

Governors

V Muthukumaran

Prepping Jalna students

He joined Rotary in 1985 guided by Dr Vijay Aradhye, a Rotarian. “I was impressed by its global efforts to eradicate polio, and diverse work for needy people,” says Dr Suresh Saboo.

With over 3,800 members in 97 clubs, “my target is to achieve a net membership growth of 600-plus by June-end. I want to charter at least 12 new clubs.” He wants to increase women members from the present 14.6 per cent to 20 per cent. *Project Padho Jalna* (GG: \$47,000) will teach ‘foundational literacy’ to students from Class 5–10 at government schools. “Our project, to be kicked off soon, will bridge the academic gap found in rural students,” he says. Around one lakh will be screened at the diabetes detection camps (₹12 lakh) funded by a charitable trust and clubs.

Around 50,000 girls will benefit under *Project Anaemia Chale Jao* through 100 special camps for anaemia detection and treatment. Five Happy Schools (₹20 lakh) are in different stages of completion. His TRF target is \$500,000. Hailing from a farmer’s family that had migrated from Nagpur, Saboo says, “touching the lives of less privileged gives me utmost satisfaction.”



Sharad Pai
Valve manufacturer
RC Belgaum
RID 3170



N S Mahadev Prasad
Ex-govt servant
RC Bangalore Malgudi
RID 3192



S Baskaran
CADD Engg
RC Nagapattinam
RID 2981

Focus on pisciculture

The philosophy of ‘selfless service to humanity’ drew Sharad Pai to Rotary in 1991, and since then he has led many impactful projects in North Karnataka districts. “My aim is to add 400 new members and eight new clubs this year. At present, we have 6,800 Rotarians across 145 clubs.”

In December, two GG projects (\$200,000) will be launched to train 60 farmers in cage fish rearing in brackish water. “We will provide the cage, feed and seed fish,” he says. A mobile clinic for screening diabetic retinopathy (GG: \$400,000) will be flagged off by Feb 2025. “We aim to examine 2,000 patients till June-end.” In another major initiative, 100 dialysis machines (CSR fund + GG: \$1 million) will be installed at charitable and government hospitals.

Project Water Pure (CSR funds of \$1 million) will convert sewage effluents into water that can be used for gardening and other purposes. “By this we can save at least 1 MLD of potable water.” *Project Bringing Back Smiles* will flag off four mobile dental clinics (GG: \$400,000) that will provide dentures to 1,000 people in rural areas. He aims to collect \$2 million for TRF.

South Asia Peace Conclave

Rotary is set for an explosive growth in the newly-carved RID 3192 with a huge spurt in the number of Rotarians, Rotaractors and Interactors in the next three years, says DG Mahadev Prasad. He wants to take the membership from the present 3,750 to over 4,500, and charter 30 new clubs.

A two-day South Asia Peace Conference will be held in March, and “the highlight will be a music concert by three-time Grammy Award winner Ricky Kej.” *Project Aasare* (giving shelter) will provide ambulance service to elderly patients across Bengaluru through a helpline number. With the support of Rotary Environment Foundation, *Project Adavi* (forest) is into afforestation of 1,500-acre at Nayakanahatti in Chitradurga district. “This year our target is 700 acres and the work is led by DGN Ravishankar Dakoju,” he says.

In healthcare, a heart valve bank will be set up at the Sri Sathya Sai Hospital, Chikkaballapur, for which they have applied for a GG of \$220,000.” DG Prasad aims to collect \$2 million for TRF. Having joined Rotary in 2006, “its motto of selfless service keeps me ticking.” RIDE KP Nagesh is his role model.

RYLAs to mould students

As an active Rotarian since he joined Rotary in Dec 2001, Baskaran has conducted 20 RYLAs. Now as the district leader, he has already conducted one district RYLA, while the clubs are doing 100 more to equip students with leadership qualities.

He is confident of adding 1,000 new members and starting five new clubs to push up their counts to 7,050 and 145 respectively. A 1.5 acre-pond (GG: \$120,000) is being created at a village in Puducherry. Listing out other projects, he says, a cancer detection bus (GG: ₹3 crore) which was initiated by PDG S Balaji will be flagged off in January; while an electric crematorium will be built through a GG valued at ₹1.5 crore by June-end. His target for TRF-giving is \$500,000.

In a mega initiative, Baskaran has kicked off awareness campaigns against cybercrime and drug abuse among school and college students with the support of government agencies. His target is to reach one lakh students. “We have already reached 40,000 of them. Around 100 clubs are taking part in this campaign, lifting our public image.” Four job fairs are planned, each attracting 1,000 youngsters.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Health camps to handmade crafts

Kiran Zehra

For Kumudh, a 50-year-old woman from Zari, a tribal hamlet 60km from Nashik, threading a needle was once an impossible task. “My husband has just two shirts, and the buttons kept falling off. I would try everything to get the thread into the needle but failed and had to rely on my daughter or neighbour for help,” she says. Now, with the spectacles she received at a medical camp organised in her village, Kumudh threads the needle with ease.

This medical camp, organised by RC Nasik, RID 3030,

in collaboration with the Sanay Foundation, Pune, addressed the pressing healthcare needs of Zari’s residents. Specialists in dentistry, ophthalmology, gynaecology and general medicine provided free consultation to over 250 villagers. Fifty people, like Kumudh, received free spectacles, while 40 others were

identified for cataract surgeries, which the club will fund.

“The setup was simple, with tables, chairs and cloth partitions, but the purpose was to provide much-needed healthcare to the community,” says Vinayak Deodhar, a club member. Coordinated by club member Makarand Chindhade under the guidance of club

With the nearest PHC 30km away, villagers struggle to access medical care, especially women who need awareness on menstrual health and hygiene.

Omprakash Rawat
President, RC Nasik

A tribal woman receives medical advice at the health camp organised by RC Nasik.





Flea market organised by the club.

president Omprakash Rawat, the camp was a response to a request from the village sarpanch. “With the nearest primary health centre 30km away, villagers struggle to access medical care, especially women who need awareness on

menstrual health and hygiene,” explains Rawat.

This camp is part of the club’s sustained efforts to uplift Zari where, over the years, the Rotarians have implemented transformative initiatives, including smokeless *chullahs*, solar

street lights, water conservation projects and toilet construction.

Since 2019, the club has also been running a farmers’ market every Sunday. A special event was organised in October to support local women’s self-help groups and tribal entrepreneurs. In collaboration with the Maharashtra government’s Tribal Development Corporation, the market featured over 50 women entrepreneurs showcasing products under the ‘Shabari’ brand, including homemade chutneys, papads, embroidery and bead jewellery. With over 1,000 visitors, the market recorded a turnover of ₹2 lakh.

“We plan to hold similar flea markets quarterly, providing a platform for these women to showcase and sell their products, and improve their livelihoods,” says Rawat. The project was chaired by club member Rajeshwari Balajiwale. ■

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Striving for green Odisha

V Muthukumar

With an alarming rise of deforestation and growing demand for urban housing in and around Bhubaneswar, the city's Rotaractors have been disbursing seed balls for the last three years in groups. "Our aim is not only to create a green, sustainable environment, but also educate the public on the need to nurture trees and preserve our ecosystem," says Mukesh Samal, club advisor, RAC Bhubaneswar Royal, RID 3262.

This year (2024–25), the club entered into a partnership with IG Drones, a local company, which has provided two drones for aerial disbursal of seed balls. "Unlike the last two years where we disbursed over 10,000 seed balls through manual work, this time we have already scattered 20,000 seed balls and have a target to reach 50,000 disbursals. Such a huge leap in our greening efforts is possible only through drones," explains Samal. Apart from 35 Rotaractors, around 20–25 volunteers from different NGOs are involved in seed ball disbursal on riverbeds, dried ponds, urban areas, villages, barren lands and denuded forests.

In the coming months, the club will rope in students from city schools and colleges, apart from NGO volunteers, for making seed balls at

a community hall. "We thank our partner company for leasing their drones for free as that has enabled us to reach out to far-flung areas with good results," he says.

Every year in October, *Project Daan Utsav* celebrates the joy of giving. It is a week-long project



starting from Oct 2 and held in different venues with different themes. “An elaborate dinner was served to around 50 students of the Odisha Association of the Deaf School this year. We staged small rallies at three places across the city to create awareness on cervical cancer. A team of 26 Rotaractors held aloft placards and banners that drove home the message of vaccinating young girls



Enthusiastic volunteers at work.



Left: Rotaractors making seed balls.

Below: The project team of RAC Bhubaneswar Royal.



against cancer. We also engaged the public at these places to spread the message,” explains Samal.

On the third leg of *Daan Utsav*, Rotaractors rallied and spoke to the public on mental health issues at a busy locality in Bhubaneswar.

“We distributed 200 handbills to the people and urged them to take care of their mental health through preventive steps.” The club has a plan to hold a quiz competition for college students in January, “but this project is still in the drafting stage,” says club president Som Shastry.

Support from parent Rotary

Their parent Rotary, RC Bhubaneswar Royal led by its president Bibhuti Kar, is extending both moral and material support to the Rotaractors to take up impactful projects. “Rtns Pratap Chaudhary and Ajay Patnaik are of great help to us in planning and executing service activities. Through our network of friends and parent Rotary club, we mobilise funds for our projects,” says Samal.

An executive at the state department of Housing and Urban Development, Mukesh Samal is a dual member and has been a Rotaractor for 12 years. “Rotaract is like a family to me and I enjoy doing community work. I will shift my work to Rotary in the next two years,” he says, as he wants to expand his service activities. ■



Habits to improve our habitat

Preeti Mehra

Easy does it. You can also be eco-friendly.

An environmentalist friend has wisely said that green habits should be gently inculcated rather than pushed down people's throats. Her take is that humans like to break the rules and dislike being dictated. So, any harsh list of dos and don'ts will likely be discarded or forgotten quickly. The more rebellious may even follow all the don'ts diligently and avoid the dos!

That said, how does one make green habits a part of our lives and that of our children? As we know, a habit is a settled tendency or usual manner of behaviour or an acquired mode of behaviour that has become nearly or completely involuntary. Repetition of any action can make any activity a default setting for our body's system. For example, waking up early, brushing teeth before going to bed, and so on..

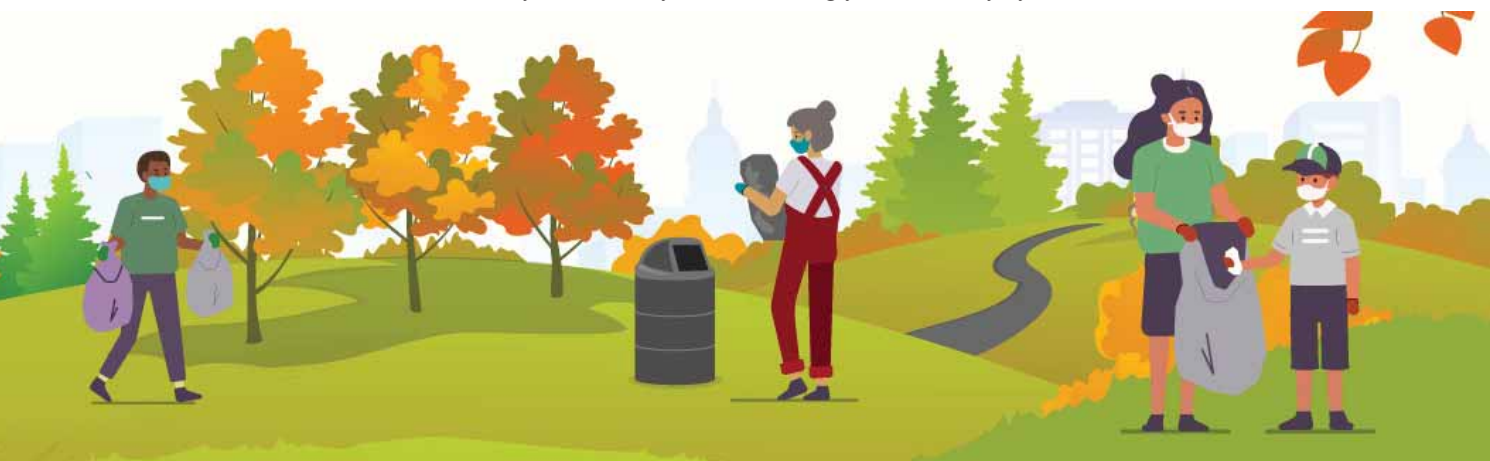
Similarly, one can start by making green habits part of our family's routine. Slowly, we can make it a standing operating procedure. Luckily, when it comes to environmentally conscious behaviour, simple acts can make a difference when they become part of our regular response. Here are a few things we can gently remind ourselves and those around us to do to become environment-friendly citizens. You may be aware of some of the acts listed below, but it does no harm to be reminded of them. So read on.

One habit we can readily embrace is reminding ourselves not to waste electricity. Switching off lights when leaving a room and turning off the TV when not in use are habits worth cultivating, considering that 40 per cent of global CO2 emissions come from power generation. So, every time you waste electricity, you needlessly and unknowingly add

to the emissions into the atmosphere. The same goes for equipment, appliances and air conditioners at home or in the office.

Being thoughtful and conscious can conserve electricity. For example, standing in front of the refrigerator with the door open is best avoided. It has been estimated that as much as one-third of the cooled air inside escapes each time you open the door. So, it might not be a bad idea to figure out what you want to take from the fridge rather than open the door and begin considering your options. Of course, this is not always possible when someone else has loaded the trays, but the idea is to minimise the time you leave the door open.

And yes, you will be doing Planet Earth and your wallet a great favour by buying energy-efficient ACs, refrigerators and fans. Similarly, you could switch to LED





lights, which consume less power than conventional lighting.

To encourage the family to conserve electricity, you could perhaps take them out for a celebratory dinner or a film when you receive a down-sized power bill!

Water is a precious natural resource that we take for granted. We can substantially reduce our consumption by ensuring that the plumbing does not leak and that taps are turned off during and after use. We can also remember to turn off the faucet while brushing our teeth. Filling your water glass halfway and taking more water if you are still thirsty is better than throwing away excess water into the sink.

Those living in gated communities and apartment complexes can get together to persuade the RWA to have a plant recycling wastewater that can

be used in the garden, for washing cars, etc. Most housing societies have provisions for rain harvesting. If yours doesn't, you must collectively insist on introducing the practice.

Segregating household waste should become a habit that everyone must follow. According to official estimates, urban India produces 1.15 lakh tonnes of municipal waste per day. Of the waste collected, 50 per cent is treated, and 18 per cent ends up in landfills. However, 31.17 per cent of the total waste generated remains unaccounted for.

As a responsible citizen, you can help by segregating garbage in your home to help with waste reuse, recycling, and scientific disposal. The two broad categories you must remember while separating garbage are dry and wet waste. The former refers to empty bottles, cans, clothing, wood, metals and paper. The latter includes all organic waste — food items, seeds, vegetable and fruit peels, etc. Sanitary and medical waste should be disposed of separately, ditto for hazardous and corrosive household substances. E-waste must be handed over separately and not mixed with the other categories.

Waste segregation plays a crucial role in its management, and the government has repeatedly stressed the importance of citizen participation in this effort. Let us do our bit to make our cities cleaner and greener.

One resource often wasted is food. It is estimated that in India 40 per cent of food goes waste either in storage or after it is cooked. Visit any marriage hall after a wedding or a social meet, and you can see the food that goes into the garbage heap. While government must ensure that food grains are protected from rodents, we can do our bit to avoid

food wastage. We should be conscious about the portions we order at restaurants and cook at home.

When it comes to food, it would be better to make it a habit to only buy local produce. This not only encourages local farmers but also reduces the carbon footprint caused by transporting goods from afar.

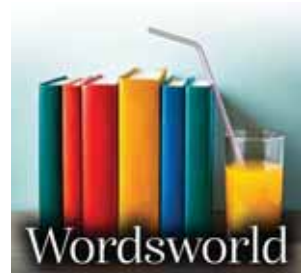
Can any article on green habits not mention plastic? There is enough said about carrying reusable cloth and paper bags. Suffice it to say that the fewer plastic bags we use, the better because they end up in our rivers and lakes, polluting the earth and harming animals, birds and marine life. Disposables made of plastic must be avoided at all costs. One-time-use plastic bottles, cups, plates and cutlery end up in landfills. So, insist on glass or metal bottles, reusable cups or biodegradable alternatives.

These are just a few suggestions; I am sure you can easily discover many more tips from experts in the field. For my part, I will leave you with this thought: let 2025 be the year of the green citizen, by habit and by design.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



Jaffna Eyes... through Jaffna eyes



VV Ganeshanathan brings us a moving testament of a time that destroyed a people and their dreams.



Sandhya Rao

It is the early 1980s. Sashi, short for Sashikala, is almost 16 and set on becoming a doctor. She has three older brothers and one younger. They live with their parents in a happy home in Jaffna, at the northern tip of Sri Lanka. Their close friend, K, lives nearby. Just a year older than Sashi, he too plans to study medicine. And then the civil war erupts.

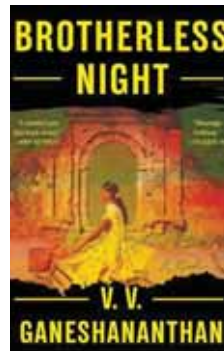
VV Ganeshanathan's novel of this time, *Brotherless Night*, won the Women's Prize for Fiction, 2024. One of the judges, Nigerian writer Ayobami Adebayo, says it is: 'A powerful book that has the intimacy of a memoir, the range and ambition of an epic, and tells a truly unforgettable story about the Sri Lankan civil war.' Sashi is the narrator of this work based on 16 years of research into a war that bled into the homes and hearts of ordinary people. Vasugi Ganeshanathan shows, through

Sashi's eyes, how this battle was not fought on some distant frontlines, but on streets, in homes, universities and libraries, in the marketplace and the forests. There was nowhere to hide. What had started as a demand for equal opportunities to work and to study, to recognise Tamil and Tamils, and to give their province autonomy ultimately became an unstoppable river of some one lakh bodies and over eight lakh displacements.

Dated New York, 2009, *Brotherless Night* opens with the line: 'I recently sent a letter to a terrorist I know.' The narrator goes on to say, 'We were civilians first. You must understand: that word, *terrorist*, is too simple for the history we have lived — ... We begin with this word. But I promise that you will come to see that it cannot contain everything that has happened. ... while I am no longer the version of myself who met with terrorists every day, I also want you to understand that when I was that woman, when two terrorists encountered each other in my world, what they said first was simply hello. Like any two people you might know or love.'

The import of these words registered with greater clarity only after reading the book; certain images too began to get sharper: gun-toting suicide bombers began to come framed in the context of families and secure homes, lines of LTTE cadres in military fatigues recalled schools and music and university libraries, unending streams of refugees arriving in Mandapam and Dhanushkodi transformed into persons with their own lives and loves. Superb storytelling by the author leads the reader to see the reality of trauma and psychological devastation.

As Sashi takes us through the years of her life as a school and then medical student in Jaffna, we see her hopes and dreams subserve the demands made by militants. Even before she can complete her medical degree, she is called upon to tend to wounded 'Tigers', as also civilians, in a medical clinic. As a 'daughter' of the revolution, and with two brothers in the movement, she has no choice. Besides, she is moved by moral responsibility as a future medical practitioner to treat the sick and the wounded, whoever they may be. Over time, she observes the actions of militants as well as of government troops and soldiers of the IPKF in all their shades of darkening grey, even as she has no time to mourn the death of a beloved elder



brother caught up in anti-Tamil riots in Colombo. Simultaneously she sees the boy she loves slowly get drafted into the movement and eventually giving up his life in a hunger strike protesting the IPKF. He is referred to only as 'K'. Meanwhile, she finds the perfect mentor in Dr Anjali Premachandran, her anatomy professor, who after initially supporting the *iyakkam* (movement), is disillusioned by its atrocities and becomes a fearless critic, even as she boldly stands up against ethnic soldiers.

You hear the voices of the people of Jaffna. Individual voices, individual horrors, personal tragedies and grief, the confusion among young people, the sundering and separating of families, the loss of relationships, the longing for security of home and garden and pets and friends, the eroding of trust, the uncertainty of life, even joys and dreams and laughter... *Brotherless Night* brings it all home. It tells the story of ordinary people, women, teachers, students, mothers, shopkeepers, with compassion.

There was a video rental place in Chennai that we frequented regularly. It was run by a Sri Lankan Tamil and, as I read the reference to 'Jaffna eyes' in the book, I recalled his eyes. Jaffna eyes. There, I once bumped into a man who looked very familiar but whom I didn't know. It was Anton Balasingham, the LTTE ideologue. We were that close to the civil war.

You will meet him and many other familiar people in *Brotherless*

Night. They are given different names but you will recognise them. K, for instance, is modelled on Thileepan, an LTTE military leader who died after going on hunger strike in support of demands the militant command felt India could force the Sri Lankan government to concede. He was just short of his 24th birthday. Anjali Premachandran is modelled on Rajani Thiranagama (nee Rajasingham), a professor of anatomy at the University of Jaffna and a human rights activist assassinated by the LTTE for calling them out for their atrocities. She was 35.

In an interview with the author on the Women's Prize website, Ganeshanathan is asked what inspired her to write this novel. 'I grew up listening to the stories of friends and family who had lived through this period in Jaffna,' she says. 'I was especially moved by the stories of women who worked to keep their families safe under brutal circumstances. I was also inspired by a nonfiction book called *The Broken Palmyra*, in which four Tamil professors at the University of Jaffna documented the violence civilians endured at the hands of majority Sinhalese-dominated state security forces, Indian peacekeepers, and Tamil



militant groups.' One of those professors was Rajani Thiranagama. *The Broken Palmyra* carries the following dedication: 'In keeping with the wish expressed by the late Dr Rajani Thiranagama, this book is dedicated to the young men and women and the

ordinary voiceless people, whose lives were destroyed to no purpose in the course of the unfinished saga of the people of Sri Lanka.'

Speaking about the challenges of writing, the author says, '... much of the book's source material is violent, and I was writing about the emotional effects of that violence. The biggest challenge of writing this book was depicting that brutality honestly, without either sensationalizing it or diminishing it. I needed to balance that with the stories of those who resisted.'

In an article for *In Conversation* (June 21, 2024), Prof Ankhi Mukherjee points out that while novels such as *Traitor* by child-soldier Shobasakthi, *The Story of a Brief Marriage* by Anuk Arudpragasam and *The Seven Moons of Maali Almeida* by Shehan Karunatilaka deal with this time period, none of them revisits 'what Ganeshanathan calls the "country of grief" to show how women suffer and survive. They don't touch on a "terrified and empowered" response such as Sashi's to the vacuum created by missing fathers, brainwashed brothers, or radicalised friends.'

Brotherless Night moves the reader through its straightforward rendering of a charged and complex truth tale.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist

“ Individual voices, personal tragedies and grief, the confusion among young people, the longing for security of home and garden and pets and friends... *Brotherless Night* brings it all home.

Footloose and injury free

Bharat & Shalan Savur

Those who don't learn from history are condemned to repeat it. That most times we learn more from mistakes than from success is a well-known fact. Here is a unique lesson from Larsen and Toubro (L&T) which tells us that one can simply be too good for the given task.

In the 1950s, legendary Hollywood director David Lean commissioned L&T to build a bridge, as the main set for his classic war movie *The Bridge on the River Kwai* (1957). Why L&T, one might ask. We'll probably never know. It could be because it was closer to the location (Sri Lanka, then called Ceylon), and cheaper, as the payment was in Indian rupees. Or perhaps, because it was to be destroyed in any case at the climax scene?

But the climax itself was an anti-climax. Bombs went off, but the bridge did not. Take one was hence aborted. The L&T crew on location went to work on the bridge once again. Hammers and tongs were employed to undermine the bridge. The second take was successful. L&T established a principle: L&T builds for a lifetime. As must you. Take care of your inner engineering.

Fortify your foundation

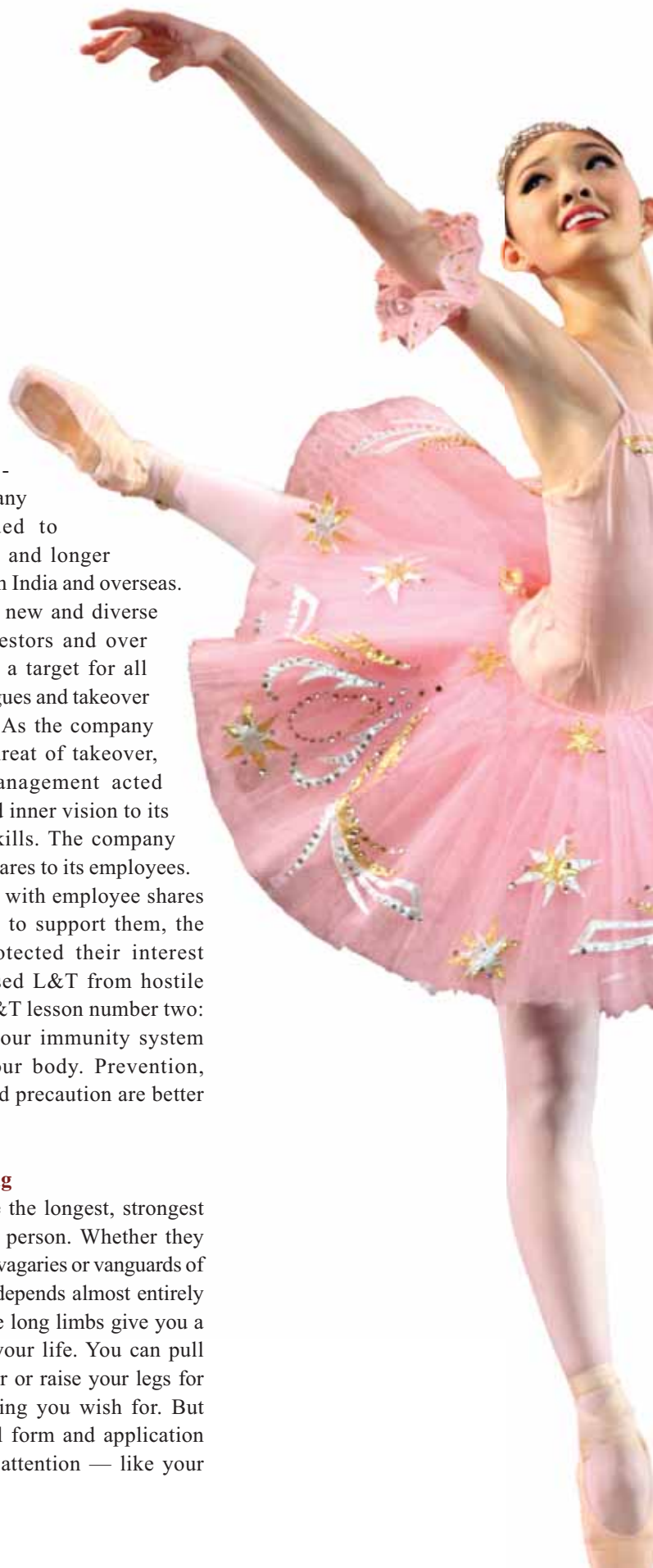
Over the years, as a corporate L&T made giant strides and became a

highly successful company and continued to obtain larger and longer contracts from India and overseas.

It attracted a new and diverse breed of investors and over time became a target for all kinds of intrigues and takeover manoeuvres. As the company was under threat of takeover, the L&T management acted swiftly to add inner vision to its innovative skills. The company distributed shares to its employees. Sure enough, with employee shares and numbers to support them, the founders protected their interest and immunised L&T from hostile takeovers. L&T lesson number two: Strengthen your immunity system to fortify your body. Prevention, protection and precaution are better than cures.

Strong footing

Your legs are the longest, strongest parts of your person. Whether they are vagabond vagaries or vanguards of good health, depends almost entirely on you. Those long limbs give you a leverage on your life. You can pull or push, lower or raise your legs for almost anything you wish for. But their physical form and application require your attention — like your





your legs strong for as long as possible. Remember to inhale through the exercise activity and exhale after you finish. Keep this cycle going:

- Lie on your left side, palms on the floor. Keep legs parallel to floor. Lift your right leg up. Lower without touching your left leg. Rep: 20 times. With your toes pointed out. Likewise with toes flexed.
- Revert to above starting position. Bend your right knee towards your body. Extend right leg straight out again parallel to left leg. Lift your right leg straight up. Revert to start. Rep: 20 times.
- Grab your right leg with right hand and touch heel to your bottom. Hold position for one minute.
- Still on your left side, supported by your left palm on the floor, hold right foot with right hand and place it in front of your left leg. Lift left leg an inch from the floor with toes pointed out. Repeat exercise with foot flexed. Ensure that the left leg's inner thigh faces the ceiling. Rep: 20 times.

Now, repeat this exercising sequence with your right side on the floor.

Lessons from the leg-end

Dancing and December go together. Hand-in-hand, cheek-to-cheek. But hang on — just a sec. Out there, on the tiny dance floor, folks are doing their own thing. The song *Kung Fu Fighting* is playing. And people are prancing around. But is their performance borrowed from a film fight sequence? Or is it a new dance format?

Meanwhile, out on the dance floor, there is choreographed chaos in motion. Disco died in the USA with John Travolta's *Saturday Night Fever*. Its theme song *Stayin' Alive* is now recommended as a silent musical accompaniment for doctors performing an emergency CPR because its 103



Your legs are the longest, strongest parts of your person. But their physical form and application require your attention — like your vehicle does.

beats per minute match the required heart rate. I know that music heals. Likewise, so does its beats.

Professional ballet dancers start young. And like fellow gymnasts, retire early, before age 20. Many of them do that because of the 'ballet-foot syndrome'. A health hazard that goes automatically with their tiptoe posture. Jane Fonda found this out the hard way. She took up ballet to impress her then boyfriend. And fell in love with the former. Her on-and-off affair with ballet continued along with her acting roles. Her injury was an accident waiting to happen. Wearing high heeled shoes, she ran for a film scene. Running to chase a helicopter, the actress fell and fractured her foot in the process. This is why we have kept our floor exercises safely horizontal. This way, they don't cause injury. And are effective to boot.

A lesson from the actress: Modern 'fast' dancing is a high impact activity. It can injure hip, leg and feet joints. Hence, forget high heels. Sneak in sneakers for better suspension. Furthermore, such dances require regular exercise-like warm-ups. Not whisky and starters. Take care. Have a ball. Season's greetings.

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

vehicle does. Naturally so, for they get you where you want to be.

Our sheer dependence on them as we walk through our life's journey, coupled with ageing, weaken our legs' muscle and fibre. Starting now is your best option to keep your legs mobile. Here's what we have done in class and in person for the past 30 years and counting: In addition to aerobic exercises like cycling and walking which we've already written about in our earlier columns, we've kept our legs firm and flexible with these supplementary exercises. Similarly, keep



RID 3142

RC Thana West

Dr Lucky Kasat, a Rotarian, gave a talk on drug de-addiction to create awareness among 60 students and parents at the Jhaveri Thanawala School for special children with speech and hearing impairment.



Club matters



RID 3170

RC Gokak

Wheelchairs were distributed to physically-challenged students in the presence of Gokak tahsildar Mohan Basme. The project lifted the public image of the club in this taluk HQ of Belagavi district of Karnataka.

RID 3191

RC Ramanagaram

Over 5,000 notebooks, dictionaries and shoes were distributed to students at 25 government schools of Ramanagara taluk and a Tibetan school at Bylakuppe, Mysuru district, Karnataka.





RID 3201

RC Coimbatore Zenith

District general secretary Subramanian and AG Rajan Arumugam inaugurated a library (₹1.26 lakh) in Kanjapally village which would benefit over 4,500 people living here.

RID 3150

RC Banjara Hills Hyderabad

Umbrellas were distributed to 1,500 children from government schools, foundations and those affected by HIV for them to attend classes even during rains.



RID 3234

RC Madras Traditional

Scholarships worth ₹2.31 lakh were given to 72 students from three schools — Smt K Sugnibai Sanatana Dharma Girls HS School, Ganeshbai Galada Girls HS School and The TTV Higher Secondary School.



RID 3261

RC Raigarh Royale

A Garba was organised on the ninth day of Navratri at the Agroha Dham with Bollywood singer Sumedha Karmahe as the emcee. State minister OP Choudhary gave prizes to the dance winners. A lucky draw was held.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

District Wise TRF Contribution

As on October, 2024

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

Source: RI South Asia Office

(in US Dollars)

District Number		Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
2981		40,403	5,481	0	38	45,921
2982		25,755	4,033	10,421	13,031	53,240
3000		16,410	2,671	1,000	243,107	263,188
3011		34,433	4,980	26,238	382,487	448,139
3012		1,017	151	1,500	97,500	100,168
3020		44,768	8,862	21,000	4,857	79,487
3030		8,972	350	2,000	23,000	34,322
3040		1,899	90	0	15,717	17,707
3053		21,211	300	0	0	21,511
3055		17,806	1,515	2,071	60,050	81,442
3056		3,592	93	60	133	3,877
3060		96,418	5,683	1,299	67,783	171,182
3070		9,514	582	0	0	10,096
3080		10,059	4,792	17,384	9,561	41,796
3090		7,563	56	0	0	7,619
3100		15,819	2,614	0	11,902	30,335
3110		7,307	623	0	91,659	99,589
3120		18,869	100	8,337	0	27,307
3131		253,060	4,769	13,000	63,463	334,292
3132		25,018	1,716	0	4,569	31,303
3141		260,632	21,098	77,000	974,093	1,332,822
3142		248,753	14,495	7,560	135,946	406,755
3150		55,226	10,018	7,250	295,119	367,613
3160		1,968	1,113	0	5,787	8,868
3170		27,613	17,720	2,000	58,566	105,898
3181		28,333	5,158	0	0	33,492
3182		14,571	1,574	0	0	16,145
3191		20,182	2,283	0	1,323	23,788
3192		47,911	1,511	1,000	22,976	73,398
3201		46,868	18,555	3,190	79,150	147,764
3203		21,912	5,400	15,000	4,690	47,003
3204		6,769	2,361	0	0	9,131
3211		11,886	3,081	0	9,398	24,364
3212		123,274	11,254	1,000	105,483	241,011
3231		11,695	3,857	31,238	10,000	56,790
3233		7,845	7,701	0	160,983	176,528
3234		48,311	21,235	21,459	467,063	558,068
3240		92,793	18,843	36,000	13,870	161,507
3250		114,181	3,351	1,000	20,115	138,646
3261		1,068	258	0	5,205	6,531
3262		7,674	668	0	0	8,342
3291		65,432	5,937	17,500	6,514	95,383
3220	Sri Lanka	32,009	2,619	4,052	3,975	42,656
3271	Pakistan	7,814	20,036	0	6,300	34,150
3292	Nepal	40,494	18,869	30,001	47,833	137,198
63	(former 3272)	250	328	0	0	578
64	(former 3281)	1,875	1,715	1,000	1,050	5,640
65	(former 3282)	371	723	0	0	1,094

* Undistricted

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Rotary





Nostalgia for a Delhi of yore

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

LBW



Having lived in Delhi since 1958 I have some very fond memories of it, before it started becoming a gas chamber about 40 years ago. Very few people now remember Delhi as it was before the Asian Games of 1982. Those games turned the old bucolic and bureaucratic Delhi into a boom town and it has not stopped booming since then. The fixed population of Delhi today is around three and a half crore. Another crore or so people float in and out annually. In 1980 the population was barely 70 million, mostly rural, living in the areas of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh surrounding Delhi like Gurgaon and Noida. Indira Gandhi's farmhouse, by the way, was on the very southwest outskirts of Delhi. Today it's south central. All those rural areas have been assimilated into a single toxic zone called the National Capital Region (NCR) and they are fully urban now. The NCR is so huge that when you fly into Delhi you can see the pollution the region causes rising up to 15,000 feet and extending some 200 miles in all directions. This is largely because in 1980 there were barely a lakh motorised vehicles. Today there are around three million.

The Delhi of yesteryear, till the early 1980s had two outstanding features: clear blue skies and clean air, both of which were free; and some wonderful restaurants that were not. The sky is still there but it's grey-yellow and not blue. Some of the old restaurants, too, are there but they are a shadow of their former selves, not frequented even by old timers who nurse their private memories and talk about them very infrequently. Food, after all, has a distinctive way of troubling you — and in not just gastrointestinal ways. Nostalgia is especially acute if you took your girlfriends to these restaurants and even got them to pay the bill once in a while.

One of these girls forwarded me photos of some paintings of Delhi's old restaurants. These brought back a lot of mouthwatering memories. Wengers for pastries. Nirula's pizzas. De Paul's chilled flavoured milk. Karim's kebabs. Moti Mahal for tandoori food. And so on.

In those days the restaurants were almost all owned by Punjabis who had come over after the Partition. They invented what is now called *mughlai* food. Its main feature was lots of oil, white butter and cream. It was utterly delicious, and tasted even better because no one cared then about cholesterol, LDL and such like. Food and medicine were kept strictly apart in our minds and every morsel that we put into our mouths wasn't accompanied by a nasty guilt pang. And this was true of even our parents and grandparents. They ate to their heart's content and died happy.

These restaurants also had clean bathrooms. In those days when there were no public restrooms, the men could go behind a tree or face walls or simply against a stationary bus of which there were always several. But there was absolutely nothing for women and these restaurants were a godsend. You went in, ordered a coke and chips for about two rupees and used the loos. Some even had air-conditioning.

One of the biggest advantages of these old restaurants was that they had phones with subscriber trunk dialling without STD locks. Those came in the 1980s. These restaurants let you call for an exorbitant two rupees thinking it was a local call. But they couldn't see where you were dialling, which could be anywhere in India. And you could talk for as long as you wanted. I was a master of this deception. But I always left a generous tip. It seemed the honourable thing to do. ■



Rotary District 3212



ROTARY KARMAVEERAR KAMARAJAR HEART CARE BUS



Heart care bus is a Clinic on wheels. It goes to multiple locations throughout the Rotary International District 3212.

Rotary International District 3212 shares the vision of 'Karmaveerar Bharat Ratna K.Kamarajar' in uplifting the quality of life in rural Tamilnadu. Rotary Heart Care bus takes the privilege to serve the underprivileged villages and towns to take Heart Check-ups and save their lives by availing due medical treatment for heart problems. Thanks to Kauvery Hospital, Tirunelveli.

HEART CARE BUS FEATURES

- Digitalized BMI Vital Screening
- Electro Cardiogram (ECG)
- Echo Cardiogram
- Defibrillator
- Physician Consultation
- Telemedicine Consultation

HEART CAMP DETAILS as on 11.11.2024

No. of Beneficiaries

3,052

No. of ECG Done

1445

No. of ECHO Done

753

No. of Patients Referred to Hospital

183



GG- 2341081

International Partners: Rotary Club of LAS VEGAS WON RID District 5300

Primary Contact :
Rtn.A.S.P.Arumugaa Selvan

International Partner
PDG.Rtn.Chehab El Awar



LEKHA on/ Dec 24/ Rotary

Clubs to Contact for Heart Care Camp Rtn. T. SUDALAIVEL - +91 97509 55445 Rotary club of Virudhunagar Idhayam

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