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Rotary 

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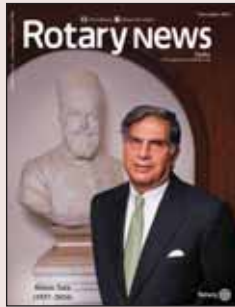
E-version rate Reduced

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

₹420 to ₹324

Attractive cover pictures

The cover portrait of Ratan Tata and his obit article in the November issue are impressive. His childhood and educational background, the simplicity and grace with which he lived and the details of his philanthropy are well-explained. His sincerity, depth of knowledge and his legendary courtesy were awesome. Good to know he was an Arch Klumph member.



article make it an interesting read. I also got to know that Tata was an AKS member.

The WordsWorld article is nice. Thank you very much for sharing this article.

Sanjay Bari, RC Chopda — D 3030

The cover picture of Ratan Tata was superb. Also, the editor's note, *The stuff legends are made of*, deserves appreciation.

Daniel Chittilappilly, RC Kaloor — D 3201

The December issue has an attractive cover picture of an anganwadi. Kudos to RID 3012 for its vision to use various facets of technology, including AI, in anganwadis so that the underprivileged children get a meaningful experience and the expectant mothers have proper healthcare and nutrition. The dashboard loaded with study material, quiz stories, play material, poems and jingles will hold the interest of children.

KMK Murthy, RC Secunderabad — D 3150

I was overwhelmed to see the picture of late Ratan Tata on the cover page of *Rotary Samachar*. After the death of Tata, I was looking forward to reading something on this iconic industrialist in our magazine.

After reading the editor's note and the cover story, many new aspects of his life became known to me. Information which was not available in other magazines, TV channels and dailies was found in this article. Struggles, opposition, insults and failures were turned into stepping stones of success by Ratan Tata. His life teaches us to be both focused and flexible to face the challenges in life. The pictures accompanying the

RID 3040 has initiated a commendable project in Madhya Pradesh (Dec issue) to eliminate illiteracy with the support of the state government. The book Akshar Pothi will enthuse an illiterate to get basic education. After this, they will switch over to another level of learning and become literate. The other RI districts could follow suit with this example from RID 3040 to bring in 100 per cent literacy. With better literacy rates, progress can be achieved for the country.

RID 3040 Rotarians deserve appreciation and I wish them success in this great initiative. Hope they will cross a milestone in their journey soon.

S Mohan, RC Madurai West — D 3000

Your December issue has interesting articles. One article talks about the philosophy of giving. All Rotarians must follow the philosophy of giving as it is based on the karma theory. The more we give, the more we gain. The second article *Striving for green Odisha* is about making seed balls. Our club has taken up this

Membership decline

Editor Rasheeda's article *Startling fall in numbers, a huge concern* (Nov issue) is an eyeopener for the leaders of Rotary. The majority of RI presidents and high officials are from the US which also houses its headquarters in Evanston. It is a matter of serious concern that our membership is falling drastically in the place Rotary was born.

RIPE Mario de Camargo says that the US membership has fallen

by 29 per cent. He adds that Rotary has lost 100,000 Rotarians in 20 years. Whereas India registered a growth of 103 per cent, and 638 new clubs were added in a span of two decades. This article provides a lot of research material to Rotarians around the world.

*Tomi Eapen
RC Alleppey — D 3211*

Your excellent coverage of our club projects has truly captured the

essence of what RC Pune Central stands for.

The new design and layout are not only visually appealing but also enhance the overall readability and impact of the magazine. A lot of thought and creativity have gone into every detail, and you and your team's dedication is appreciated.

Your work serves as an inspiration and a testament to the spirit of Rotary, bringing projects

LETTERS

project with schoolchildren and scattered seed balls at roadside areas, barren lanes and dried urban areas over the last four years. Every club must take a huge effort to support the mission of making India green.

Piyush Doshi, RC Belur — D 3291

In a novel initiative RID 3233 organised a conclave for all the past presidents of clubs in Chennai titled *Kalangarai Vilakku* (light house). DG Mahaveer Bothra recalled the mentorship role of the past presidents. The event was held in appreciation of their efforts. Congrats to RID 3233 for arranging this wonderful conclave.

N Jagatheesan, RC Eluru — D 3020

The cover story *Rotary introduces India's first AI-integrated Anganwadi* in the Dec issue is impressive. I am happy to learn that AI techniques were adopted for a better understanding of the learning abilities of poor children. The project called *Nanhe Kadmo Ki Udayan* can transform the learning system of anganwadis in India. Truly, a positive initiative by RID 3012.

Likewise, the initiative of RC Jubilee Hills, RID 3150, (Nov issue) in providing bicycles has given students at Pakur village, Jharkhand, an effective means to commute to and from school. But the initiative could have been more effective if the club had arranged a common transport for them during rains.

Niranjan Kar, RC Bhubaneswar — D 3262

I very much appreciate the editor's note and the cover story on late Industrialist Ratan Tata in the Nov issue. The pictures in the cover story are marvellous. It was interesting to read the interview of RIPE Mario de Camargo, which is really a collector's item to be preserved. As Rotarians, we are proud to serve the global communities through TRF.

Soumitra Chakraborty, RC Calcutta Universe — D 3291

and achievements to life. Thank you for your commitment to excellence.

*Madhusudan Rathi
RC Pune Central — D 3131*

The district-wise TRF contributions and membership summary published monthly are quite informative. Likewise, RI South Asia Office can provide information on RI dues collection and the expense allocation pertaining to

collection on a half-yearly basis to all the members through our Rotary magazine.

*Jacob Mathew
RC Erumeli — D 3211*

Have you read **Rotary News Plus**?

This online publication is sent to the e-mail ID of every subscribing member. Read **Rotary News Plus** on our website www.rotarynewsonline.org

Info on social media pages

Numerous Rotary club and district Facebook Pages and Instagram accounts have been closed by Meta without prior notice. After RI worked with Meta to find a solution, several Rotary-related pages were restored.

If social media pages of your clubs/districts have been closed, please complete the form on this link — on.rotary.org/fbissue — and submit to add the pages to Meta's 'allow list' within their Brand Rights Protection tool. RI will act on this. The admins will receive an email with specific instructions (from Meta's guidance) and an official letter from RI to support their restoration efforts.

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**.*

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Bring the joy

I always walk into meetings at my home club of McMurray, Pennsylvania, with a smile on my face.

A few years ago, someone arrived late. Instead of scolding the person, we cheered. Since then, we've made it a tradition to applaud all members when they arrive for meetings. It's tough not to smile with a greeting like that.

There's nothing more powerful for engaging and retaining members than a club that's vibrant, welcoming, and yes, fun.

Think back to what drew you to Rotary. Chances are, it wasn't just the service projects or professional networking. It was the people — the friendships, the shared laughter, and the joy of working toward a common purpose. That's what keeps us coming back.

If you're looking for that sense of joy in your meetings, don't be afraid to ask yourself and your fellow members some tough questions. If you were a prospective member, would you join your current club? It's a powerful question but don't stop there.

Do members of your club feel that they belong? Are your meetings fun? If not, what can you do about it together?

At your next meeting or event, try something new to bring out a few extra smiles. It's the simple things that create lasting bonds and make clubs simply irresistible.

Here's one example of a club moving in the right direction. The Rotary Club of Fukushima, Japan, has been combining environmental responsibility with

community fun since 2021. In Japan, people have made picking up trash into a sport known as SpoGomi, and every year the club hosts a game. This year, more than 400 participants cheered each other on while they came together to improve their community.

This event is an excellent example of how Rotary clubs can have fun, make a difference, and raise awareness for broader global challenges, all at the same time. And the inclusive, family-friendly format allows people of all ages to participate.

When we enjoy what we do, that energy becomes contagious. It's what attracts new members and keeps our clubs strong and engaged. It helps people feel that they belong.

Retention and culture go hand-in-hand. The healthier our club culture, the more likely members are to stay. Rotary magazine is an outstanding resource for inspiration on how to enhance our club culture and deepen member engagement. I encourage you to explore the stories and strategies in these pages, drawing from other clubs' successes to find ideas that work for you.

Together, we can create a more engaged, enjoyable, and inclusive Rotary that every member can feel proud to be part of. Let's continue with renewed commitment and enthusiasm, living *The Magic of Rotary*.

Stephanie A Urchick
President, Rotary International



An Institute for all tastes

The best part of the Kochi Zone Institute convened by RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and chaired by PDG John Daniel was reserved for the last. It was the delicious *sadya* feast — a traditional, elaborate Kerala meal — the participants were given for lunch on the final day. For one, it was a huge relief to have a meal while seated; where is the fun in holding onto a heavy china plate, balancing the food, spoon and fork on it, while standing? Served on the banana leaf, the aroma wafting from the delicacies served, combined with the flavour of the leaf, to satisfy the most demanding palate. Not only was the food served delicious, it was the manner and love with which it was served that bowled over the participants. The women serving the extra helpings hovered around you, keeping a close watch on the disappearing items from your banana leaf and offered to refill it with a warm smile. It felt like every guest was a *mappillai* (groom) at his own wedding! The *appams* at breakfast were perfect too!

Now that credit has been given to the most important aspect of any event — food — Team Kochi members were found hitting the ball out of the park on other aspects as well. Take for instance, transport, which is a major headache at many Rotary events. Even though one can understand the dilemma of the organisers handling a huge number of delegates, the 1,200-odd delegates in Kochi found that the wheels carrying them from various hotels to the venue and back, as also airport and railway station transfers, rolled smoothly and without glitches.

I'm sure it must have taken a lot of brainstorming and executing skills to achieve the results, but at the end of the day, this Institute had an eclectic mix of events to satisfy every taste, passion or preference. Whether it was the entertainment, either during the sessions or laced with the right mix of spirits in the evenings, sporting activities like the traditional Kerala

snake boat race or the half-marathon to raise funds for TRF, or service projects, the fuel which fires the imagination of so many Rotarians, they were all there. The Kerala flavour came through from the line-up of mock elephants, *chenda melam* performances, Kerala-style street food and backdrops for memorable photo opportunities.

Last, but not the least, the choice of speakers, gave the RNT team some interesting speeches to report on. Environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk, even though he took a mild potshot at the unnecessarily excessive air conditioning in the hall where the main plenary was held, was brilliant in the simplicity with which he spelt out the grave challenges we were inflicting on Planet Earth by such thoughtless acts, that triggered catastrophic consequences in the high Himalayas where he lives. Parliamentarian and Kerala boy Shashi Tharoor regaled the audience with his wit and charm — a woman delegate who had to leave urged me to send her a video recording which I declined of course — in a Q&A session where he successfully deflected a few googlies bowled by his interrogator PRID A S Venkatesh, with intelligent and fact-filled answers delivered in his impeccable diction and near-perfect English. Nobel Peace laureate and champion of children's rights Kailash Satyarthi held the audience spellbound with his heartfelt appeal to remember that "every child and every childhood matters".

The choice of the venue — Grand Hyatt Kochi, a waterfront luxury resort overlooking the backwaters of the Vembanad Lake, gets full marks too. The service the hotel staff offered was exceptional, complete with sparkling clean and stink-free women's loos at the event venue.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Message from
TRF Trustee
Chair



This year, become a regular donor

January marks a fresh start, a time to take stock of what we have achieved and plan for future success.

It is important to remember that we are in the middle of a major year for fund development. The Rotary Foundation has set an ambitious goal to grow Rotary's Endowment to \$2.025 billion by this year, 2025. This will only be possible through the generous support of every person reading this message.

January is also Vocational Service Month, when we recognise how vital each member's professional calling is to the work Rotary accomplishes.

During the Arch Klumph Society weekend in October, Gay and I were inspired by the diverse vocations represented among some of our most generous supporters. They included teachers, engineers, healthcare professionals and builders. Uniting them was a shared commitment to building a better world through The Rotary Foundation.

So many of us bring the insight of our professions into Rotary through Vocational Service. The Rotary Foundation's Cadre of Technical Advisers exemplifies this. These Rotary members use specialised skills to guide project planning, grant applications and evaluations, ensuring the projects you fund and implement are sustainable and effective.

The work of The Rotary Foundation, from safe water initiatives to literacy programmes, depends on regular giving by our members. One convenient solution for many is Rotary Direct, which provides a simple way to make monthly, quarterly, or annual contributions. This empowers Rotary to plan effectively, respond promptly to urgent needs, and continue transforming lives.

The Paul Harris Society, which honours those who contribute \$1,000 or more annually, also strengthens the Foundation. Paul Harris Society members, like Klumph Society members and Rotary Direct contributors, embody the spirit of sustained giving.

When setting your personal goals for this year, remember that by supporting The Rotary Foundation, you extend your impact worldwide. Every contribution — no matter the size — adds to the momentum driving meaningful change. So, as we enter 2025, let us reaffirm our commitment to The Rotary Foundation.

By combining our efforts and our giving with others in our great organisation, we can truly say that no matter what our vocation or where our location is, we are contributing to a global force for good.

Thank you for all you do.

Mark Daniel Maloney
TRF Trustee Chair

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Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee



Let's renew our support to TRF

As we enter 2025, it is time to reflect on our past achievements and gear up for the future. With a tremendous past which has made The Rotary Foundation as a force for doing good in the world it is now time to focus and strengthen it to play an increasingly important role in the future. Whether it is polio eradication (and we *will* get there), Programs of Scale, peace and goodwill, or building the \$2.025 billion Endowment Fund by 2025, truly TRF is touching lives and transforming communities and countries, thanks to the commitment, passion and support of Rotarians like you dear reader.

Thank you for your sterling support to TRF.

When we give to the Foundation, we can make a larger impact together as a Rotary family than we could do alone. Your contributions become the grants that fund the projects, which transform people's lives and create lasting change. So I request you to:

- **Support the Annual Fund:**

- a) Increase the number of donors by 20 per cent; 28 per cent of Rotarian donors contributed to the Annual Fund in 2023–24. Fifty per cent from the previous year were repeat donors, and 50 per cent of them did not contribute. Encourage repeat contributions.
- b) Encourage and ensure 100 per cent club contribution to TRF. In 2021–22 we had three districts with 100 per cent clubs contributing to TRF, in 2022–23 there were eight districts and in 2023–24, 10 districts. In 2024–25 already 12 districts have achieved 100 per cent club contribution. That is very good. Congratulations to these districts.
- c) Don't forget the small donors. Significant achievements are made by small steps in the right direction. Recognise these donors at club events, club installations and club visits.
- d) Lead by example by making *your* contribution to the Annual Fund.
- e) Encourage more Rotarians to join the Paul Harris Society.

- **Support the Endowment Fund:** The EF ensures a bright tomorrow for our Rotary Foundation. The goal is \$2.025 billion by 2025. When we reach the goal, it will enable us to have about \$50 million in spendable earnings every year. Imagine how much good we can do. So please contribute to the Endowment Fund. By increasing our endowment, we can ensure that Rotary can do good in the world well beyond our lifetime.

Arch Klumph once remarked, "We should be ambitious for Rotary." Let us channel our ambition by working through and supporting the Foundation. Remember 'there is no exercise better for the heart than reaching out and lifting others up.' That is the magic of The Rotary Foundation.

Bharat Pandya

TRF Trustee



Director speak

A New Year of Purpose and Possibilities

Dear Fellow Rotarians,
Happy New Year! As we welcome 2025, let us embrace this fresh start with renewed energy, purpose and passion. The beginning of a new year is always an invitation — a call to dream bigger, act bolder and leave an indelible mark on the world.

Each of us holds the power to create change, not just through grand gestures but through small, meaningful acts that ripple outwards. Rotary's legacy is built on this very premise: the ability to save lives, transform communities and spark hope where it is needed most.

This year, let us find the perfect balance between honouring our traditions and embracing the winds of change. By championing *Rotary's Action Plan*, we ensure our vision evolves to meet the needs of today's world, without losing sight of our core values.

In a world longing for peace, we must be its fiercest advocates. Imagine the message we send when we plant a Peace Pole in a playground, park or community space — a silent yet powerful symbol of harmony and unity. With every such act, we inspire others to believe in a shared future where goodwill prevails.

At the same time, let us commit ourselves to doubling down on environmental sustainability. Every tree we plant, every resource we conserve and every green initiative we champion moves us closer to a healthier planet. This is not just an obligation; it is our legacy to future generations.

And as we focus on today's challenges, let us not forget to empower tomorrow's leaders. Rotaractors are the next wave of change-makers. By mentoring and supporting them, we ensure the continuity of Rotary's mission of service.

With every project we complete, every dollar we raise and every new member we welcome, we create magic — the kind of magic that changes lives and inspires others to join us. Let us live this magic with Rotary's *Four-Way Test* as our compass, ensuring truth, fairness, goodwill and benefit for all.

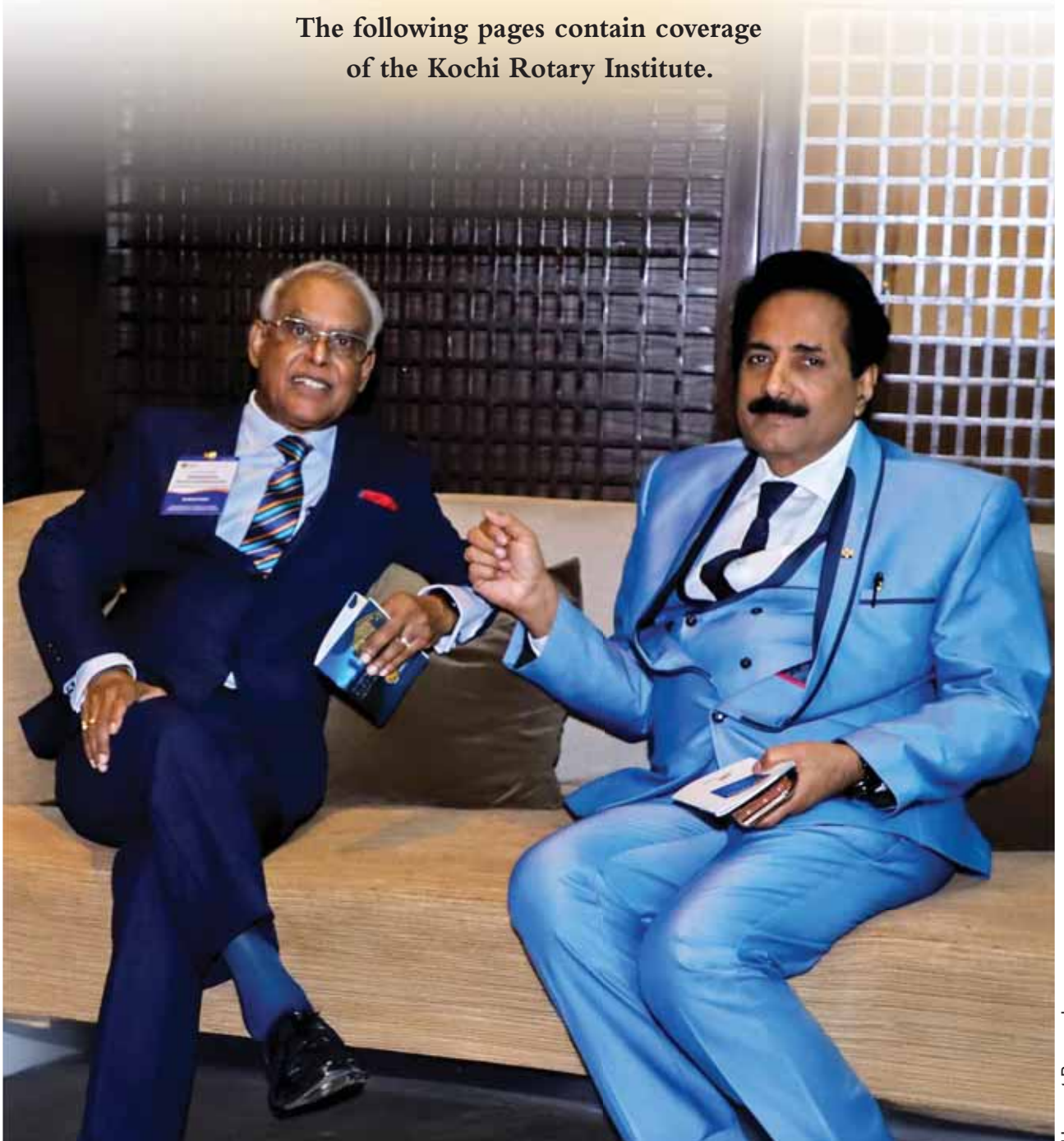
2025 is a blank canvas, ready for us to paint with vibrant colours of hope, service and impact. Together, let us dream, act and achieve like never before.

Anirudha Roychowdhury

RI Director, 2023–25



The following pages contain coverage
of the Kochi Rotary Institute.



Hemant Banswal

Institute convenor RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury (L) with Institute chair PDG John Daniel.



Rotary
Institute
KOCHI 2024

Environmentalist
Sonam Wangchuk



Ladakh



DIS

World War III has begun... between man and nature

Wangchuk

Rasheeda Bhagat

In a world where violence and conflicts are tearing apart nations and wars are being waged in different parts of the world, environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk left the participants of the Kochi Institute with a different thought when he said: “when we talk about world peace, today’s problem is not the huge war going on between nations but between man and nature. I believe that the World War III is already on between human beings and nature.”

He proved his point with statistics. Every year, seven million people die of air pollution alone. If you add other climate-related deaths, it’s 10 million people. “I was thinking what

does this figure of 10 million people mean... what is this number? I naturally thought of the two big wars, World Wars I and II, which together lasted roughly 10 years. Around seven million people died from them, but from reasons related to environmental degradation and pollution we lose 10 million every year. This means World War III is already on.”

But the answer to this huge problem will not come from “solar-heated buildings or electric vehicles or technology in any form. The answer has to come from the whole discourse changing, and when religious leaders, who people listen to... nobody listens to scientists... will take up this subject in their discourse and makes it a priority.”

But even better than that, he said, was that “we become once again nature worshippers, as we were before any religion came.” He hastily added that for this we didn’t have to give up our current religions, but just tweak them a little and “become an adapted, updated version of Hindu, Muslim, Christian or Buddhist nature worshippers, and that will show us the light.”

Calling for adapting to a lifestyle that takes care not only of “our future but also that of the rest of beings who share this planet with us,” Wangchuk said the answer to the problems of today’s world lay not “in the blind rush for growth and development of the kind we have seen in the last 300 years; more of that will only get us further down.”

He would seek the answer from the Indian traditional wisdom and what the Buddha had said 2,500 years ago, that “a human being’s success lay not in fulfilling one thousand desires, such as the best of cars, houses, clothing and material wealth, but the elimination of a single desire, rather than its fulfillment. That is the kind of innovation we need on this planet, not technological or of the engineering kind.”

The founding-director of the Students’ Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh (SECMOL), on whose life experience Aamir Khan’s role as the scientist Phunsukh Wangdu in the Bollywood blockbuster *The 3 Idiots* was based, mesmerised the Kochi Institute audience with his profound talk that was wrapped up in stark simplicity and plain speaking.

To begin with, the environmentalist who lives in the fragile ecoregion of Ladakh, took a potshot at the super cool auditorium where the Institute sessions were held, and where men

Wangchuk's magical school



The SECMOL (Students' Educational and Cultural Movement of Ladakh) School.

In order to combat the challenges posed by the climate crisis created by environment degradation in the high Himalayan region, “we are trying our bit in Ladakh to adapt and innovate to mitigate the impending disaster. For the last 35 years at our school, we are trying to innovate ways to adapt locally. But today we need to adapt and innovate globally. Our little interventions alone will not help,” said noted environmentalist Sonam Wangchuk, addressing the Kochi Institute.

Started in the 1990s to bring reforms in the education system, “where failure was a big thing, it tries to prepare young people for a future that is very different from the past.”

This (SECMOL) school was built with natural materials like mud or earth, found right under our feet. And it is powered by the sun. In an extremely cold place like Ladakh, no energy, fossil or otherwise, is used to warm this school in winters or even to cook. Everything happens with solar energy in this school, which he said is perhaps the first carbon-neutral school in the world.

But that is not the most important issue, said Wangchuk. The students learn by living and experiencing things and solving hands-on real-world problems through the education they receive. “Rather, I’d say, they make the world a classroom and apply what is in the books to solve these problems... with solar cooking, solar power, organic gardening and so on in a campus that is fully solar powered. Almost everything happens with sun, which we have in plenty, be it cooking or green houses producing fresh vegetables, lighting, electricity, water heating, water pumping... even cows on our campus live in solar-heated cowshed.”

The school was about innovations in building in the harshest remote, forsaken place; such buildings can be made in any place needing sustainability. “These buildings have an indoor temperature of +18 deg C when it is -20 deg C outdoors, without a drop of oil, air, wood, coal or any other fuel. And the beauty is that with a little definition of physics for the solution and geography for the orientation, the buildings are coolest in summer and warmest in winter.”

Wangchuk added this technology is now being extended to the rest of Ladakh, a heavily militarised place. “This means that 100,000 soldiers would be burning oil and fossil fuels to keep warm, as many come from warm places like South India. This causes carbon emission to a degree that you can’t even imagine. A million tonnes of emission in that very fragile region from armies of three nations — India, China, and Pakistan. So we are now extending this technology to the Indian Army, which I believe is the most ecologically progressive among all three.”

He added, “Our Army now lives in fully solar-heated, carbon-neutral shelters which are done by us in collaboration with them. This saves them using fossil fuel, carbon emission and fire accidents. More soldiers in that region die of accidental fire than enemy fire. So now our soldiers live warm and happy in those heights.”

He added that in “their or our homes, and school, temperatures always remain between 18 and 25 deg C dec in the coldest winter. At any time, it is warmer than in a house in Delhi. And every time I come down to Delhi from Ladakh, I feel cold. This is how you can be, if you use a little bit of science and innovation.”

were wearing jackets. “I had hoped to bask in the warmth of Kochi with a single shirt. Little did I know that I would dress almost as I do in Ladakh, and I do see many of you in three-piece suits.” Spelling out the damage done by excessive air conditioning, he said that a temperature of 27 deg C is comfortable in India; every degree lower required six per cent energy. To maintain a room temperature of 20 deg C meant expending 40–50 per cent more energy.

In Ladakh, of course, the temperature these days was - (minus) 20 deg C and “soon it will go to -25 deg C,” he said, thanking the organisers for making him “feel at home in Kochi, dressed in a jacket!”

Wangchuk then proceeded to peel off layer after layer of the climate crisis that is facing our world, particularly the fragile Himalayan zone “that I come from and where we are seeing the brunt of what is called climate change in real time. No place could be more different; Ladakh is more like another planet, and it is not in, but across, the Himalayas or trans-Himalayas, and where nature has left us high and dry.”

Himalayas, he said, “are lush and green like Kashmir, Shimla. But across Himalayas is a very different world. When I open my windows in the morning, it looks more like Mars than Earth. Like outer space, temperatures here go from +35 deg C in summers to -35 in winters. This is one place, they say, where you can have sunburn and frostbite at the same time, if your head is in the sun, and feet are in the shade.”

Despite this region facing climate change in the most severe ways, human interventions could, and had made magic happen. Showing pictures of green patches in a Ladakhi village, he said this was

“the doing of not nature but our ancestors in a region which is not blessed by monsoon as yours is.”

Such green patches were possible thanks to innovative adaptations by local farmers who had channellised melting glaciers, bringing a trickle of water to the dry patches of sandy land by carving the rocks. “Thanks to the magic they created thus, we have barley, wheat, fruits like apricots, apples, peaches, plums, growing here. And not only have the people survived over the ages, but also their colourful civilisation has thrived with its own music, dance, literature and spirituality.”

But now, thanks to global warming and climate change, the region was facing a huge challenge. “Our glaciers are melting away very fast. You may watch on television, but you don’t know what it does to people in the high Himalayas, and very soon it will have its impact on the rest of the country and planet... North India specifically.”

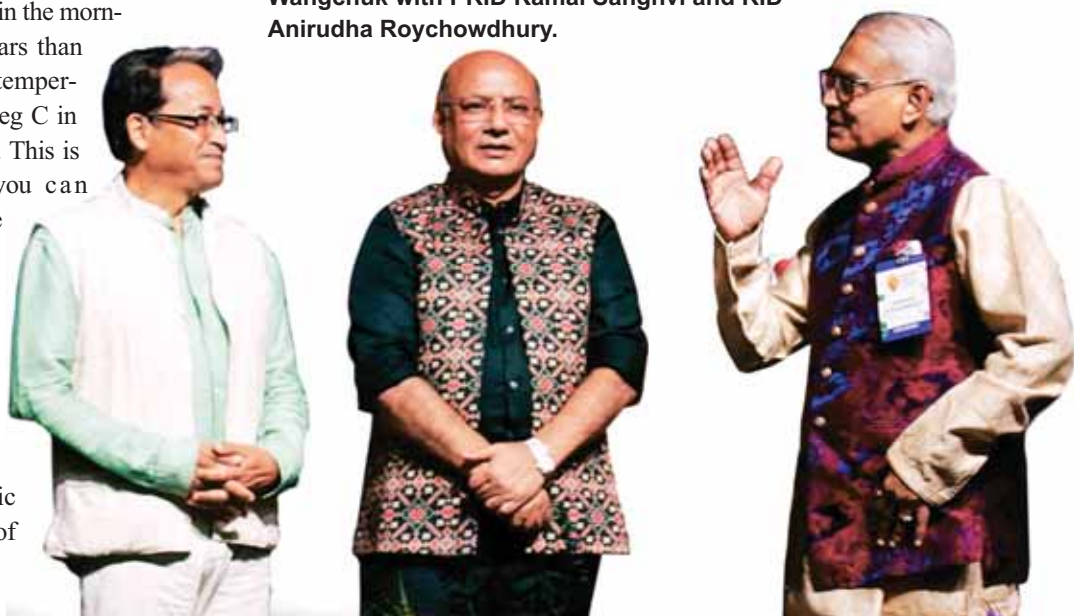
Wangchuk said this region hosted most of the world’s glaciers and frozen

freshwater. “After the North and the South Pole, this region is called the Third Pole, the Hindukush Himalayas.” Displaying a picture he had clicked from the airplane that showed 10 glaciers, he said the region had around 50,000 glaciers which were so precious for our planet. “And as they melt, you get the rivers of North India flowing down to the plains and nourishing life. This part of the planet directly or indirectly supports around two billion people, or a fourth of the world’s population.”

But these glaciers are melting at an alarming rate. Showing the picture of a tall glacier “which used to be towering high that I used to admire as a teenager, is today a shadow of itself. Every summer it flows down, roaring on its way down as the planet warms up and summers get hotter.”

The implications of this melting are grave. Giving an example, the environmentalist said that in 2006, there was a big flash flood in a village next to their school, which was devastating. It wiped out many farms, fields, animals and homes. Along with his students he went there to volunteer relief efforts. He asked a villager in his 80s how frequent such calamities were, and he said he

Wangchuk with PRID Kamal Sanghvi and RID Anirudha Roychowdhury.



hadn't seen anything like that in his life. "That was 2006; the next disaster came in 2010, when a quarter of Leh city was wiped away and 1,000 people were lost, followed by two more big ones in 2013 and 2017, with several small ones in between."

This grave situation in the high Himalayas is not only devastating lives of the local people, "it's also taking away the water that your children should have had in the next generation, causing floods now but impending drought for the next generation. Because these are the glaciers that have fed North Indian, Gangetic and the Indus plains in Pakistan. The water's coming down in a fury that is devastating; but what comes tomorrow will be even more devastating."

Creating artificial glaciers

Urging Rotarians to "understand the gravity of the climate crisis and the urgent need to change and adapt innovatively to the present crisis," Wangchuk said to tackle the impending shortage of water from melting glaciers, "we've started working on artificial glaciers thinking that even though the natural ones are melting away, till there is some flow, let's recreate glaciers ourselves."

This involved refreezing the stream water, "which still flows in winter. You'd think it freezes, but under the ice some water still flows. We freeze the glaciers using geometry shapes, which the children learn at school. Normal ice happens horizontally... flat, and that is exposed to the sun and melts in early spring. But when you use a little geometry, and create spherical and conical shapes, you get low surface area and high volume. And farmers need just that."

He added that they had built glaciers that had a height of 6 to 12 storeyed buildings, with the big ones having the capacity to hold 10 million litres of water. "They form in winter and then, because of the shape, don't



melt in March or April, unlike ice on the ground. They stay till June when farmers really need the water and there is no sign of ice anywhere." As this artificially created glacier melts slowly, water becomes available as the system works like a drip irrigation. So, you have trees blooming in deserts that have never seen trees, he said.

But, Wangchuk admitted, these were very small measures and he wasn't really proud of them. "These little artificial glaciers or solar power will not change the destiny of the Himalayas and its glaciers. Innovation needs to happen at much larger scale for things to change on this planet."

Unfortunately, we are not adapting what is required fast enough. "We think that engineers and technologists will find solutions. The problem is not technology, it is our outlook towards the world, our sensitivity for the future generations, our empathy for fellow beings, not just humans. All the other beings on this planet... plants, animals, birds, insects... have equal rights on the

planet. We humans actually deserve to be punished for what we are doing."

Putting faith in the human being's traditional quest for innovation, Wangchuk said, "I think human beings' biggest innovation is not one of rockets or electric vehicles. To me, their biggest innovation is the concept of God. That needs to be re-adapted to current times."

Because it dated back to the times when there was no law or system, might was considered right, "and if we had differences, I could break your skull open if I was stronger. And nobody would question me."

So in a world filled with violence, where might was right, man came up with the concept of something that was way stronger — God and religion — and voila, it worked! But now to deal with today's problems, a new version, God 2.0 is needed, "with the concept being adapted to current times to enable us to address today's problems," he concluded.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat



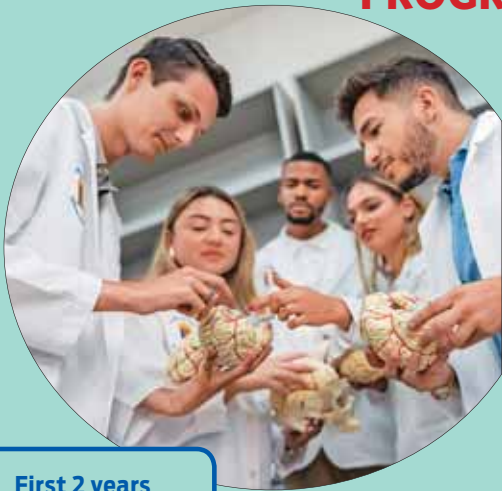
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Need to guard against “built-in attrition” in membership

Rasheeda Bhagat

While Indian Rotarians were doing a great job in attracting new members to Rotary, attrition continued to be a problem and the challenge was to address issues related to attrition in different forms, RI President Stephanie Urchick said in her inaugural address at the Kochi Zone Institute.

The future of Rotary lay in growing it; and there were three ways to do that. “One, by attracting members to our traditional clubs. But for those not interested in our traditional clubs, let’s form new clubs with new models, providing new ways for people to come into our organisation. The third way is by retaining members we already have and that is the one we need to work on here in India,” she said.

Indian clubs had “no problem attracting new members; Your attraction rate is astounding.” But she had found after an analysis of membership reports from India that there is always “a graph that goes up and then dips on Dec 31 and July 1, showing members have left and not paid their dues. The good news is that after that dip, we rebound. But my point is what would

that graph be like if we had not lost those members? We can prevent that dip if we can make our clubs irresistible, so that people will want to stay.”

The answer to this, said the RI President, lay in the Action Plan which specifically talks about how every club can use the four priorities listed there; “to take a look at the culture of the club, what the club is doing and determine how can we go from good to great, or better if it wasn’t so good to begin with. So do pay attention to the Action Plan and then you can address the problem. Instead of falling off every December and July, we should continue to grow.”

Stephanie said this was important to her “because when I wake up every morning I realise I don’t have 30 years in front of me to do Rotary. The Rotaractors do, but I don’t. I’m happy to see Rotaractors and young professionals coming to Rotary because I know the magic of our organisation will continue when I am no longer here. And that’s true for every single one of us here.”

She was most grateful for the 34 years spent in Rotary, which had given her such a rich experience in core values such as leadership, integrity, diversity and so on.

Moving on to the other important aspect, she talked about the ‘**built in attrition**’ factor “which means that if we are not intentional about increasing our members consistently, our club will certainly go away eventually.” This would happen each year; if the club had 20 members, two would pass on, two would move out due to a transfer and one might just leave because he didn’t enjoy what the club was doing. “So the first year, if you don’t add new members, your club of 20 will suddenly become 15. Next year, it would have only 12 members if you are not intentional... every club in the world will have to be intentional about replacing members and sharing the magic of Rotary so that we continue to move into a bright and healthy future.”



RI President Stephanie Urchick

STEPHANIE
BIRNBAUM & URCHICK

“

Just because you don't have a title it doesn't mean you are not a leader; so do continue the good projects.

Stephanie Urchick
RI President



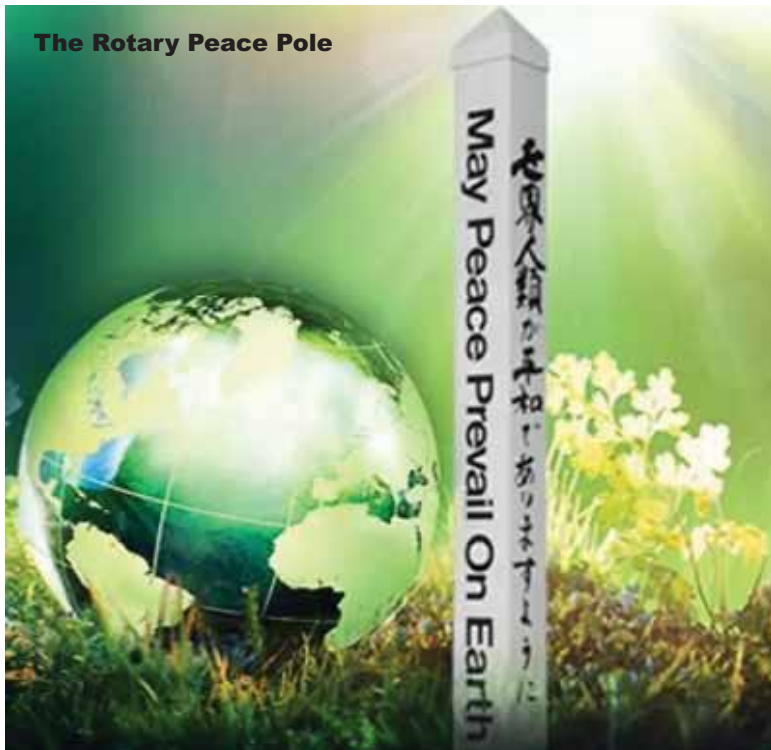
From L: RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, Shipra, President Stephanie, Institute Chair PDG John Daniel and Meera.

The second big idea Rotarians need to focus on was that “we are **peacebuilders** and we have many tools to help us with that. Rotary is built on a foundation of world understanding and peace. But we are not peace brokers or people and organisation that

can negotiate the release of hostages or can stop a war. That’s not what we do. As peacebuilders, we prevent conflict before it happens. We create the conditions that need to exist for a peaceful society. If people don’t have enough to eat, we go in and feed them. If people need clean water, we go in and provide it. If people are uneducated, we go in

and provide education. If people need employment, we give them skills. So we create the conditions necessary for a peaceful society to exist. Desperate people do desperate things; those without water will eventually fight over access to clean water.”

Stephanie urged Rotarians to visit the Positive Peace Academy at the Rotary Learning Centre. It was an online programme where in two hours, “you can learn about the eight pillars of positive peace.” Another useful programme was the Youth Exchange Programme, where students visit different countries, interact with host families, teachers, Rotarians, and learn new cultures, languages and perspectives. In essence, they were building peace, one at a time.



A terrific programme she urged Rotarians to implement was the Rotary Peace Pole Project, which involved planting poles in different places and communities. “These will become visible monuments carrying the inscription ‘May Peace Prevail on Earth’ in local languages. The new Peace Poles also have a QR code containing information

about Rotary. “I love the Peace Pole Project because not only does it instill a sense of pride in the local Rotarians, it’s a visual monument that reminds the community that Rotary is about peace-building,” she added.

The idea was not to stop wars, but to engage the local people in a conversation about the need for world peace.

The RI President added that to celebrate the milestone of establishing Rotary’s newest Peace Centre in Istanbul, she is holding a Presidential Peace Conference titled *Healing in a Divided World* on Feb 20–21, 2025. “In that symposium with fabulous speakers, we will talk about peace and engage in peace activities, plant a Peace Pole, visit the Peace Centre and meet the students undergoing the programme.” She urged Rotarians in the hall to attend that conference in Istanbul.

She herself had visited a graduation ceremony at a Peace Centre in the US, and heard the presentations of students on what they would do with the learning experience gained here. “As I listened with amazement as 25 young people stood up and talked about the impressive ways in which they were going to change the world, I thought, what was I doing when I was 25 years old? Well, I certainly wasn’t changing the world!”



We are not peace brokers or people who can negotiate the release of hostages or stop a war. As peacebuilders, we prevent conflict before it happens.

Stephanie Urchick
RI President



Institute Convenor RID Roychowdhury and Shipra, Institute Chair Daniel and Meera, and Co-chair Madhav Chandran accompany President Stephanie to the Institute inaugural. PDG Tom Gump and his wife Catherine, are also seen.

Saying that this was her 10th Institute, Stephanie also reiterated the continuity mantra that is so important for Rotary leadership and projects. “Just because our leadership changes it doesn’t mean we should stop doing projects,” and recalled that Shekhar Mehta as RI President had given name to a programme (Empowering girls) that had “caught fire everywhere, and clubs were continuing to support young girls and women. Last year Gordon (McInally) woke us up to the idea how important it is to deal with mental health issues and help remove the associated stigma and clubs around the world have embraced it and initiatives on mental health are happening.”

So even while embracing change in leadership — at all levels — good programmes should continue, remembering that “when new people come in, we get fresh ideas and new perspectives. So let’s focus and work with the people who come in, keeping in mind that just because you don’t have a title it doesn’t mean you are not a leader. We have to work together to make our

clubs strong, so that we can create lasting change.”

Giving the example of a quilt, where each square is beautiful individually and even more colourful and vibrant when put together, she said Rotary was just like such beautiful tapestry or quilt with different squares... “they don’t speak the same language, one is male, the other female or transgender, and so on. Together they represent how unique we are as an organisation. It is our differences that make us the strongest and the best in the world.”

In his address, convenor and RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury said that led by chair and PDG John Daniel, the Institute team had worked really hard to make it a memorable experience with thrilling events such as a snake boat race, a golf tournament to raise funds to TRF, a half marathon and unique projects which would be inaugurated at the venue. There were 46 Rotaractors participating in the Institute, including DRRs and DRRs-elect.

Welcoming the delegates John Daniel said that a record number of 1,200 participants had registered at the Institute.

Pictures by Hemant Banswal



Untapped CSR resources and underutilised cadres

Jaishree

The magic of Rotary doesn't just happen among senior leaders. It happens where you are — in your clubs, in your communities, every time you act on an idea and change someone's life. Thank you for all you do to create a better world," RI President Stephanie Urchick said at the TRF seminar, prior to the Kochi Institute. Urging Rotarians to continue donating to TRF, she shared a couple of her experiences highlighting TRF's role in transforming lives and communities.

One of these moments occurred at the Rotary School of Pennsylvania in Vietnam where a little girl proudly showed her the school's toilet facilities,

saying, "This is the best place in our school, because now we don't have to go in the rice paddies." The other cherished moment was at a meal distribution event supported by her club's district grant. "As I placed potatoes, hot dogs, meat and lettuce into a woman's box, she looked at me and said, 'Thank you, honey. I don't have to eat popcorn for dinner tonight.' Over the years, I've had countless moments like these. What matters most to the Foundation is you and me. It's the passion and ideas we bring when we ask what can we make better in our community," she said.

At a panel discussion moderated by TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, Institute convenor and RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, RI Director Raju Subramanian and TRF Trustee Martha Helman shared their thoughts on various Rotary aspects.

Highlighting India's CSR landscape, Subramanian noted that corporate contributions exceed ₹30,000 crore annually. "We have not yet tapped the full potential of public sector companies and other industrial units, which are in fact looking for trusted avenues where their funds can make a meaningful impact. Rotary's meticulous financial management and commitment to community projects make it an ideal partner," he said, urging Rotarians to leverage their professional networks to engage with corporates.

He also stressed the importance of TRF's technical cadres who remain underutilised. "Beyond ensur-

ing compliance, these cadres can strengthen grant proposals, reducing application errors and rejections. They are experts in Rotary's seven focus areas. Involve them early as subject matter experts," he advised.

Appreciating the role of RRFs, the RI Director remarked, "The giving is increasing, and 100 per cent giving clubs are now a reality. Over the years, we've moved from hiding our good work to proudly showcasing our impact. Let's make giving a way of life."

Addressing a question from Pandya on Rotary's polio eradication efforts, RI Director Roychowdhury said that the fight against polio remains a significant challenge, especially in regions like Pakistan and Afghanistan, where political instability and access issues persist. To address these challenges, Rotary, through its International PolioPlus Committee and regional partners, has initiated strategic action and renewed focus on immunisation. "Rotary is confident in achieving a polio-free world. While recognition is gratifying, the real reward lies in the mission itself." He added that recently TRF released \$27.5 million to its partner, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, to intensify activities in polio-endemic countries and their neighbours. On stewardship, the RI Director said, "This is critical to ensuring impactful results. It sustains trust and accountability which are the bedrock of Rotary's work."



RI President Stephanie Urchick



From L: TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury, TRF Trustee Martha Helman and RI Director Raju Subramanian during a panel discussion.

For TRF Trustee Martha Helman, on her third visit to India, “every visit is a chance to witness the magic of Rotary’s humanitarian work. Through your investments in education, environment, medical care and vocational training, you are creating that magic.” She recalled visiting a check dam project in Bengaluru in 2019. “I was struck by its simplicity and profound impact on the environment — revitalising arid land and creating sustainable agriculture. One-eighth of all Rotary GGs happen in India. While India is second in giving, it is first in utilising GGs effectively. The rest of the world has noticed what you are doing with CSR, and we hope to emulate that success across the world,” she said.

Responding to Pandya’s question on how TRF aligns with the Rotary Action Plan, Martha said, “TRF is our Action Plan. It has funded \$17 million for Ukraine war relief, helping Rotary grow even amidst conflict. With just around 1,000 Rotarians, Rotary was nascent in Ukraine when the war started. The number has increased to 1,600 the last time I checked. Bombs

are falling, and yet businessmen and women have time to join Rotary because they see its impact. Rotary is changing. The biggest adaptation, of course, is the environment because we’re learning that there can be no peace, no happiness, unless our environment is healthy. The Action Plan is just really another way to talk about the Foundation and the work we do.”

Talking about Rotary’s peace centres, she noted: “Peace is not merely the absence of war. A ceasefire — such as the one in Lebanon — is not synonymous with peace. True peace is cultivated from the ground up and requires frameworks that address systemic issues. This is the challenging, long-term work undertaken by Rotary Peace Fellows across the globe.”

On Rotary’s future, she said, “We have learnt two things from our Polio projects — one, great initiatives start at the club level. Polio started as a club project. And two, if we do things bigger, better, bolder, we can change the world — like the concept of Programs of Scale, which remains a club project. Happy Schools are a club project, but by all the clubs in India working together. Happy

Schools will change many schools throughout India.”

Summarising India’s contributions, Pandya noted significant growth in TRF giving over the years. Contributions rose from \$7.1 million in 2019–20 to \$8.9 million in 2022–23, with 12 districts achieving the ‘100 per cent Giving Clubs’ milestone in just five months this year.

“Our zones do 22–23 per cent of the total GGs. We have executed 279 grants worth \$17.97 million in the last Rotary year, up from 219 grants worth \$14.3 million in 2022–23.” The performance of the clubs in CSR grants is also commendable; 2021–22 was the first year of the CSR grants. From \$2.8 million then, it grew to \$8.1 million last year. Rotary clubs in India have partnered with over 390 corporates and raised \$10.6 million.

“If Rotarians are the heart of Rotary, the Foundation is its backbone; much of the good work that happens in Rotary happens through and because of TRF. Your generosity helps in fulfilling the hopes and dreams of millions of people worldwide,” he added. ■



Next Rotary peace centre could be at **Pune or Seoul**

Rasheeda Bhagat

The next Rotary peace centre could come up either at the Symbiosis University in Pune or in Seoul, TRF Trustee Martha Helman, a member of RC Boothbay Harbor, US, told *Rotary News* in an interview at the Kochi Institute. She has been instrumental in getting the huge funding of \$15 million from the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, which made possible TRF setting up its latest Rotary Peace Center in Istanbul, Turkey.

Excerpts from the interview

Before we come to the massive investment you and your late husband got for TRF, tell us why, when and how did you join Rotary?

My late husband and I joined Rotary together in 2003. We were new in our small community, had just moved into Bay Harbor, and joined Rotary because we wanted to meet people. It was as simple as that.

Your journey so far?

In the first year I wasn't sure Rotary was for me. And then I discovered international service, got excited by the grants, became my club president in 2006–07, and right after that, joined the District Foundation Committee (now the Peace Major Gifts Initiative), as the grants coordinator. I became district governor in 2012–13 and IA trainer in 2018–19, and a TRF trustee in 2022.

How did the peace centre funding happen?

My late husband was a lawyer with an international law firm in New York City, the founding partner of which was Otto Walter, who had moved from Germany to US in 1937 to escape the Nazis. He knew four languages, but not English. His law degree from Germany was no good in the US; it was the middle of the Great Depression, with 25 per cent unemployment, animus against Jews and immigrants. But he worked hard, went back to law

school here, graduated in the mid-'50s, and started his own law firm with another expat German Jew.

How old was he in 1937?

He was born in 1909; so he was a young man. He had entered the bar in Germany, but he was disbarred because one of the first Nazi hate laws was that Jews could not have a profession, such as doctor, lawyer, or business executive. He was disbarred from the bar for his religion, and then some other nasty things happened, so he left Germany.

Anyway, his law firm in the US did very well. In the early '80s, three things happened. First, he had acquired enough personal wealth to start a small family foundation, more or less as a rich man's philanthropic pocketbook. Second, he apparently could take long lunches on Wednesday and joined the New York City Rotary Club. Third, his law firm hired my husband, a newly-minted law graduate, to join the firm.

This is New York City we're talking about...

Yes, and between the early '80s and early '90s, Otto and my husband Frank's relationship went from boss to mentor to friend. And in the early '90s, Otto rewrote his will; they had no children. After taking care of the hairdresser, driver and doorman with small legacies, he left everything else to this family foundation, leaving my husband as executor of the foundation.



TRF Trustee Martha Helman

In 2003, Otto died in his '90s; his wife died within six weeks. My husband, and by extension, me, found ourselves responsible for a wealthy man's philanthropic fortune.

Can you put a figure to that?

Around \$18 million; not a Rockefeller, but he had done very well. He started with nothing in his early 30s, and left this. The goal of his life was that the country of his birth, Germany, and the country of his adoption, US, should never ever be at war again. He spent his life working on that, and was honoured by the governments of both nations.

Meanwhile my husband, who had been in the

US Air Force during the Cold War, was stationed in Berlin as his job was to listen in on the Soviet air pilots. Later he had to interview displaced persons who were escaping from the Soviet-held countries in Eastern Europe.

How long did he serve in the military?

Five years in the Air Force, as a sergeant in the Air Force Intelligence. Now I don't know of any child who says that when he grows up he would like to have a philanthropist leave behind his fortune for him to manage. That's just not on the list. But this happened to Frank and by extension, me.

First of all, we wrote a cheque for \$3 million, and established a chair in Otto's name at his law school in the US. This left \$15 million. We created a board, that laid down guidelines based on what we had seen Otto spend money on in his lifetime. And because he was a Rotarian, and so interested in peace, we started funding the Rotary Peace Centers, creating an endowment in Otto and Fran Walter's name at the master's degree level.

This was in the 2013, 14, 15 era. In 2018, the TRF trustees decided to start new peace centres, including in the Middle East, North Africa region. In 2020 when I was on a Zoom meeting at the beginning of the Covid pandemic, I heard RI vice-president Yinka Babalola, who is from Nigeria, talking about the new peace centre which was about to open in Makerere, Uganda (Africa). Yinka said Makerere marked the first time in history that an institution in Africa had been set up to train African peacemakers to come up with African solutions to African problems.

As a person of privilege from a privileged community, I was absolutely stunned by those words — 400 years of the slave trade, 150 years of colonisation, and here is an African saying that this is the first time that the



world had asked Africa to look within itself for the means to look for its future. So I talked to my husband and we talked to the board of the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation. The result of that was that in the 2020 fall, I called Evanston and asked the cost of buying the naming rights for a new peace centre in the Middle East... later in 2020, they did decide on Istanbul.

In 2021, the trustees accepted the gift. I should tell you, it's the first time in the history of Rotary that a project/programme was named after

the funder. We have named everything after Paul Harris, Arch Klumph... Rotary pioneers, but not the persons whose money it was. For us, this was a deal breaker; and Rotary had no problem with it.

So you gave away all of the money?

Yes, all of it; the foundation was done. All gone. No bank account. The other unusual thing is that though \$15 million is a lot of money, in terms of philanthropy, it's really a drop in the bucket. And Rotary gets all of its money from our members, from individuals, very, very little from corporations, with the exception of Gates.

So that was in 2021. I was on the team that selected the Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul two years ago. The first batch of students has been selected, and President Stephanie Urchick is holding the peace conference in Istanbul in February. So that's the story.

How difficult was it for you and your husband to decide on this? Did you have other alternatives in mind?

My husband always felt very strongly that small family foundations should not live forever because at some point the founder, and what was important to him, is forgotten. It's not that the money is misused, but it just becomes a sort of treadmill... the money goes to the bank officer's mother-in-law's charity, something like that. And we did not want that to happen to the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation. We wanted Otto's name to live forever... we just wanted their names and their portrait to be there at the

students' centre, so that the students will know about them and their life story.

We felt that if Otto could trust us with his legacy, and give no instructions, then we could certainly trust TRF to do the right thing.

It's sad that your husband, who passed away 30 months ago, did not survive to see this centre.

Yes, it is. He lived to know that the centre would be established, but died before we selected the site. That's okay. It proves that peace is something that's larger than anyone's lifetime. I will tell you that Frank is right here behind this shoulder and Otto is right here behind this shoulder, and every day I'm aware of them and what their wishes would be. This one's whispering into one ear and the other one's whispering very similar things into the other ear. They're always in sync, almost always!

Coming to our trouble-ridden world, establishing peace efforts is so important. Look at the conflicts, violence and aggression that we see. Your thoughts.

We can't stop the current wars; we can't declare a ceasefire, but we will have to work for another generation, maybe 100 years, maybe 200 years, to solve conflicts in the Middle East. The current problems didn't start a year ago; what happened on Oct 11, 2023, was exacerbated by decisions made, not in the Middle East, but in the West, when the British Empire was carved up, and there was a war in 1947 when the Palestinians became homeless people. They've been living in refugee camps ever since. So, we have to take peace a step at a time.

And we cannot expect change to happen overnight, but over generations, because the problems we're in today took generations to develop. What happened on Oct 11 is dreadful, horrifying. But you should not confuse



the work of those terrorists with the people of Gaza who have not had any control of their lives for generations. Gaza and the Palestinian question is, of course, the most depressing one in the Middle East, but there are many others too in the region. I'm always impressed by Rotarians because, you can count books when you give them to a school, or polio vaccinations. But you can't count peace. And yet, despite that, from our almost \$2 billion endowment at TRF, almost \$250 million — that is one-eighth of that endowment — has been given by Rotarians for the subject of peace.

Rotarians love peace, and Rotarians trust TRF to build that peace. And we just have to recognise that as my husband's life and death proves, as Otto's death proves, it won't happen in anyone's lifetime.

But it's not only the Middle East. We see much of the world around us being torn apart by so many violent groups.

Oh yes, we're living in a period of time right now... in your country, in my country, where right-wing, nationalist leaders are taking over. This is a terrible problem internationally and Rotary can't do anything about that. What we can do is work on the ground with vulnerable and damaged people. Our Rotary Peace Fellows are not diplomats. They don't go around in suits. They are working on the ground in NGOs with

We can't stop the current wars or declare a ceasefire, but we will have to work for another generation, maybe 100 or 200 years, to solve conflicts in the Middle East.

vulnerable people, changing one life at a time, one situation at a time.

And we have 1,900 graduates now, and with the new peace centres we'll have more. But it's always a process. It will never be completed.

Hopefully the next one will come up in India. India has been trying. Trustee Bharat Pandya has been talking about it too.

So the situation is like this. The trustees in 2018 had one graduate certificate programme going at Chulalongkorn University in Thailand. They decided to grow the Rotary Peace Centers by growing the graduate certificate programme as opposed to the master's programme offered by five universities. They have decided to make the graduate certificate programme only regional.

We are now selecting a school for the Asia centre. Asia is a big place and could probably use two or three peace centres, but it takes a lot of funding. We have funding for only one; we started with something like 60 schools in 60 universities in 12 countries. The requirements were it has to be in a place with many Rotarians and where visas were available to all potential students, and it had to be a university that had proven expertise in peacebuilding.

We did site selections, site visits at schools in Pune and Seoul, South Korea. Both are very strong contenders; both India and Korea are very strong Rotary countries; both Indian and Korean Rotarians think their country should have the peace centre. And I can't disagree with them. But we only have funding for one.



Is the funding ready, and what does it cost?

Yes, it is ready; it costs close to \$20 million. The trustees are meeting in February and will decide, so till then we all have to hold our breath. I wish we could select two, but we can't!

Once the new school is selected, it will open in winter or Jan of 2027. Or whenever the spring semester opens in that school.

Let me add that in the last 25 years we've had the Rotary Peace Centers, one quarter of the students from Asia have been from India. India is a very, very strong user of our Peace Centers.

Pictures: Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



RI President Stephanie Urchick with RID Anirudha Roychowdhury (L) and PDG John Daniel.



PRIP Shekhar Mehta with RIPN Sangkoo Yun.



TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya and Madhavi.



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee with women delegates.

Kochi clicks



At the TRF dinner.



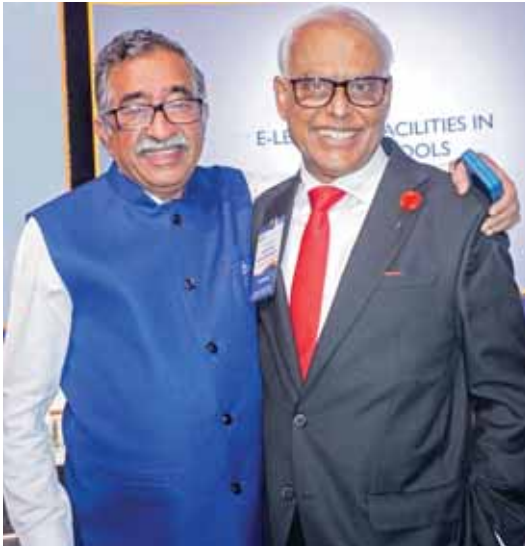
PRIP Rajendra Saboo and Usha with RID Raju Subramanian and RIDE KP Nagesh.



RIDE M Muruganandam and Sumathi.



RIDs Raju Subramanian and Anirudha Roychowdhury



PRIDs PT Prabhakar and Mahesh Kotbagi (R).



Catherine Gump with Vinita Venkatesh.



PRIP KR Ravindran and Vanathy with RID Subramanian and Vidhya.

John Daniel
and Meera.



RIPN Sangkoo Yun with past TRF
Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty.



TRF Trustee Martha Helman, Vidhya
and RID Subramanian.



Gulam Vahanvaty, Rajendra Saboo and Martha



Women delegates click a selfie with Vidhya Subramanian.



PRID AS Venkatesh and Vinita.



Anirudha Roychowdhury and Rajendra Saboo.



Bharat Pandya, Madhavi and Raju Subramanian.



PRID C Basker and Mala.



PRID Kamal Sanghvi and Sonal.



PRIP Ravindran with RIPN Yun.



Mahesh Kotbagi and Amita.



From L: DGN Ravishankar Dakoju, Usha Saboo, PRIP Ravindran, Vanathy and Paola Dakoju.



Rotary's legacy of service & impact

Jaishree

We Rotarians are excellent tenants of this planet as we truly live up to the motto *Service above Self*. Together, let us continue to be the architects of hope, champions of compassion and pioneers of change. Through thoughtful planning and steadfast commitment, we will not only serve to change lives but create a brighter, more equitable future for generations to come," said PRIP Shekhar Mehta, addressing the Kochi Rotary Institute.

He highlighted how well-planned humanitarian projects have transformed communities across India. The global fight to end polio exemplifies how a well-defined programme, coupled with strategy, execution and assessment, can achieve extraordinary results. Rotary's literacy initiatives are also another example of this approach.

"Millions of students in grades 1–12 across India are using our audiovisual

content, thanks to Rotary's contributions to the GoI's NCERT programme. Our adult literacy project is another milestone, empowering thousands of women and men with dignity, independence and freedom that literacy brings." The Happy Schools initiative is transforming schools into smart, vibrant learning environments for students, he said.

In healthcare, Rotary's impact is equally profound. From installing dialysis centres nationwide and performing paediatric heart surgeries to supporting health programmes in Nepal and cervical cancer awareness programmes in Sri Lanka, Rotary's large-scale projects continue to transform communities. "Our passion and purpose are our strength," said Mehta.

He was delighted that RC Delhi Premier had secured the Programs of Scale grant for a water project. "The far-reaching impact of such initiatives demonstrates the potential of well-funded, large-scale projects. I urge the trustees to

consider expanding this model to two grants of scale per year, and eventually one for each area of focus."

Taking note of the contributions of Rotarians from India zones to TRF, he remarked, "We give generously each year, and we also deploy these funds effectively in our local communities, creating a cycle of trust, growth and impact."

On membership growth, he acknowledged India's role as the "North Star" of Rotary's expansion. "This solid growth, coupled with exceptional service and contributions, positions our zones as a powerhouse within the organisation. As a 120-year-old organisation, our legacy is incredible, but our potential is even greater," he added.

To enhance the impact, he suggested district leaders to focus on strategic, multi-year projects under each area of focus; offer a "menu of service" to guide clubs toward scalable and sustainable initiatives; and ensure clear implementation plans and impact assessment for every project.

Mehta said that a proposal to host the RI convention in Delhi for 2029, 2031 or 2032 has been submitted to the Board. "A convention in Delhi will be a perfect acknowledgment of the incredible work being done in India. Let's unite and work together to make this dream a reality," he said.

PRID C Basker who anchored this session said, "Service is not just a project; it's a way of life where the giver gains as much as the receiver. Even seemingly simple acts, like supporting a struggling student financially, advocating for marginalised communities or offering a listening ear, carry immense value. All it takes is willingness to serve." ■

PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi being honoured by Meera Daniel at the Kochi Institute.





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Rotary International Director 2023-25



POG Mr. JILL K F Nagabh
Rotary International Director Elect 2025-27



Mr. N S Mahadev Prasad
Rotary District Governor, RID 2342 2024-25



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Past presidents recognised

Rasheeda Bhagat

At the Kochi Institute, three past RI Presidents were recognised for their contributions to Rotary.

Addressing the Institute on the topic of peace, past RI President Kalyan Banerjee said we lived in a very disturbed world where so many nations were in conflict. When “you see the world in such turmoil, you wonder if peace is ever possible in our world.”

While the UN observes Sep 21 as the Day of Peace, he felt every day needed to be marked as a day of peace in a world where 15,000 individual died daily from hunger-related causes, with almost a billion people suffering from malnutrition; over one billion people

have no access to safe drinking water; and yet another billion, two-thirds of them women, are illiterate. The worst scenario was that currently 20 significant armed conflicts were raging worldwide, with 300,000 children pressed into combat, and nearly 37 million people were homeless or living as refugees, often in their own homeland, he said.

In such a disturbing scenario, Rotarians could, and indeed had, rendered a lot of help through The Rotary Foundation. “Even in developing countries, \$100 is not a great deal of money. It may mean just a dinner for you and your spouse at a good restaurant or just about a good pair of shoes. But out there, in



PRIP Rajendra Saboo addressing the delegates as Usha Saboo and RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury look on.



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee being honoured at the Institute. Also seen (from L) TRF Trustee Martha Helman, PDG Ravi Vadlamani, Shipra, RID Anirudha Roychowdhury and Institute Chair John Daniel.

the real world it can mean the difference between hope and despair, life and death itself,” he said, urging them to donate to TRF.

Banerjee urged Rotarians to just think about every girl child who was born in Afghanistan today who would have to grow up under “inhuman” conditions. “Today the real borders are not between nations, but between the powerful and powerless, free and fettered, privileged and humiliated.” If Rotarians really want to be “true peace makers, we have to bridge this divide and close these gaps.” Rotary Peace centres were

striving to promote peace in the world, and required Rotarians’ support.

It was clear that understanding and peace would elude the world as long as poverty and hunger existed. So the common goal of all Rotarians should be to eradicate human misery, “just as we have systematically eradicated polio. We are here today because there is more left to be done, challenges to be completed, stories yet to be given happier endings,” he added.

In his brief talk, PRIP Rajendra Saboo recalled that once he had completed his role as RI president, he was

wondering what he should do next and “my wife Usha told me that your presidential theme was look beyond yourself, and you have to continue to do that.” One of his major initiatives was organisation of medical missions and he was instrumental in holding 45 medical missions across Africa and India.

PRIP KR Ravindran, accompanied by his spouse Vanathy, was also recognised at the Institute, and his contributions to Rotary recalled.

But the cynosure of all eyes was Usha Saboo, who through her brief and right-from-the heart address, left many eyes moist in the hall. She said: “I just want to thank all of you for your warmth and your respect for both of us. Raja is often not able to express properly what he wishes to.” This was because Covid had hampered his hearing and speech. “But his passion and dedication to Rotary are not hampered. At 90-plus, he is here because of his love for Rotary, and all of you. Keep us in your thoughts and prayers so that we can continue to do whatever we can still do for Rotary,” she said amidst thunderous applause.



From L: RID Roychowdhury, PRIP K R Ravindran, Vanathy and Shipra.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat



New AKS members honoured

Jaishree

On the eve of the Zone Institute, nine Rotarians were inducted into the prestigious Arch Klumph Society. Thanking the inductees for their generosity, RI President Stephanie Urchick said, “Individuals like you, with your vision and generosity, keep the Foundation strong. You enable the incredible work—the magic—that Rotary creates across the globe.”

TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya assured the donors that their money will be spent for the right cause it was meant for, in a structured manner. He thanked them “on behalf of the trustees, the countless lives you’ve impacted, and our Rotary leaders.”

TRF Trustee Martha Helman, representing TRF Trustee Chair Mark Maloney at the Institute, commended the initiatives of Rotarians in India. She highlighted the transformation of government schools through the Happy Schools programme, creating clean, healthy and inspiring environments for students to thrive, and the achievement of the Rotary Club of Delhi Premier securing the fourth Programs of

Scale grant that would support critical water management projects, positively impacting countless lives.

“These initiatives are nothing short of spectacular; they also highlight the vital role of financial support. As Rotarians, it’s up to us to step up, dig deep and ensure that these transformative projects continue to flourish,” she said. Addressing the new AKS members she added, “I know how meaningful this occasion is, having experienced my own induction last year. Welcome to the Society. We celebrate your commitment, generosity and passion for service.”

A little earlier, the new AKS inductees shared their stories on the essence of



Jaishree

AKS members PDG N Subramanian and Lalitha being honoured by (from L) TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, RI President Stephanie Urchick and TRF Trustee Martha Helman.



Jaishree

RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and Shipra.

Below: New AKS inductees (from R) M R Ravishankar, Rajashree and PDG Krishnan G Nair, Hemant Bhasin, Joshita and Sourabh Khemani, Mahinder K Jain and Manjeet Kripalani.





From R: PRIP Shekhar Mehta, RIPN Sangkoo Yun and PRID Mahesh Kotbagi. RIDE M Muruganandam and his wife Sumathi are also seen.



From L: PRIP Rajendra Saboo, PRID C Basker, PRIP K R Ravindran, Mala Basker, Vanathy Ravindran, Uma Nagesh and Usha Saboo.



RI Director Raju Subramanian and RI Treasurer Rhonda Beth Stubbs.

giving, and of what inspired them to support TRF.

RID 3011 **PDG N Subramanian** said, “Our involvement with Rotary over the years has taught me the value of philanthropy over charity. We like the global approach of Rotary, its areas of focus, and the audacious goals that we set for ourselves.”

RID 3211 **PDG Krishnan G Nair** said, “As long as I am a Rotarian and able to spare even \$1, I will continue to support the Foundation. Knowing that someone, somewhere, lives a happier, more peaceful life because of our contributions is reward enough for my family and me.”

Sourabh Khemani recalled how he was denied membership in RC Calcutta in 2010 because his wife was already a Rotarian. He had to wait for five more years when RI decided to accept couple membership. “Social service is more than just writing a cheque. True ownership comes from arranging funds and ensuring successful completion of projects,” he noted.

Hemant Bhasin, member of RC Delhi South End, RID 3011, recalled his 96-year-old mother, a Rotarian 30 years ago, who would say that Rotarians are blessed people because they have the time, resources and inclination to give back to the society. He recounted his decision to forgo a Mercedes that his children had proposed to gift him on his 70th birthday, instead contributing the

amount to TRF to join AKS. “I urged them to let me donate this money to TRF and invest in something meaningful, earning the blessings and goodwill of people around us, rather than add one more vehicle to our garage.”

Mahinder Jain, a cancer survivor and a 30-year member of RC Madras, said that his contribution to TRF will support two causes — maternal and child health, and providing shelter for the socioeconomically backward Narikurava tribe.

Manjeet Kripalani, a third-generation Rotarian hailing from a family that endured the trials of partition, but “always guided by the Rotary Four-Way Test,” said that her donation to TRF honours the memory of her parents and grandparents, and hopes that “our contributions will promote health and longevity for our fellow citizens.” Manjeet is a member of RC Bombay, RID 3141.

M R Jaishankar of RC Bangalore Midtown, RID 3191, recalled his involvement in distributing wheelchairs to 101 physically-challenged people and low-cost homes to 125 less privileged people in South Bengaluru.

Kochouseph Chittilappilly, a member of RC Cochin Central, RID 3201, and **Navas Meeran** of RC Cochin South, RID 3201, were honoured *in absentia* at the Zone Institute.

Pictures by Hemant Banswal



An Institute to remember

Rasheeda Bhagat & Jaishree

The Kochi Institute will go down in the Rotary annals of India as a “complete Institute”, in that it had a mix of everything to satisfy the needs and taste of the participants — from some outstanding speakers to humanitarian projects, great food and entertainment.

That this wasn't the first institute in Kochi was disclosed by past RI President Kalyan Banerjee. Addressing the delegates seated in the plush auditorium of the Grand Hyatt Kochi, a waterfront luxury resort overlooking the backwaters of the Vembanad Lake, he recalled how he had been at Kochi for a couple of Rotary zone institutes,

the first being in 1995 when he was on the RI Board in his first year as director.

The then RI President, late Glen Kinross was there with some other attendees from overseas. He recalled that Kochi did not have any air-conditioned auditorium in those days. “So, we brought in a large number of old type window/wall model air conditioners, of mixed capacities and tried to close the gaps in the windows, and got the machines running together. The net result was some semblance of cooling which the participants happily accepted, because they had no other choice!”

The next institute at Kochi he attended was chaired by the then RI

Director K R Ravindran, when Banerjee had just been chosen by the RI nominating committee as RI president. “The new air-conditioned auditorium had been cool enough then, but the Rotarian's temperatures were on the rise for a variety of reasons! So when Director Anirudh invited me to come, I said ‘ok, I'll be there,’ even before he had finished. But he put me in a spot because he asked me to speak on a subject of my choice.”

But that created a dilemma; when given a subject, one knew what was expected from the speaker. “But when you're given a free hand on the choice of a topic, it's a problem because you are 83, have been a Rotary president over 15 years ago, and the current young, Rotary leaders look on you as an extinct dinosaur, and you wonder what to say,” mused Banerjee.

Rotary leaders including RIPN Sangkoo Yun participating in the boat race.



Kerala Carnival

At a well planned and executed event, the icing on the cake was the Kerala Carnival organised at the resort's gorgeous waterfront, with the highlight being the *vallam kali*, Kerala's traditional snake boat race, which offered a thrilling experience to around 225 delegates including DGEs and DGNs. Around 150 professional rowers steered the boats which carried the Rotarians. A line up of mock elephants, like the Thrissur Pooram, *chenda melam* performances, Kerala-style street food, games and traditional art forms added to the attraction, creating memorable photo opportunities.

What Indian Rotarians are most famous for in the Rotary world are service projects, and in keeping with tradition, some grand memorable

projects were launched or inaugurated at this event.

RI President Stephanie Urchick launched the ‘Green Angels’ project to provide CNG-powered autorickshaws to 119 women (symbolising RI’s 119th anniversary). The project, done in collaboration with Institute Chair John Daniel’s family charity — the Y-Daniel Foundation — hopes to give less privileged women opportunities for suitable income to support their families.

The team also managed to pull off a ‘State Guest’ status for President Stephanie when she arrived in Kochi.

Around 5,000 children and adults participated in a **half-marathon** flagged off by RIPN Sangkoo Yun. The event, supported by RC Cochin Knights, raised ₹20 lakh to support children with autism. A Rotary President’s Cup golf tournament for Rotarians raised funds for TRF.

Forty-six district Rotaract leaders were sponsored to attend the Institute, receiving training along with complimentary accommodation and meals. “This experience allowed the Rotaractors to immerse themselves in Rotary’s values and culture,” said PDG Daniel.

Showcasing Rotary’s commitment to DEI initiatives, the Institute featured



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee with PDG Ravi Vadlamani and TRF Trustee Martha Helman.

a breathtaking performance by **Miracle on Wheels**, said to be India’s only inclusive dance theatre group. Dancers with various challenges, including those requiring wheelchairs, left the audience deeply moved and spellbound. Equally captivating was 11-year-old Ganga Sashidar’s soulful violin recital during the TRF dinner.

The culinary experience was nothing short of spectacular, with a variety of international dishes, vegetarian and non-vegetarian options, and Jain specialties delighting attendees. The grand

finale was the traditional **Sadya**, served on plantain leaves, stealing the show with its authentic Kerala flavours. Delegates dressed in the state’s traditional costume — *kasavu saree* for women and *veshti* for men — added to the vibe.

It was a perfect ice-breaker on the first day as the DGEs and DGNs, along with their spouses, painted their vision of Rotary on canvas. This was followed by a serene cruise along the backwaters. The **drum circle** was a much-appreciated programme at the graduation ceremony, where each governor-elect played percussion instruments in unison, fostering unity and camaraderie through lively rhythms. The spouses, resplendent in Bengal’s iconic *laal-paad shada* saris (red-bordered white saris), an idea championed by Shipra Roychowdhury, added to the occasion’s grandeur.

At the end of the day, it was evident that Convenor RID Anirudha Roychowdhury, Chair PDG John Daniel, and the Institute team had worked really hard for this mega event. “Meera and I relocated from our residence in Kollam to Kochi for 40 days to oversee the preparations. Our days started at 4am, and stretched until 11pm, packed with back-to-back meetings. There were 36 committees in all!” said Daniel. ■



Delegates enjoying the *sadya*.



Only India can usher in global peace

V Muthukumar

India is well-positioned to take on the leadership role in ushering in global peace as “the world is witnessing an unprecedented upheaval with violence, conflicts, economic inequalities, environmental crises and technological disruptions which have led to a deadly cocktail” that puts humanity in peril, said Palki Sharma Upadhyay, TV journalist and editor, Firstpost YouTube channel.

Speaking at a session titled ‘Rotary brings peace,’ at the Kochi Institute, she gave a vivid description of the uncertainty plaguing the world. “We need to address the systemic breakdown in the global order, and India as the leader of Global South has the immense potential to lead the world in navigating through wars, economic disparities and disruptions caused by AI and other emerging technologies,” she said. The raging Ukraine war since 2022 had resulted in global disarray as it affected the

energy markets, food supplies, and led to over 30 million people displaced in Europe, the biggest since the World War II. “There is lot of uncertainty as we don’t know how the Ukraine war will shape out in the near future,” she warned.

India and other countries are trying to stop the war “through a diplomatic solution. Indian PM Modi told Russian President Putin that ‘this is not an era of war’ in the early stage of the Ukraine conflict,” she said. The Oct 7, 2023 terror attack by Hamas and taking of hundreds of Israelis as hostages has become a full-blown war between Israel on one side, and the Hamas-Hezbollah-Iran bloc on the other side of the divide.

In this complex Israel-Palestine conflict, over 40,000 innocent lives

were lost in Gaza over the last two years, and “at present we have around 30 armed conflicts including those in Syria, Yemen, Sudan and Ethiopia.” Over five lakh people had died in Syria in the last 13 years in a raging civil strife, she said. (Syrian rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham has captured power, and President Bashar al-Assad and his family have fled to Russia.)

Non-state actors

In today’s conflict-ridden world, nation states have to contend with non-state actors like terrorists, lone wolves and mercenaries who don’t observe “any rules of modern warfare.”

The military-industrial complex of the US has benefitted as it exported over 50 per cent of its arms and



V Muthukumar

weapon systems, worth \$2.4 trillion, to these conflict zones in last 2–3 years, she said.

Turning her focus to economic disparity, she said, “globalisation has concentrated wealth in the hands of few rich countries and individuals with a World Bank report saying that 9.2 per cent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.” Another UN report details that 700 million people are hit by extreme poverty.

While tackling the scourge of poverty, “it is not enough to provide just food, as we need shelter, education, health and opportunities for growth.” There is staggering disparity and distress in Sub-Saharan Africa, parts of South Asia and Latin America, and there is an urgent need to address “social unrest, conflicts and the migration crisis in these regions,” she explained.

Past TRF Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty presents Pride of India Award to journalist Palki Sharma. PDG Muthu Palaniappan is on the left.



A UN study had stated that “climate change is a major threat to global peace, and it is a force multiplier with droughts, floods and other natural disasters on the rise due to historical emissions of greenhouse gases.”

While nations play the blame game on meeting emission targets set at COP Summits, climate change will not wait for political consensus. “We have to understand that floods, droughts and hurricanes are geopolitical events. The worse hit are poor countries with scant natural resources, even as their people migrate to other places in search of livelihoods, thus becoming planet refugees.” Some European nations pay African states for restricting their people from taking the perilous boat rides. “If they still land in Europe or America, they are called aliens and are detained and deported,” she said.

Climate change events alone had shaved off four per cent GDP of West and Central Africa.

Emerging challenges through AI platforms are “a perfect storm waiting to happen and we don’t know what effect they will have on the job markets and the social fabric.” While policymakers are trying to catch-up with tech platforms like AI, “politicians claim to serve the people, but in reality, they serve their own interests at the expense of others.” In recent years, 50 countries have held elections for new political set-up, and “whenever there is a regime change, we can expect more disruptions like in Uganda, the Maldives and Bangladesh. We still don’t know what effect Trump 2.0 will have on the global geopolitics.”

For decades, as champion of unity in diversity with faith in its non-violence and pluralism, India was in an eminent position to take centre stage in geopolitics, she said.

We talk to all

India has not sided with any country in the ongoing wars, as “we are a peacebuilding nation.” We buy drones, weapons from the US, high-tech defence platforms and oil from Russia, have close ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, and nurture friendly ties with both Israel and Palestine.

As an ideal candidate for peace leadership, “we have the goodwill of all nations in the world.” India has sent its peace-keeping force to 40 countries with “over 200,000 Indian soldiers helping in rebuilding livelihoods in strife-torn regions of Congo, South Sudan, Lebanon, Afghanistan and other countries.” India is trying to reform the United Nations in tune with the “multilateral rule-based global order we are striving to usher in. During the G20 Summit in Delhi, we have inducted the African Union in the elite group.” More collaborations and partnerships are in the offing to foster dialogue for a multilateral world order which is now fractured and torn by violence and conflicts.

Earlier, past Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty said that a third Rotary Peace Centre offering a short-term course to train 40 peace fellows in two batches in a year will be set up either in South Korea or at the Symbiosis University, Pune. “Already we have five Peace Centres offering long-term Masters courses and two centres for short-term certified programmes affiliated to top varsities in the world,” he said. Each peace centre turns out 50 peace scholars a year, and “all their visas, airfare, boarding, lodging and tuition fees are met by Rotary,” he said.

Rotary is committed to global peace through promotion of understanding, fellowship and integrity, he said. Vahanvaty, along with PDG Muthu Palaniappan, handed over the Pride of India Award to Palki Sharma. ■



Towards a sustainable future

V Muthukumaran

A strong culture and corporate values lay the foundation for leadership excellence which must be sustained through collaborations and continued success, said Puneet Chhatwal, MD, The Indian Hotels Company Ltd (IHCL), at a session titled ‘Look beyond yourself’ at the Kochi Institute.

Work with “simple, minimalistic goals in mind, so that we can focus on restructuring our branding, priorities and portfolios without hurdles. Let’s have a growth mindset that is fostered through alliances and partnership for

synergising operations.” While IHCL is the first hospitality firm in India to cross \$1 trillion in market capitalisation, it did have a rollercoaster ride till 2017.

As one of the oldest and pioneering companies in the Tata group, set up by its founder Jamsetji Tata in 1868, IHCL was known as ‘the jewel of the Tata group’ till 2017. “The global financial crisis (2007–08) and the 26/11 terror attack at the Taj Mahal Palace in Mumbai made the cash-rich company underperform on growth metrics,” he explained. But they took the challenges head on, ‘daring to be bold and different,’ as they

RI Directors Anirudha Roychowdhury and Raju Subramanian present Pride of India Award to India Climate Collaborative CEO Shloka Nath.



adapted to be nimble and fragile to overcome the adversity, post the terror attack.

Against 142 hotels in 2017, today they have 232 operations across the world, all done through partnerships and alliances.

Thanks to its consistency and service, “we have been rated as one of the most valuable hotel brands in the world by global studies.” For a proud legacy company with over 150 years of heritage, Chhatwal said, “we still value the statement of our founder: For any enterprise, community is not just another stakeholder in business, but is the very purpose of its existence.”

Earlier, PRID PT Prabhakar recalled how a small entrepreneur Harakchand Savla began to distribute food packets to a few cancer patients at the Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai, over 40 years ago. “Now thanks to his efforts, many corporates have pooled in money and resources to provide food to over 1,000 patients a day,” he said. Despite limited resources, Savla’s leadership vision earned him goodwill and success in his mission, he said.

Climate resilience

Speaking on the topic ‘Resilience in a changing world,’ Shloka Nath, founder-CEO, India Climate Collaborative (ICC), pointed to the looming dangers of the climate crisis that has already wreaked havoc on vulnerable communities in the world. “Many species disappear, floods and droughts, a result of climate change, affect millions of families who don’t know how to cope with the extreme weather,” she said.

It is also a crisis of social and economic equity, as women, children, farmers and low-income families bear the brunt of climate crisis.



PRID PT Prabhakar presents Pride of India Award to The Indian Hotels Company Ltd MD Puneet Chhatwal.

“They don’t have access to clean energy, food and good education.” Mankind has a huge opportunity to adapt, innovate and thrive in the face of this extreme adversity, she said, and added “nature-based solutions are cost-effective and efficient in tackling climate crisis.”

With the Indian farmers being hit by erratic rainfall and crop losses, “half of their population can be diverted and trained for green jobs as 70 per cent of the country’s GDP will come from urban areas which are vulnerable to extreme weather changes,” she explained.

Secondly, we have to embed climate resilience in key economic sectors with focus on “local solutions and innovations to drive real, sustainable change.” Climate crisis is testing the best of humanity, and “we must relook at how we consume, eat, travel and build, to heal our planet

to make it more resilient against extreme changes to the environment. For lasting climate solutions, “we need to work together with our allies across borders in harmony with nature and communities,” she said.

Welcoming Shloka, RI Director Raju Subramanian said though Rotary has introduced environment as the seventh area of focus, “this move has come a bit late as the emission of greenhouse gases is leading to destruction of our habitats.” He cited the case of Bengaluru where the collusion between builders and officials had led to largescale felling of trees, and disappearance of hundreds of lakes. “The ecological disaster waiting to happen will be much larger than a nuclear explosion,” he warned. He conferred Pride of India Award to Shloka.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

TRF Star Performers (2023–24)

Trophy	Zone 4	Zone 5
Highest Contribution to TRF Annual Fund	Arun Bhargava (3141)	T R Vijayakumar (3201)
Highest Contribution to TRF Endowment Fund	Arun Bhargava (3141)	Ravi Raman (3232)
Highest Contribution to TRF Polio Fund	Milind Kulkarni (3142)	Ravi Raman (3232)
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF	Arun Bhargava (3141)	Jerome Rajendram (3220)
Highest Total Contribution to TRF	Arun Bhargava (3141)	Ravi Raman (3232)
Highest Donor Participation (% wise)	Nihir Dave (3060)	T R Vijayakumar (3201)
100% Club Participation for TRF Giving	Mehul Rathod (3055) Arun Bhargava (3141) Milind Kulkarni (3142)	S Raghavan (2982) Jerome Rajendram (3220)
Highest Giving Club towards TRF Polio Plus Fund	President G Sukumaran Nair, RC Hiranandani Estate (3142)	President P Srinivasan, RC BHEL City Tiruchirapalli (3000)



RI President Stephanie Urchick presents award to RID 3141 DG Chetan Desai. From L: TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, RID Raju Subramanian, TRF Trustee Martha Helman and RID Anirudha Roychowdhury are also present.



Trustee Martha congratulates RID 3234 DRFC B Dakshayani as RID Roychowdhury looks on.



From L: RID Subramanian, RIPN Sangkoo Yun, RID 3132 DGE Sudheer Lature, President Stephanie and PDG Swati Herkal.

— Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7

Trophy	Zone 6	Zone 7
Highest Contribution to TRF Annual Fund	Hira Lal Yadav (3291)	Manjoo Phadke (3131)
Highest Contribution to TRF Endowment Fund	Hira Lal Yadav (3291)	V Srinivas Murthy (3192)
Highest Contribution to TRF Polio Fund	Rajendra Prasad Dhoju (3292)	Subbarao Ravuri (3020)
Highest per capita APF Contribution to TRF	Hira Lal Yadav (3291)	Manjoo Phadke (3131)
Highest Total Contribution to TRF	Nilesh Agarwal (3240)	Manjoo Phadke (3131)
Highest Donor Participation (% wise)	Rajendra Prasad Dhoju (3292)	H R Keshav (3181)
100% Club Participation for TRF Giving	Ashok Kumar Gupta (3100) Nilesh Agarwal (3240)	Subbarao Ravuri (3020); Manjoo Phadke (3131); Swati Herkal (3132); BC Geetha (3182)
Highest Giving Club towards TRF Polio Plus Fund	President Jayant Dagadu Khairnar, RC Nasik Grapecity, (3030)	President Prasad VR Sadhu, RC Vijayawada Midtown (3020)

Zone 4, 5, 6 & 7 (India, Nepal and Sri Lanka)	RI District
Nitish Laharry Trophy for Highest Total Contribution to TRF	3141
Binota and Kalyan Banerjee Trophy for Highest Endowment Fund Contribution	3192
Usha and Raja Saboo Trophy for Highest Annual Fund Contribution to TRF	3131
Highest Polio Fund Contribution to TRF	3020
District with highest new AKS members	3011



PDG Srinivas Murthy (3192), PDG Manjoo Phadke (3131) and Jeetender Gupta (3011) with their awards.



From L: President Stephanie, PDG Subbarao Ravuri (3020), Trustee Martha and RID Roychowdhury.

Membership and Public Image Awards in the next issue.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar supports orphan girls

Rasheeda Bhagat





Whenever the Arya Kanya Sadan in Faridabad near Delhi, that is home to some 70-odd orphan girls, requires a helping hand, it reaches out to the Rotary Club of Delhi Mayur Vihar, RID 3012, for support.

For over 10 years, senior Rotarians of this club led by past president Arvind Jain and others have been supporting this orphanage which was built 32 years ago on land given by the Haryana government.



Ashok Vohra and his wife Neelu gift woollen clothes and one year's school fees to one of the girls.

“This shelter home run by an NGO is located in the posh Sector 15 of Faridabad and provides shelter to orphan girls who have nobody to take care of them.

From childhood to adulthood these girls live here, are sent to school and even college, and “some of them have been married too with help from philanthropists, including our club members, who support this cause,” says T D Bhatia, a member of this club.

Over the last five years past president Jain has been supporting this orphanage with large donations to the tune of a few lakh rupees. “As the girls are supported right from childhood, given shelter, food and clothes, education, and helped to find employment when qualified, from time to time our club helps out providing whatever assistance that is required.”

In November with funds provided by Jain and some other Rotarians, arrangements were made to distribute blankets and warm clothes

to protect the girls from the biting cold of winter. Jain also made arrangements for a bhajan session for the girls.

Bhatia said that it all began about 10 years ago when past president of the club Rajeev Gupta, who is the CFO of KEI Industries, and his wife Shashi, were approached to help this orphanage. They willingly led the way, got other members of the club to donate too, and “this couple continues to support the girls living here in a big way, giving food, clothes, helping to organise the marriage of a few girls by providing not only the wedding clothes but also gold jewellery such as the *mangalsutra*. At present 72 girls are living in the Kanya Sadan, and their team leader, who has been with them for 22 years, takes care of them,” he adds.

The Rotarians have plans to make a few more visits to this orphanage to give woollen sweaters and jackets to the girls to withstand the winter months. Already Rotarians

have ‘adopted’ many girls from the orphanage and support their education by either paying the fees, or providing learning material such as textbooks, exercise books etc.

On their recent visit, Ashok Vohra and his wife Neelu, handed over woollen clothes and school fees (₹12,000 for the entire year) to one of the girls. After distributing blankets and other woollens, the Rotarians also served food to the inmates. They were accompanied by club president Awadhesh Kumar, Arvind Kumar Jain, N K Bhargava, and others. Bhatia said the club has plans to adopt more girls from this orphanage and give scholarships and learning aids for their education.

Other regular projects being done by RC Delhi Mayur Vihar include eye and other health screening camps, distributing warm clothes and blankets in winter for the children of small farmers who do cultivation on the Yamuna banks, along with textbooks and notebooks. ■

Nourishing communities

Jaishree

The Rotary Club of Wadhwan City, RID 3060, is operating the Annapurna Rath to provide dinner at ₹5 a plate under its project, *Bhukhya ne bhojan* (food for the hungry). Since its launch in 2021–22, the initiative has provided over 1.4 lakh meals in Surendra Nagar, a twin city of Wadhwan, Gujarat, says club president Hita Jani.

Every evening between 5.30 and 7.30pm, a truck delivers hot, nutritious meals including rotis, gravy, khichdi and buttermilk to slum colonies. The food is kept fresh in casseroles, and a sweet dish is added to the menu on festive occasions. “We charge ₹5 per plate to ensure the recipients maintain their dignity. Those who can’t afford this nominal amount are not turned away,” she explains. On average, 150 people benefit daily from this service.

The project operates 365 days a year, primarily funded by the Rambhojnalay Trust led by philanthropist Dhanjibhai Patel and Dr Yashwant Patel, father of club member Karthik Patel. The daily cost of ₹2,500 is often covered by club members who sponsor meals to mark special occasions

such as birthdays and anniversaries.

The 60-member club, now in its 25th year, has five permanent projects to its credit. Among its earliest achievements is a garden developed during the Rotary Centennial Year which remains a landmark in the community. “People here identify us as the ‘gardenwalli club’.” It has helped in enhancing

our public image,” smiles Hita.

Other flagship initiatives include a dialysis and a thalassaemia centre, established in 2020 when Hita’s husband Prashant Jani was district governor. These centres serve 25–30 people every day. “Over the years we have installed 13 machines at the dialysis centre. Our club sponsors breakfast for patients and

their caregivers at both the centres through a dedicated fund,” she says.

A vocational training centre was inaugurated last Rotary year with the help of CSR grants and it is equipped with computers, CSC machines and sewing machines to train men and women in industry-related skills. The centre also trains youngsters in karate, chess and carrom. ■

Food being served from the Annapurna Rath, a project of RC Wadhwan City.



A school comes to life

Kiran Zehra

As the Interactors from Utterbuniyadi Vidyalaya in Amalsadi, a tribal village near Surat, Gujarat, worked on their cleanliness drive, the wind seemed determined to make their job harder. “The moment we started sweeping,

paper bags and plastic bottles flew right past us like they had grown feet,” says Sahil Rathod, the president of the newly installed Interact club. “We couldn’t stop laughing, it was as though the wind was playing games with us. One of us even chased down a plastic bag that had taken off with the breeze.”

Despite the wind, Rathod adds, “We didn’t want to give up.” By the end of the day, the school and streets were clean, though the Interactors were “tired and hungry but proud of our work. We showed our parent club (RC Surat, RID 3160) that we could clean and maintain the school facilities they had renovated for us,” he adds.

In February 2022, the school approached RC Surat for computers, and after a visit from club members, it received 10 computers. “The visit also revealed deeper challenges. This residential school, which houses 358 students, many of whom come from underprivileged families, lacked basic amenities and faced severe infrastructure challenges. Toilets were in disrepair, access to drinking water was inconsistent, and basic hygiene practices were neglected,” says Ajay Mahajan, the project coordinator of the club.

With a ₹40-lakh global grant and RC Emory Druid Hills, RID 6900, US, as its global partner, the club transformed the school. Separate toilet blocks for boys and girls, handwash station, a 1,500-litre storage tank and a drinking water station were set up. The hostels, home to 115 boys and 90 girls, were revamped with updated plumbing, new tiles and fresh paint.

The computer lab was expanded and equipped with furniture and infrastructure to provide hands-on technology to more students. “When the school later received government funding for additional computers, those funds were redirected to build restrooms for teachers and to expand lab space,” says Giridhar Tandel, the school principal.



A student at the new computer lab.



Students learn hand wash techniques.



The new handwash station installed by RC Surat at the school.

The club members also brought their professional expertise to the project. Architect Umang Dalal handled the planning and work drawings, structural design was undertaken by Zawareh Wadia, and project supervision was managed by Kamal Gandhi. “All three contributed their time and skills, saving the project significant cost. Their expertise not only brought this project to life but also helped us to channel resources into additional improvements,” says Mahajan. Recently he, along with two other club members — Dr Viral Choksi and Swetha Jajoo — conducted health and hygiene workshops for the students.

To ensure the project’s sustainability, the Interact club was installed at the school in September 2024. The Interactors play a crucial role in maintaining the improvements while developing their leadership and teamwork skills. “They diligently monitor hygiene practices, ensuring that students wash their hands with soap before meals, and after using the toilet, and take responsibility for keeping the toilets and school campus clean, fostering a culture of accountability and cleanliness,” he says. ■

Farmers are priority for this Mumbai club

V Muthukumaran

In a novel initiative to train farmers on green technology, RC Bombay Queen City, RID 3141, along with eight other clubs, hosted a two-day *Project Green Gold*

for around 100 farmers from all over Maharashtra. They were trained in residue-free farming, nature conservation, poultry, goat farming, grafting and made aware of the current trends in agro

industry. On the final day, they visited the Krishi Vigyan Kendra, Baramati, a knowledge centre for the upliftment of farmers, and equipped themselves with the latest technologies in farming.

Rotary clubs from RID 3142, 3131, 3030, 3060, 3170 and 3132 pitched in with their resources and support for the skill upgradation of farmers, while resourcepersons from Zydex Agro, the project partner, conducted the training sessions. Club members Sandeep Bajoria, Ravindra Patodia and Dinesh Sharma were the main sponsors of the farmers'



DG Chetan Desai (3rd from left) and to his left RC Bombay Queen City president Ajay Agrawal, along with Rotarians, distribute cloth bags to passengers at the Mumbai Central Railway Station.

workshop, while the club's International Service director Ralphy Jhirad took care of logistics for the meet.

In another event, RI Director Raju Subramanian inaugurated the HPV-DNA testing equipment (₹30 lakh) installed by the club at the Prasad Chikitsa, a renowned diagnostic and health centre in Palghar, through a global grant. Rotarians from the partner club, RC Oakland, US, were present at the clinic. In a similar project, the club donated an ultrasonography



RI Director Raju Subramanian looks at the HPV-DNA PCR testing equipment installed at a diagnostic centre in Palghar near Mumbai.



device (₹34 lakh) to Sri Satya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital, Navi Mumbai, through another GG with the same international partners. DG Chetan Desai was all praise for club president Ajay Agrawal and his team for taking up medical projects that will benefit underprivileged patients.

Spit pouches and cloth bags were distributed to passengers at the Mumbai Central Railway Station as part of *Swachh Abhiyan*

The inter-school quiz is being held over the last 20 years, and has earned a brand identity of its own for nurturing science talent among students.

drive conducted by RID 3141 clubs led by RC Bombay Queen City. The series of programmes held to mark Gandhi Jayanthi (Oct 2) included a chorus singing by the International Fellowship of Rotarian Musicians and a skit by members of RAC KC College. DG Desai spoke on the importance of cleanliness and hygiene, while PDG Rajendra Agrawal and past president Girish Agrawal urged the public to keep the surroundings litter-free to ensure a better environment for a healthy lifestyle.

The club honoured 125 visually-impaired students who had excelled in Class 10, 12 board, BA and BCom exams. During a colourful event, held jointly with the Blind Welfare Association, at the Marine Lines, South Mumbai, Ajay Agrawal and DG Desai distributed white canes, Braille books, pen drives and cash prizes, all worth ₹2 lakh, to the beneficiaries. The event



A delegation of farmers from Palghar, along with Rotarians, at the farming workshop.

was also sponsored by the Akhil Bhartiya Agrawal Sammelan.

In a joint project with RC Bombay Pier, the annual inter-school Science Quiz Contest is being held at the Nehru Science Centre, Worli, for 750 students from 190 schools across Mumbai.

The contest will progress for three months before ending in a grand finale in Jan 2025. The inter-school quiz is being held over the last 20 years, and has earned a brand identity of its own for nurturing science talent among students in Mumbai schools.

With the support of Rtn Vinod Bhimrajka and his family, grocery bags were distributed to 350 needy families. Breakfast was served to 150 differently-abled people under *Project Annapurna* at Cuffe Parade. The project cost ₹1.5 lakh. In a similar initiative, club

members Anil Chokhani, Amla Ruia and Anoop Gupta sponsored meals for cancer patients and their relatives at various hospitals in the city.

A blood donation camp saw around 60 people donating blood at Dadar, Mumbai. Rotarians educated passengers at the railway station on ways to prevent anaemia and thalassaemia with lifestyle changes. Several passengers came forward to donate blood. The blood donation camp was held jointly with other clubs, Rotaractors and Inner Wheel clubs. ■



Rotarians, along with DG Desai (2nd from left), wish a child a speedy recovery under *Project Gift of Life* that does free paediatric heart surgeries at the Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital, Navi Mumbai.

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Prashant Raj Sharma
Advocate
RC Ghaziabad Greater
RID 3012

Your

Governors

Kiran Zehra

Membership matters

While analysing membership challenges, Prashant Raj Sharma identified that the first two years are crucial for new members to feel at home and integrate into the club. “When clubs foster a healthy, welcoming environment, members feel comfortable and supported, which inspires them to invite others to join,” he says.

His district recently hosted a grand Diwali celebration, attended by 3,000 people, including 150–200 potential Rotarians, who will be approached for membership. Women, representing varied professional backgrounds constitute 30 per cent of the district’s membership. The TRF goal of \$600,000 was met within five months of his term, and a \$700,000 cath lab CSR project is underway.

This year, the district is implementing eight CSR projects and two global grants, including the *Rotary Viraj Anganwadi*, an AI-integrated anganwadi, and the *Rotary Atma Nirbhar* project, providing artificial limbs to those in need.

Sharma joined Rotary in 2011.



Sadhu Gopalakrishnan
Chartered Accountant
RC Proddatur
RID 3160



N Sundaravadivelu
Advocate
RC Coimbatore
RID 3201



Raakhi Gupta
Educationalist
RC Jaipur Marugandha
RID 3056

Targeting growth

Sadhu Gopalakrishnan believes that subsidised membership rates would help in member retention and growth in rural areas and exclusive women’s clubs in the district. He aims to reverse the negative growth of 700 members in 2023–24 and bring the total membership to 3,160 as a symbolic figure of his district number.

He agrees with the 1:2:3 theory (for every Rotarian inducted we must ensure we bring in 2 Rotaractors and 3 Interactors.) suggested by RIDEs M Muruganandam and KP Nagesh to boost membership growth. “It is doable and will increase youth engagement,” says the DG.

Gopalakrishnan aims to raise \$316,000 for TRF, against the district’s goal of \$275,000. His district is also working towards initiating one permanent project per club and tapping into CSR funding from corporates.

Joining Rotary in 1995, Gopalakrishnan led a Group Study Exchange team to Ohio in 2012–13 where he witnessed Rotary’s internationality, “an aspect I cherish deeply.”

Advancing inclusivity

On diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI), Sundaravadivelu is proud of his district’s women members. “Clubs are making efforts to maintain a gender balance, and I have recommended that one-third of our Rotarians should be women,” he says. Two transgender members have been inducted into RC Coimbatore Akruti. He notes that “this inclusivity is a gradual process, as transgender members need time to familiarise themselves with Rotary and its opportunities while clubs create a welcoming environment.”

Comprehensive orientation programmes for new members and a supportive environment through mentorship will “instil a sense of belonging among all members and encourage them to contribute actively,” he says.

The district’s major projects for the year include providing homes to 100 Toda tribal families in the Nilgiris, rejuvenating the River Kaushik that flows 50km from the Kurdi Hills in Coimbatore, and raising awareness of cyberattacks and cybercrimes among students.

He joined Rotary in 1995.

AMAR strategy

Raakhi Gupta, the first woman governor of RID 3056, is focused on membership growth with the ‘AMAR’ strategy (Add, Multiply, Adapt and Retain). Focused on diversity and retention, she aims to “create an inclusive space that attracts members with fresh perspectives to Rotary.”

With women making up 25 per cent of the district’s membership, Raakhi is launching a Rotary Passport Club to engage busy professionals and young changemakers. “This flexible model prioritises virtual engagement, diverse membership and service-driven projects, making Rotary more accessible,” she explains.

This year, her key initiatives include cancer screening in underprivileged communities, an organ donation pledge drive targeting 5,000 people, and cervical cancer awareness sessions for school students.

Her Rotary journey began in 1997 after participating in a GSE visit to Florida, USA.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Making a difference

A DEI champion

Past Rotary International President, K R Ravindran, a leading businessman of Sri Lanka, and co-founder of Printcare, a diversified printing and packaging company with manufacturing plants in Sri Lanka, India and Africa, was recognised as one of the ‘Top 10 champions of Diversity’ by WIM (Women in Management), and IFC (a World Bank subsidiary), for his role in promoting DEI not only in Rotary, but also his own company.

Ravindran’s recognition was for his company’s strong positioning of DEI, offering several worker-friendly schemes, employing physically and mentally challenged persons, rehabilitated drug addicts and supporting local schools, temples and communities around its plants. ■



PRIP K R Ravindran with the award.

Philanthropist par excellence

RID 3192 DGN Ravishankar Dakoju, a distinguished donor to The Rotary Foundation, has been conferred with the prestigious Karnataka Ratna Award 2024 by Parivartan Prabha, a renowned Kannada daily newspaper.

He was given the award for his “unwavering commitment and purpose, driven by a desire to create meaningful and sustainable change in society. His transformative efforts have profoundly impacted key areas such as education, community development, senior citizen care and environmental conservation,” said the citation. ■



DGN Ravishankar Dakoju (R) with the Karnataka Ratna Award.

Waterwheels for rural women

To provide relief to rural women, RC Visakhapatnam, RID 3020, distributed 200 waterwheels to them at Alamiapalem, Kondasantha and Downuru villages, tribal areas of Anakapalle and Alluri Sitaramaraju districts of Andhra Pradesh.

The beneficiaries have been fetching water on their heads trekking a distance of 2–3km every day. Last year, 100 waterwheels were distributed and this year, the club has doubled the number of rolling drums given to rural women. The project was sponsored by SNF India. Past president Madhu Burra coordinated it. ■



Rotarians distribute waterwheels to tribal women.



RC Poona North members with students near a composting pit.

Composting pits in Pune schools

To reduce carbon footprint, RC Poona North, RID 3131, is setting up composting pits for a zero-waste model across schools and institutes in Pune. Till now 10,000 students have benefitted from this project, and the plan is to support at least 25,000 beneficiaries by instilling values of sustainability, health and community responsibility.

Shedding light on the project, club member Mohan Poojary says, “the initiative also includes a three-year maintenance plan to ensure 24x7 operation and sustainability of the composting pits.” Awareness sessions and training are held for students on waste segregation, composting and sustainability, to foster a culture of environmental stewardship. ■



Rotary bets on zero-based budgeting

V Muthukumaran

Presenting Rotary’s five-year financial forecast at the Kochi Institute, RI treasurer and director Rhonda Beth Stubbs informs that revenues are higher than expenses until fiscal 2026 (2025–26), and from fiscal 2027 “our expenses will become higher than our revenues” starting with a \$4 million deficit budget. “We are projecting a balanced budget in fiscals 2025, ’26, and deficits from FY 2027 through fiscal 2029.”

The decision to increase membership dues (\$78.5 per Rotarian) from FY ’27 will be determined by the Council on Legislation 2025. “RI’s bylaws require a balanced budget each year and our Finance Committee staff prepare a zero-based budget that aligns with our strategic initiatives and wherein the expenses must equal our

revenues,” says Rhonda. The RI Board evaluates the budget against Rotary’s overall goals taking into consideration the strategic investments and financial performance.

Out of the projected revenue of \$135 million in FY ’25, membership dues contribute \$92 million (68 per cent), services and others, that include related expenses for holding RI convention and COL for example, bring in \$39 million (29 per cent), and investment earnings chip in with \$4 million (3 per cent). “RI leaders and staff look for opportunities to increase revenue, reduce expenses, and find ways to invest in our members,” says Julie Burke, RI’s CFO, during a video presentation with Rhonda. Almost 60 per cent of RI dues are invested in membership support initiatives and programmes, followed

by administration cost and compliance obligations (22 per cent) such as expenses for tech platforms, accounting and legal support, and finally, 19 per cent of dues are spent in enhancing public image like revamping the Brand Center which offers resources for Rotarians to increase awareness about Rotary in their communities.

Forecast

While the trend indicates fewer members joining Rotary over the next five years “we are focused on growing membership — both new members and retaining the existing members,” says Rhonda. “In a typical year, we welcome around 150,000 new members in our clubs, while we also lose a similar number each year.” With increased numbers, RI will be better equipped to address the needs of communities, and “also enriching the lives of our valued members.”

Though inflation rates have gone down recently, the higher inflation over the past several years led to increased expenses. “This resulted in some tough decisions to reduce costs and develop a balanced budget,” says Julie. Now the challenge is to balance the budgets for fiscal 2027 through the next two years (till FY ’29). The forecasted reserves are above the RI board’s target in FY ’24 through FY ’28, and then projected to be below the reserves target in FY ’29. Rotary’s financial health is strong and good stewardship is ensured on finances which enables RI to support members with resources, tools to serve clubs and communities, Rhonda adds.

More institute coverage in next issue.

RI treasurer Rhonda Beth Stubbs being felicitated by RI Director Anirudha Roychowdhury and Kochi Institute co-chair Madhav Chandran.



V Muthukumaran

Unforgettable evenings in Calgary



A Nashville North tent concert

Get your cowboy hat. Your Rotary pals in friendly Canada are excited to welcome you to signature convention events, including dinner in their homes, a country music jamboree, and boot-stompin' celebrations of the Western culture in Calgary.

"We're a big small-town city, and so the hospitality we have, the ticketed events, the experiences — they will be fantastic," says Mark Starratt, co-chair of the Host Organisation Committee for the Rotary International Convention June 21–25. Buy tickets at rotarycalgary2025.org.

- **Grandstand Spectacular,** June 21: This night of showmanship includes indigenous hoop dancing, toe-tapping music, and horseback relay races.
- **Rockin' the Big Tent,** June 22: Country music fans and people who want to sample Calgary's Western charm will enjoy the honky-tonk beats and twangy guitars. The concert is billed as the night "Rotary rocks the roadhouse" in the Nashville North tent.

- **New Blood with the Calgary Civic Symphony,** June 22: The dance show features Peter Gabriel's music and explores Blackfoot traditions through the story of a man who survived a government residential school for indigenous children.
- **Host hospitality evening,** June 23: For this convention favourite, members invite Rotary visitors to their dinner tables, restaurants, or other venues to "break bread and share in fellowship," Starratt says.
- **Western Ranch Showcase,** June 24: You may notice you're holding your breath from excitement when you watch bronc riding of the "wildest, orneriest, out-of-line" horses. The organisers advise, "Pull down that hat brim and hold on tight."

Learn more and register at convention.rotary.org



Next Zone Institute... Delhi

At the Kochi Zone Institute, RIDE KP Nagesh, as convener of the next Institute, invited delegates to Delhi where the event will be held on Nov 14–16, 2025 at the Yashobhoomi India International Convention Centre, located 10km from the Delhi airport, at Dwarka on



Rasheda Bhagat

Convener of the Delhi Institute RI Director KP Nagesh and its secretary PDG Manjoo Phadke promoting the event at the Kochi Institute.

Delhi-Gurgaon border. RID 3012 PDG Sharat Jain will chair the Institute, and PDG Manjoo Phadke (RID 3131) is the secretary.

The adjunct seminars for the incoming district leaders will be held at the Manekshaw Centre, Delhi Cantonment, during Nov 11–13, 2025.

Taj Palace in Chankyapuri, Pullman, Novotel and Holiday Inn in Aerocity are the official hotels.

"We had 1,000 registrations at the Kochi Institute itself," said Jain.

For more information, refer: www.rotaryinstitute2025.com ■

Medical care projects and Adult Literacy initiative hogged the limelight at the installation of RID 3261 DG Akhil Mishra in Jabalpur, MP. During the investiture, Rajya Sabha MP and PDG Vivek Tankha sponsored a state-of-the-art bus for differently-abled children at the Justice Tankha Memorial Rotary Institute for Special Children; four dialysis machines, a sonography device, and a blood bank freezer for government hospitals in Jabalpur, Nainpur and Gadarwara, all worth ₹75–80 lakh.

PRIP Sekhar Mehta, chief guest at the installation, donated two dialysis machines to the Government Polyclinic, Kotwali. “The district Rotarians pooled in around ₹45–50 lakh to set up facilities needed for the proposed dialysis units at the hospitals,” said DG Mishra.

A spacious floor was allotted at the Jabalpur Hospital and Research Centre run by Rtn Dr Rajesh Dhirawani for the district to do free heart surgeries on children. While Dhirawani will install the facilities, Rotary clubs will take care of the recurring expenses of the paediatric centre.”

A Rotary Autism Rehab Centre will come up at Kundam village, 34km from Jabalpur, in collaboration with Seema Singh, a non-Rotarian. The centre, which will be operational in 6–7 years, will be spread over 16 acres, having around 200 residential units to house patients and their caregivers, explained Mishra.

PRIP Mehta and Jabalpur mayor Jagat Bahadur Singh Annu inaugurated an adult literacy programme being done jointly with the municipal corporation. Each child

will make one adult literate and the former will get academic benefits for this work. Adult education kits were provided to children of the Royal Senior Secondary School, M M International School and Government Middle School Rampur, Chhapar.

A new adult literacy programme for over 500 schools was unveiled with the help of the MP government.

DG Mishra will inaugurate a Rotary Skill Development Centre in Jabalpur (CSR fund: ₹94 lakh) shortly. “This will provide training in all major vocations to enable beneficiaries to earn a decent income,” he says. ■

RID 3261 focuses on medical care and literacy

V Muthukumaran

From R: Jabalpur mayor Jagat Bahadur Annu, PDG Vivek Tankha, PRIP Shekhar Mehta, DG Akhil Mishra, IPDG Manjit Singh Arora, Jabalpur CMHO Dr Sanjay Mishra and Dr Sanjay Chhattani at the launch of the dialysis machines project.



Rotary Information Centre at Daman

Team Rotary News

The Rotary Information Centre, an initiative of RC Daman, RID 3060, serves as a resource hub for the public, sharing information about Rotary's mission, activities and community impact. The centre is set up in a busy market area in Daman. In the coming days, it will serve as a venue for the club's various initiatives such as providing free legal advice, awareness seminars on government schemes and health camps, said club president Vishwajeet Borate. The centre was inaugurated by DG Tushar Shah in the presence of Sajnam Singh, chief officer of the Daman Municipal Council, and its president Aspi Damania. ■



A shed for bike taxi pilots



Goa is probably the first state in India to legalise motorcycles as commercial vehicles, and service providers such as Rapido and Uber introduced bike

taxis as a practical mode of transport more recently.

Earlier, the 'pilots', as the bike taxi riders in Goa are called, would stand under the merciless sun, or

sometimes get drenched in the monsoon rains, as they waited for their pillion passengers. But now, thanks to RC Panaji Riviera, RID 3170, a dedicated shed for motorcycle taxis is in place in front of the KTCL premises in Panaji, for the pilots registered with the Goa Motorcycle Taxi Riders Association.

The taxi stand was inaugurated in August by transport minister Mauvin Godinho and KTCL managing director Derick Netto. DG Sharad Pai and club members led by their president Tanvi Attreya Sawant were present at the event. ■



RID 2982

RC Salem Phoenix

Around 120 students from government schools displayed their talent in oratory, dancing, singing and other fine arts at a cultural fest. They were given mementos and certificates. The winners got cash rewards.



Club matters



RID 3011

RC Delhi Divine

Rotarians and members of a resident welfare association planted 50 saplings at the Vasant Kunj colony as part of ongoing efforts in its fight against climate change to ensure sustainable living.

RID 3020

RC Rajamahendravaram Icons

To promote healthy living and fitness, a 3km-marathon was conducted jointly with Rapo Gym that saw 250 runners. It showcased the club's focus on community service.





RID 3080

RC Solan Royal

Baby kits and cash amount of ₹1,100 were given to mothers of newborn daughters at the Regional Hospital, Solan, during Navaratri under *Project Beti Hai Anmol*. Medical superintendent Dr Sandeep Jain was the chief guest.

RID 3000

RC Karambakudi City

The club donated play equipment to a government school in the town. The Rotarians involved the students to plant saplings on the campus and taught them to nurture them.



RID 3100

RC Meerut Prabhat

Ceiling fans were donated to Shri Ram Mandir Public School, Lalkurti, at an event to mark Children's Day. An exhibition was conducted by students which was appreciated by Rotarians and visitors.



RID 3110

RC Firozabad

Around 350 children from Dayanand English Medium School benefitted from a vision testing camp and 70 were given eyeglasses. The project was completed in five phases in a month.

Membership Summary

As on December 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	6,046	5.62	56	106	34	254
2982	94	4,118	5.93	30	422	96	188
3000	148	6,314	11.59	80	1,007	242	218
3011	138	5,401	30.83	71	1,600	227	41
3012	163	3,994	24.69	53	655	105	61
3020	84	4,771	8.15	33	467	115	351
3030	102	5,665	16.33	60	882	499	398
3040	100	2,396	14.61	35	727	62	216
3053	76	3,193	17.19	23	338	39	131
3055	85	3,442	12.26	47	680	58	391
3056	87	3,770	25.12	21	182	105	201
3060	100	5,096	15.97	52	1,882	78	152
3070	117	3,101	15.38	33	187	69	64
3080	111	4,452	13.54	59	1,384	200	127
3090	135	2,659	6.43	21	298	359	174
3100	117	2,253	10.79	15	81	40	151
3110	139	3,729	11.88	19	163	97	114
3120	90	3,831	15.82	41	545	43	58
3131	141	5,673	35.29	122	2,291	296	216
3132	97	3,810	14.49	29	353	143	226
3141	122	6,502	28.28	121	2,171	203	246
3142	115	4,098	23.13	56	1,622	130	99
3150	108	4,082	12.79	82	1,158	124	130
3160	79	2,526	9.62	24	62	95	82
3170	145	6,686	15.20	88	1,034	187	184
3181	88	3,763	10.82	39	408	108	122
3182	85	3,723	10.82	46	227	113	104
3191	96	3,457	19.29	70	1,613	155	36
3192	93	3,742	22.13	60	1,384	158	40
3201	173	6,726	10.04	107	1,823	107	97
3203	97	5,148	7.32	43	662	149	39
3204	81	2,658	8.13	22	185	17	17
3211	163	5,280	8.84	9	82	31	135
3212	123	4,729	10.49	84	528	209	153
3231	95	3,769	7.32	29	326	74	417
3233	87	3,168	18.31	51	1,270	0	
3234	79	3,178	24.29	59	1,316	54	63
3240	101	3,607	16.94	42	774	88	42
3250	113	4,445	23.13	33	463	68	247
3261	110	3,534	24.65	18	108	65	192
3262	117	3,911	16.08	82	764	36	46
3291	145	3,901	27.30	0	0	91	764
India Total	4,679	176,347		2,065	32,230	5,169	6,987
3220	70	2,060	16.75	81	3,339	137	78
3271	114	3,901	20.62	104	447	651	289
0063 (3272)	81	1,184	20.10	48	309	23	49
0064 (3281)	284	5,890	18.00	192	1,014	120	211
0065 (3282)	153	3,089	9.00	167	1,137	25	48
3292	162	5,643	19.26	174	5,390	123	140
S Asia Total	5,543	198,114	16.26	2,831	43,866	6,248	7,802

New Interact club formed in Trichy

Team Rotary News



Students at a handwash demonstration.

An Interact club was chartered at the Sri Vageesha Vidhyashram Senior Secondary School, Srirangam, near Trichy in Tamil Nadu, by RC Jambukeshwaram, RID 3000, on Global Handwash Day (Oct 15). The new club was initiated by past president and Rotary Study Circle district secretary Abbas Mantri.

District Stewardship Sub Committee chairperson Afroze SH

from RC BHEL City Tiruchirapalli presented the Rotary certificate, citation, etc to charter president SS Kaviyan. In her address, Afroze spoke on the type of activities the Interactors can take up in the school that would improve their public speaking capability and leadership traits.

She urged the Interact club chairman Suresh Ramaratnam from the parent club and coordinator Chitra, a

teacher from the school, to hold orientation sessions for the Interactors. While appreciating the school principal and correspondent for their support in forming this Interact club, she called upon the Interactors to take up “diverse activities and get groomed as future leaders of your community. District Rotarians will extend all help in the projects taken up by the school’s Interactors,” she added.

The club installation was followed by a demonstration of handwash by Rtn S Damodaran, founder-CEO, Gramalaya, an NGO working to provide sanitation facilities and clean water in rural areas. He highlighted the importance of washing hands before and after taking food, visiting toilet, etc. Around 2,500 students were sensitised on proper handwashing at the demonstration in the presence of the principal and the teachers.

RC Jambukeshwaram president Bharath Manoharan, secretary Raja Salavuddin, treasurer Selvakumar and District Basic Education and Literacy coordinator Paranjapey were present at the installation of the new Interact club and handwash event. ■

Some vital Rotary info

- In September, Brazil awarded the Oswaldo Cruz Medal of Merit to Rotary for its work to end polio and increase vaccination coverage.
- For the 16th consecutive year, The Rotary Foundation received the top rating (four stars) from Charity Navigator, an independent evaluator of US-registered charities.
- Minneapolis will host the Rotary Convention in 2028, a year earlier than previously planned. A replacement host city for 2029 has not yet been chosen. The 2026 RI Convention will be held on June 13–17 in Taipei, Taiwan.
- A new Instagram channel highlights RI youth programmes (Rotary Youth Exchange, Rotary Youth Leadership Awards and Interact). Follow @rotaryyoungleaders.
- The Foundation will accept nominations this month for the Distinguished Service Award. Learn more at rotary.org/awards.

©Rotary

A magical RYLA at Ellora Caves

V Muthukumaran

One day, during a conversation two Rotary club presidents from nearby districts, RIDs 3132 and 3060, got an idea of conducting an inter-district RYLA at the Ellora Caves, the UNESCO World Heritage site, with the theme ‘Culture, art and cinema’ for school students.

As RC Dhulia is holding RYLAs for the last 15 years at different places, “RC Aurangabad president Shripad Kulkarni broached the idea with his brother Mahesh Kulkarni, who leads the Dhulia club, for a joint RYLA. And they chose Ellora, a scenic landscape

with caves, best suited for a three-day camp where the students could relax as well as learn about the heritage of our country,” says project counsellor Sarita Lonikar.

It was a transformative three-day stay for 80 high school students from Aurangabad, Dhulia, Surat and Latur at a scenic resort near the heritage site. On the first day, soft skills trainer Devdatta Gokhale from Jalgaon spoke about “connecting with new people to foster a spirit of unity” at the session on ‘Fort and Leadership’. This session drew a parallel between India’s resilient forts and our past leaders.

The day ended with a campfire where students bonded over music and some lovely stories.

It was a nerve-biting experience for the students the next day to walk through the caves amid thick vegetation. Prof Yogita Mahajan from MGM College, Aurangabad, spoke on film-making and “the creativity behind the big screen.” This was followed by a skit on mobile addiction with a message for balanced use of technology. The day was wrapped up with a talent show and DJ party.

On the final day, “we trekked to the Jogeshwari temple, and lost our

A replica of Raigad Fort built by RYLA participants.





A peek into the art of filmmaking.

hearts to the beautiful landscape. Also, a workshop on cinematic art gave a peek into the world of tinsel-dom,” says Sarita. Rtn Suresh Sonone guided the participants in building a

replica of Fort Raigad which helped them appreciate historical forts and the importance of teamwork.

Addressing the students, RID 3132 DG Suresh Saboo urged them

to “avoid screen addiction, and obey your teachers and parents. Think positively, and work hard to succeed.” His district has plans for a similar RYLA with RID 3141 at a military campus in Aurangabad. PDG Rukmesh Jakhotiya, DGE Sudhir Lature, and District Youth Service director Nitin Kudale were present at the inaugural session. RYLA t-shirts, certificates and stationery items were given to all students.

Recalling some exciting moments at the Ellora, Siddhi Takey (Class 9) says she is now able to “communicate effectively after the RYLA. My behaviour has changed for good.” Another student, Yashodeep Pawar (Class 10) from Satara, a film buff, is happy that his “skills in scriptwriting have improved and I got some good tips to hone my acting techniques too.”

Summing up the event, Sarita Lonikar says, “It is truly inspiring to witness the transformation in young people who came together with a shared purpose. They all brought their unique energy which enriched us all at the RYLA.” Project chairs Sayali Virgaonkar (RC Dhulia) and Pankaj Loya (RC Aurangabad) took care of the logistics. The programme was co-hosted by RCs Aurangabad East and Latur Mid Town. ■



Third row from top (from L) DGE Sudhir Lature, project counsellor Sarita Lonikar, Nirmla Saboo, DG Suresh Saboo and district youth director Nitin Kudale, along with RYLA participants.



Tales of inspiration

Preeti Mehra

How they dreamt it and achieved it.

The first of January should, in real terms, be another day. But it is happily not just that since we attach a special significance to it. As someone put it, we see it as a reset time when we start afresh, dream a new dream, and set new goals. The day serves as an opportunity to start on a clean slate, think anew and even seek inspiration from those who have successfully ventured into areas we haven't and made a difference or achieved a measure of success.

As we all know, resolutions for the new year are customary, almost a habit. It is meant to be a matter of personal choice, although there are enough people offering suggestions on what you must resolve to do. But I shall desist from doing that. Instead of subjecting you, the reader, to a must-do list, I offer you few inspirational stories that might help you think of how to devote some free time to making the earth a greener and better place.

I could think of no better example to start with than the remarkable

achievement of 17-year-old Diya Loka from Hyderabad. On Dec 6, she was awarded the prestigious Diana Award for 2024, which recognises young people who demonstrate exceptional social action and humanitarian work. Diya received the award, instituted in memory of Princess Diana, from the latter's sons Prince Henry and Prince William.

Diya is a passionate environmentalist who, with her childhood friend Sahithi Radha, co-founded E-Cycl, an organisation dedicated to addressing the humungous e-waste problem. The two high school girls in their teens set up E-Cycl with many plans and ambitions. Later, with mentoring from Recykal and Crabpin, two waste management startups, they established their organisation, which has grown steadily and extended its reach beyond Hyderabad.

Diya and Sahithi felt compelled to start E-Cycl when they observed the callous manner in which e-waste containing poisonous materials like mercury and arsenic were being handled in their city. Such contaminants damage

our ecosystem and affect the health of sanitation workers and children, who often collect waste for a livelihood.

Diya and Sahithi felt they had to address the problem in an organised manner. They started with zero investment but had a lot of zeal and enthusiasm. Their organisation took shape through student-led awareness sessions at schools, campuses and office spaces. They

conducted seminars in educational institutions and reached out to students from grades 6 to 12. Some signed up as volunteers and became a part of the movement. These engagements quickly helped foster community engagement. They also facilitated a collection drive, and people came forward to help.

Today, E-Cycl has an impressive record. It has collected over 10,000kg of



e-waste and mentored over 5,000 people and hundreds of young changemakers. Diya's work has gained national recognition, with organisations like Meta, WSJ and SOIF Futures sponsoring E-Cycl's efforts. Her passion for sustainability also led her to work on advocacy and digital marketing for environmental causes. Diya continues to inspire her peers, motivating them to take action and advocate for climate solutions in their communities.

Not everyone can show Diya's dedication, and we cannot return to school and emulate her. However, we can help her by spreading awareness

about e-waste collection and management in our spare time. Perhaps we can borrow her template and pass it on to schools and resident welfare associations. To learn more about her organisation, go to ecycl.org.

Some 1,500km from Hyderabad is Delhi, infamous for its crowded roads and polluted air. Come November, the smog-filled air that hovers over the national capital makes it the most polluted city in the world. But you can breathe easy once you step into Peter Singh and Neeno Kaur's home in Sainik Farms. Their neighbours in the upscale South Delhi colony have to

suffer the pollution, but the home that this couple have built insulates them from it and is often described as an oasis in the polluted disaster called Delhi.

Next to the front door of their home, Peter and Neeno have a sealed panel packed with wood shavings and water trickling down it. A powerful fan draws in the outside air through the panel, cools it, and circulates it through a greenhouse covering the entire verandah length before the main house. The plants growing in the greenhouse also oxygenate the air.

The plants are grown using aquaponics — a unique farming method that combines aquaculture, the practice of raising fish, with hydroponics, the method of growing plants in a soil-less environment. Water from rain harvesting is stored in a tank where fish are reared. Bacteria convert the waste produced by the fish into nutrients that the plants can absorb. In turn, the plants filter and purify the water so the fish can thrive.

The canopy of green that envelops the house — even the roof is covered with plants — keeps the couple comfortable and healthy. The traditional architecture adds to the house's eco-friendly nature. According to Peter it's not just large houses; even flats can have a

balcony with 500 plants that can filter the air that enters the home. Three cheers to that!

Our last port of call is on the west coast in Maharashtra. It is here in Peth village, Palghar, that my friends Ravi Iyer and Meena Menon bought land and set up a small organic farm. That Ravi, a project manager at IBM, and Meena, a journalist and author, decided to opt out of the rat race and become farmers is only part of the narrative. The fact that they have integrated into the rural community and brought about change is the real story.

Ravi has so far taught organic farming to 70 adivasi farmers in the neighbouring Vikramgad district. It has worked well for them since they are earning more with less financial input. He also set up 'Hari Bhari Tokri', a marketing channel to sell the farmers' produce and has commitments from building societies and schools to buy organic vegetables, fruits and grains. He also set up the Mumbai Organic Farmers and Consumers Association (MOFCA) to give a voice to the agricultural sector.

All these stories come with the subtext that to go green, you need to extend yourself. Happy New Year!

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



A green PHC near Bengaluru

Team Rotary News

A rural public health centre (PHC) at Kumbalgodu, on the outskirts of Bengaluru, now benefits from sustainable solar energy, thanks to the support from Rotary Club of Bangalore Lakeside, RID 3191, and its CSR partner Pai & Pai Chemicals.

Recognising the company's interest to invest in environmental projects, "we proposed installing solar power for the PHC, and the company's founder director Kruthika Pai liked the idea," said Kasinath Prabhu, district CSR director, and past president of the club. The PHC serves over 10 villages and gets a footfall of 40,000 visitors annually.

The newly installed solar panels address the issue of erratic power supply, ensuring consistent electricity



DG Satish Madhavan (centre, second row); Kruthika Pai (second row, right), founder-director, Pai & Pai Chemicals; District CSR director Kashinath Prabhu (fifth from L, front row), Chaya Rao, managing director, Pai & Pai; and RC Bangalore Lakeside president Abhilasha Pandit at the PHC in Kumbalgodu.

for medical equipment including the vaccine freezer at the centre. The 'Green PHC' initiative extends beyond solar power, with efforts

to create a green landscape around the centre located on a two-acre land. The project was completed at a cost of ₹12 lakh. ■

From RI South Asia

Know more about Paul Harris Society

The Paul Harris Society (PHS) recognises individuals who notify us of their intent to contribute \$1,000 or more each Rotary year to the Annual Fund, PolioPlus Fund or an approved global grant. PHS contributions count towards Rotary Foundation Sustaining Member (Annual Fund contributions only), Paul Harris Fellow, Multiple PHF, Major Donor and club recognition banners. Recognition consists of a chevron-style pin and certificate provided by the district PHS coordinator. PHS members and their eligibility appear in the Paul Harris Society Report. For more on PHS, read the Paul Harris Society brochure.

Trustee Bharat Pandya's Endowment Fund appeal

To support the Endowment Fund goal of \$2.025 billion by Rotary year 2025, TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya proposed, during a workshop on TRF Major Gifts and CSR Funds on July 30, 2024, setting up a special fund "2.025 by 2025 Endowment Zones 4, 5, 6 & 7 endowed fund." For a minimum gift of \$1,000 to this fund, donors will be recognised

as a Benefactor of TRF and will receive a certificate along with an insignia to wear with a PHF or other appropriate pin. Show your support to Endowment Fund Goal by contributing today.

Payment options

- Donor can send cheque in favour of "Rotary Foundation (India)" with information about donor name, Rotary ID, PAN and Gift ID (E21465), behind the cheque and/or cover note to enable us to process contribution smoothly.
- Through individual donor dynamic links that provide option of payment through multiple channels including debit/ credit cards, net banking, e-wallets, BHIM UPI etc. To get a dynamic link, donor must fill the online form (<https://forms.office.com/r/8ardURDjnR>) and mention endowment gift ID E21465. Once online form is submitted donor will receive payment link. Please contact Rabi Boaz at rabi.boaz@rotary.org for any queries on dynamic link. ■

Community impact

RC Nizamabad, RID 3150, organised a medical camp for 60 traffic constables. Scholarships worth ₹20,000 were awarded to five girl students pursuing engineering studies.



Traffic constables at the health camp.

Fighting tuberculosis

RC Coimbatore New Town, RID 3201, launched the Ni-Kshay Vahan, a mobile TB screening van, that will operate for 100 days in collaboration with NTEP, to strengthen early detection. DG N Sundaravadivelu inaugurated *Project Marumalarchi* to provide nutritious food to 1,500 TB patients for six months.



Club members at the launch of the Ni-Kshay Vahan, a mobile TB screening van.

Cash grant for visually-impaired

The members of RC Mumbai Kandivli West, RID 3141, led by its president Devsingh Shahani donated ₹1.25 lakh to the National Association for the Blind India, Worli, for the purchase of white canes, bed sheets and sponsoring the education of visually-impaired inmates.



Rotarians and inmates at the National Association for the Blind India, Worli.

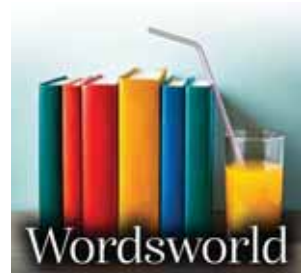
Celebrating women

DG V Sivakumar inaugurated the Narumugai Women's Conference hosted by RC Salem Wings, RID 2982, at the Periyar University, Salem. The event honoured 50 women Rotarians and 10 non-Rotarians for professional excellence, and featured inspiring speeches, cultural performances, fashion show and awards, drawing over 750 delegates.



Members of RC Salem Wings at the conference.

A kind of serendipity



Elif Shafak's new novel stirs up memories and emotions nostalgic and troubling.



Sandhya Rao

I am an Elif Shafak fan. This remarkable writer with over 20 novels under her belt writes in Turkish and English. Her storytelling is hard-hitting and brings to readers worlds we are unlikely to be familiar with, and tackles subjects such as child abuse and genocide. Her uncompromising examination of the Armenian genocide (which 'official' Turkey has consistently denied despite it being raised by other writers such as Orhan Pamuk as well) in *The Bastard of Istanbul* invited legal action from the authorities, forcing Shafak to move to the UK, where she still lives.

Her latest book, *There are Rivers in the Sky*, tackles the question of the Yazidis, a community of people from the region once known as Mesopotamia which included parts of Iraq, Syria, Turkey and Iran. Historically persecuted, with thousands of them

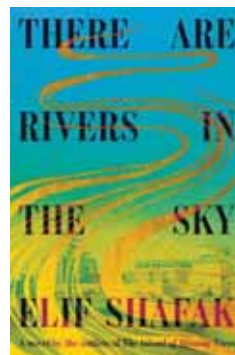
systematically decimated over centuries, the Yazidis continue to be oppressed and reviled for their religious practices, particularly by the ISIS. Shafak approaches their lives through a narrative woven around the discovery by an Englishman — whose story also unfolds in the course of the novel — of ancient tablets inscribed with the verses of *The Epic of Gilgamesh*. And all this is held together by references to water, from a tiny drop to the rivers Tigris, Euphrates and Thames, among others. The Yazidis hold water particularly sacred. The novel opens with a drop of water falling on a king's head, and, over the course of more than 400 pages, develops three separate plotlines featuring three different characters — Arthur, Narin, Zaleekhah — in three different times and places.

The king is shown in Nineveh, a rich and prosperous city on the banks of the Tigris, where Ashurbanipal is gazing proudly upon his splendid city: 'He reigns over an empire so immense that they hail him as "The Emperor of the Four Quarters of the World"'. Some

day he will also be remembered and renowned as "The Librarian King", "The Educated Monarch", "The Erudite Ruler of Mesopotamia" — titles that will make people forget that, whilst he may have been highly learned and cultured, he was no less cruel than his predecessors.' Amongst his most prized possessions is a section of a poem about a hero called Gilgamesh.

The name immediately brought to mind — and tears to my eyes — a dear friend exclaiming in horror: 'You don't know *The Epic of Gilgamesh*?! You're a student of literature! He's the hero of what's believed to be the first literary work committed to writing. Recorded in cuneiform. You don't know?!' I didn't and wasn't ashamed to admit as much because my friend was a genius, and what can you do in the face of genius but confess ignorance. We lost that friend, suddenly, unexpectedly, barely a year ago. When I thought I would spend a lovely weekend with her in her home in the US last year, I ended up attending a memorial service instead. Incidentally, cuneiform

is a writing system used between the early Bronze Age and the beginning of the Common Era in what is now West Asia / the Middle East (depending upon which side of the region you live). This epic is believed to have inspired the



tradition of hero poems, such as the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*.

Sometimes, I look up reviews just to see what other people think but usually never before getting into a book myself. Idle curiosity, you could say. And even though reviews rarely influence either the decision to read or my opinion, they do provide insight. I was halfway into *There are Rivers* when I saw the *Guardian* review which said the novel was ‘hard going’, mainly on account of baggy structure and sentences, sentimentality, superfluity and endless analogies to do with water, although it did commend certain other sections. My ordinary, curious, reader’s mind found the storytelling engaging, informative and connected to contemporary realities. And even if the coming together of various plotlines was predictable, the worldview the novel offers, prompted me to reflect on the history of human behaviour and stop to take in the full import of observations made through the voice of various characters or the author herself.

For instance, soldiers capture Ashurbanipal’s mentor whom they accuse of being a traitor, and bring him, bound in chains, before the king. Growing up, Ashurbanipal has spent endless hours reciting *Gilgamesh* with the mentor. As he kneels before his former ward, the old man says, ‘Gilgamesh... He wished to conquer death and so he travelled to the ends of the world — but he failed. He did not see that the only way to become

immortal is to be remembered after you are gone, and the only way to be remembered is to leave behind a good story. My king, why is it that you chose to make your story such a heartless one?’

Shafak artfully, if sometimes predictably, weaves together the storylines until they coalesce eventually to present the big picture. There was even a sense of déjà vu when I discovered that nine-year-old Narin, an important protagonist in the novel, is gradually losing her hearing. We had just read a book called *True Biz* by Sara Novic in our book club (it received passing mention in Wordsworld June 2023); that book is set in a school for the hearing impaired. Doctors say Narin will lose her hearing completely in eight months and so, before the squeal of infants and the bleating of lambs become merely recollections for Narin, Grandmother Besma wants to get her baptised at a place sacred to the Yazidis, called Lalish. She wants her to ‘hear the birds, susurrations and prayers of the sacred Valley of Lalish for the first and last time. Narin should behold the one place on earth where despair turns into hope and even the loneliest souls find solace.’ But before they can get there, thousands of Yazidis hiding in the Sinjar mountains are killed and thousands of women and children



Author **Elif Shafak**

abducted in the August 2014 genocide by ISIS. This historical event is brilliantly and movingly described in the novel, as are many other true events. Some characters too are based on actual people.

Arthur, who goes to Mesopotamia to search for a missing

section of *Gilgamesh*, realises how empires deceive themselves into believing they will last forever, just because they are powerful for a time. His archaeological findings provide enough evidence of that, and of how even the mightiest rulers feared death. Indeed, ‘Arthur is beginning to suspect that civilization is the name we give to what little we have salvaged from a loss that no one wants to remember. Triumphs are erected upon the jerry-built scaffolding of brutalities untold, heroic legends spun from the thread of aggressions and atrocities. The irrigation system was Nineveh’s glowing achievement — but how many lives were squandered in its construction. There is always another side, a forgotten side.’

In the hurly-burly of so-called modern life, most of us appear to be relinquishing our humanity for money, power, and other material things. Shafak serves a warning regarding this as the novel winds to a close: ‘The Ancient Mesopotamians are famed for inventing writing, mathematics, astronomy, irrigation and the wheel, but their biggest discovery has gone unrecognized. They are the first to experience the pain of losing a motherland.’ Centuries down the road, the pain of losing a motherland remains ever present — here, now, and all around.

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist

“The Ancient Mesopotamians are famed for inventing writing, mathematics, astronomy, irrigation and the wheel, but their biggest discovery has gone unrecognized. They are the first to experience the pain of losing a motherland.”



RID 3142

RC Hiranandani Ivan

Over 630 patients were screened at a mega medical camp in which ECG, blood sugar and other tests were done. Medicines worth ₹3 lakh, value coupons (₹2.34 lakh) and 575 spectacles were distributed. Twenty-five patients were identified for cataract surgery.



Club matters



RID 3182

RC Chikmagalur Coffee Land

Over 1,700 students attended a one-day event on Rotary projects at the Government Junior College. DG Dev Anand, Rtn Thejaswi Halekote, advocate; Krishnamurthy, Addl SP; Rtns Chandrashekhar M, doctor; and Venkatesh Chauhan, agri expert, spoke on community initiatives.

RID 3203

RC Erode Thindal

A rally-cum-roadshow was held to create awareness on traffic rules from the Erode bus stand with the participation of 100 students from Velalar Engineering College. DG Suresh Babu and state minister S Muthusamy were present, along with district and police officials.





RID 3212

RC Sivakasi Sparkler

Over 60 college students attended a three-day RYLA at the KR Tiger Resort, Courtallam, held jointly with RCs Sivakasi Diamond and Sengottai. DG Meerankhan Saleem inaugurated the event. Prizes were given to 48 winners and RYLA certificates were given to all.

RID 3181

RC Mangalore Seaside

Around 700 students from 35 schools took part at *Chinnara Chilipili*, a multilevel competition for all age groups, to mark Children's Day in Mangalore. Prizes were given to the winners.



RID 3231

RC Gudiyaatham – RID 3231

Over 135 patients were screened at a cardiology camp held with the support of KVS Heart Care. Gudiyaatham MLA Amulu Vijayan, PDG JKN Palani, municipal chairman S Soundararajan and club president C Kannan were present.



RID 3261

RC Wainganga Balaghat

Around 190 children had ECHO tests at a cardiac screening camp held jointly with the Rashtriya Bal Swasthya Karyakram. Doctors from Metro Hospital, Jabalpur, and Narayana Hrudayalaya, Bengaluru, checked the patients, and 50 were chosen for surgery.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

District Wise TRF Contribution

As on November, 2024

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

Source: RI South Asia Office

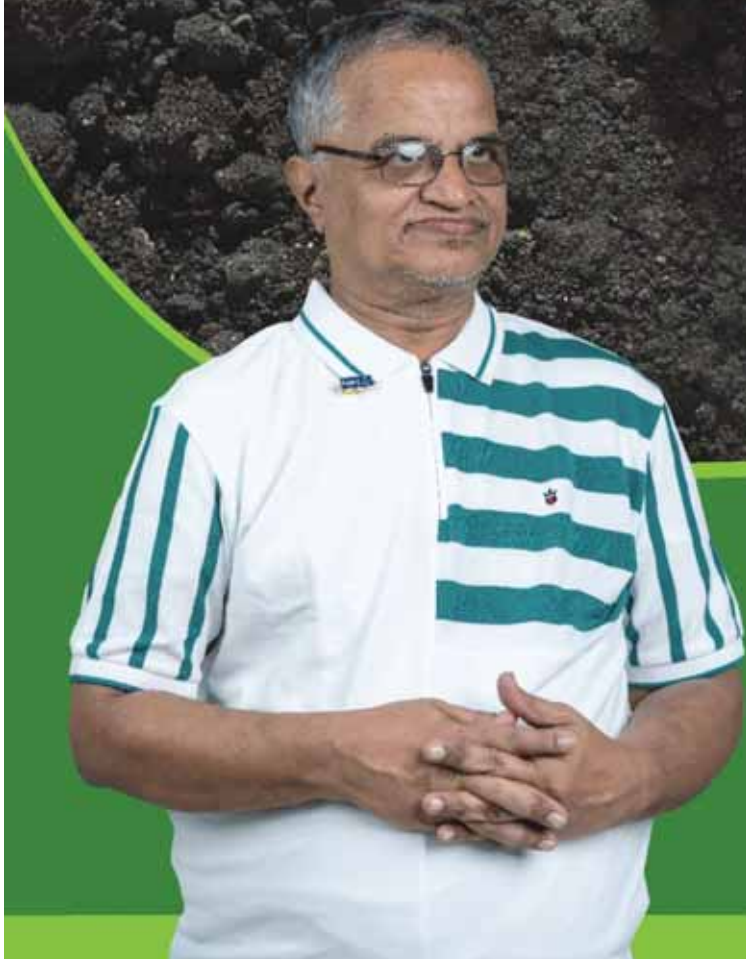
(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution
2981	45,993	11,232	0	38	57,263
2982	27,797	4,605	10,421	33,218	76,040
3000	17,893	2,671	1,000	245,336	266,900
3011	46,037	5,053	26,099	505,498	582,686
3012	1,282	151	1,500	97,500	100,433
3020	65,951	9,262	21,000	4,857	101,070
3030	19,854	875	4,190	53,000	77,920
3040	3,001	90	0	15,717	18,808
3053	33,979	300	0	0	34,279
3055	19,470	2,943	2,071	60,050	84,534
3056	15,645	93	60	133	15,930
3060	131,013	6,338	2,499	71,950	211,800
3070	14,858	582	0	0	15,440
3080	11,104	5,041	17,384	9,561	43,090
3090	13,165	56	7,000	0	20,221
3100	18,419	2,871	0	34,765	56,054
3110	12,365	623	1,000	135,838	149,825
3120	30,068	1,011	8,337	12,173	51,589
3131	383,471	14,052	48,524	114,948	560,994
3132	29,627	1,847	15,000	9,769	56,243
3141	321,812	24,720	78,000	1,094,610	1,519,142
3142	347,400	14,945	50,060	190,890	603,295
3150	55,030	11,368	57,251	387,105	510,753
3160	3,996	3,159	0	5,787	12,941
3170	28,918	19,775	2,000	90,377	141,071
3181	51,295	14,937	0	0	66,233
3182	32,583	3,098	0	36	35,717
3191	22,493	2,542	0	1,323	26,358
3192	66,180	1,868	1,000	33,105	102,153
3201	48,294	28,225	3,190	79,150	158,859
3203	29,006	9,643	15,000	4,690	58,340
3204	7,060	2,461	1,000	0	10,522
3211	15,269	3,287	0	11,212	29,768
3212	252,115	13,969	59,000	105,483	430,567
3231	12,054	4,731	57,138	30,400	104,323
3233	9,154	14,467	0	269,325	292,947
3234	54,320	23,834	69,276	654,648	802,077
3240	130,675	25,666	36,000	13,870	206,211
3250	132,016	4,534	1,000	41,503	179,053
3261	1,187	268	0	5,205	6,660
3262	30,487	1,879	1,289	0	33,655
3291	103,161	8,693	110,000	112,580	334,434
3220	Sri Lanka	42,584	2,754	4,052	53,465
3271	Pakistan	8,137	30,036	0	48,673
63	(former 3272)	929	881	0	1,810
64	(former 3281)	1,895	2,715	1,000	6,661
65	(former 3282)	458	1,046	0	1,504
3292		50,724	19,625	30,001	186,593

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North India on a plate

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

LBW



North India, or at least the part of it that lies to the north of Agra, has invented many foods, especially after partition in 1947. Butter chicken. *Kulcha a la aloo*, ie stuffed kulchas. *Chow mein avec tadka*, which was our revenge against the Chinese for mauling us in the 1962 war. (*Avec* means ‘with’ in French, by the way). *Dosas* stuffed with *kheema*, which was a specialty of the Coffee House in Delhi. I think it reminded the Keralites who ran it of their *kothu parottas* back home. And in the 1980s a friend told me that Indian Airlines even tried putting *kheema* in idlis. Ouch!

It’s quite a long list to which, I am sure you too can add a few items. Suffice it to say that in most cases (like butter chicken) it wasn’t gourmet experimentation. It was quite simply proof of the old adage that necessity is the mother of invention. My own favourite was the bun omelette. This is a super fast food, prepared in about two minutes on a street cart. It was our saviour when we were students in Delhi University. It consisted of two eggs beaten viciously and sautéed in a small lake of Dalda taken out of a battered and often rusted canister. Though onions were extra, the huge dollop of Polson butter was free. It was a full meal for less than a rupee. Carbs, fat and protein, all for about 50 paise. It was also heaven on earth. My mouth is watering as I write this.

Another place where this heaven could be found was the Bina railway station between Jhansi and Bhopal. It had a breakfast halt of about 30 minutes for trains passing through between 7 and 10am. There was a medium-sized dining room on the platform where you could go and sit down for a proper breakfast while the train waited. That diner also prepared exquisite breakfasts with eggs

to order and toast for free. Price one rupee. But alas there were no buns. Railway imagination didn’t extend that far. The breakfast *poori-aloo* at the Nizamuddin station restaurant in Delhi was a secret place that my brother and I kept to ourselves. He lived close by and would sneak off to the station to add a few more calories. At home he ate only cucumber.

But the North Indian railway stations had close competition from other places in India. The *bondas* of Karjat and Godhra, the *usal paav* outside the Baroda station, the massive *vadas* at the Vijayawada station’s dining room, the *khichdi* at Madurai station, all competed for travellers’ attention. You had to be a frequent ‘trainer,’ so to speak, to have this specialised knowledge. Frequent fliers, in contrast to frequent trainers, miss out on the mind-boggling diversity of Indian cuisine. When I tell my wife about these delights she says it’s the lack of hygiene that adds to the flavour. I think she is right. Today railway stations are dreary places not just because of the massive crowds but also because there’s virtually no food available there.

It wasn’t just at the stations, though. Until 1975 you could get top class food on board the trains as well. They used to have dining cars where freshly cooked food from the kitchen cars was served at your table. Plus, the waiters were in clean uniforms. Imagine eating a full five-course meal out of proper china crockery and steel cutlery while India, in all its splendour, slid by. But there was a trick to this. It was to avoid early breakfast because otherwise you would see a lot of morning rituals being performed by the tracks. India in those days was inside the trains and Bharat was outside. Both ignored each other and calmly carried on. ■



Rotary
District 3212



Yadhumanaval

100 PROGRAMS



Jayanthasri Balakrishnan

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Therefore the coming together of Rotary District 3212 and IDHAYAM, to empower young adults through a confidence building Programme specially designed by an illustrious life skills facilitator, Dr. Jayanthasri Balakrishnan, titled "Yadhumanaval", is a great blessing indeed.

LEKHA ads/Jan 25/Rotary/BIW

Get in Touch

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