

Rotary News

India

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Celebrating lifetime achievement



Above: PRIP Kalyan Banerjee with RI Directors KP Nagesh (L) and M Muruganandam.



Above: TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to PSNA Institution pro-chairman RSK Raguraam. RI President Francesco Arezzo and RI Director Muruganandam are present.



Left: Rajya Sabha MP and actor Kamal Haasan being recognised by RID Muruganandam. President Arezzo and his wife Anna Maria cheer on.



President Arezzo presents the Award to Kaveri Hospitals Founder Dr S Chandra Kumar. **From L:** RID Nagesh, TN School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi, RID Muruganandam and TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin are also seen.

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Planting 50,000 trees in a day

Rotary 

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An inspiring green story

I was inspired by the cover story, *Rooting for a green planet*. It showcases *Project Koti Nati*, which aims to plant one crore saplings across India. An impressive 48.2 lakh done already, transforming landscapes and spreading hope for a greener future. Heartfelt appreciation for DGE Ravishankar Dakoju, Neil Joseph and the team, whose tireless efforts are evident. This monumental effort has significantly reduced dust, lung cancer, asthma etc, and improved the general health of people in the Kolar belt. A great initiative to protect Mother Earth.

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

The cover story was brilliant! Sustainability and a greener planet are an important priority for Rotary. Global warming is a burning issue, and this project will have a domino effect for other Rotarians. Grateful for the generosity of our DGE Dakoju, who was rightfully called *prakriti purush* (nature's child). Kudos to Rasheeda for the amazing write-up.

Akil Rassai, RC Bangalore — D 3191

Congrats to the green warriors — Dakoju and Joseph. After the PolioPlus movement, the next big RI project should be 'greening of mother earth'; 30 years hence, our children should not blame us for not planting trees. Bank account details where Rotarians can donate on their birthdays/wedding anniversaries for this cause can be given.

Ramesh Chari, RC Bangalore
Orchards — D 3191

RI director Muruganandam's 1:2:3 formula is a simple and effective strategy to break the 1.2 million membership barrier. He says, "for every one Rotarian, let's engage two Rotaractors and three Interactors with our clubs."

R Murali Krishna, RC Berhampur — D 3262

As the Editor's note points out we should save food from wastage. Rotarians worldwide who are collecting such

food and distributing it to the hungry, inspire all of us.

Arun Kumar Dash, RC
Baripada — D 3262

The editor's clarion call to prevent food wastage is timely. An estimated 78 million kg of rice, vegetables and meat are wasted at family and social gatherings in India alone. Millions of people around the world go hungry. Ikyam, an NGO, where I'm a member, has provided 2,032 weekly midday meals to the needy in the last 36 weeks. Breakfast costs only ₹25 and evening meals cost ₹50. After reading the editorial, I came to know that we can collect wasted food and provide it to the needy, as also vegetables, fruits and meat. Thanks to *Rotary News* for raising awareness on food wastage. But a lot of food is wasted at Rotary events.

Shiva Perumal Subramani
RC Walajapet — D 3231

Thanks Rotary News

With gratitude, on behalf of the RC Malda, I extend my heartfelt thanks to *Rotary News* and Jaishree for chronicling our humble ecological endeavour, *Project Green Earth* to distribute jackfruit saplings. It has elevated a modest local initiative into a beacon of inspiration for Rotarians. By casting the spotlight on our mission to plant 10,000 jackfruit saplings to ensure nutritional security, sustainable livelihoods,

and environmental rejuvenation, you have amplified its resonance far beyond the verdant hamlets of Bhabuk Gram Panchayat.

Bhaskar Paul
RC Malda — D 3240

A nicely written review of the book *The day the chariot moved* authored by Subroto Bagchi. It is a highly motivational book for Rotarians as it focused on skill development in our country. Every governor should devise a programme to provide employable skills to the youth. Looking forward to many such book articles from Rasheeda Bhagat.

Radheshyam Modi
RC Akola — D 3030

I thank Kiran Zehra for publishing our experience. The beautifully written article, *Travelling to make new friends*, captured the spirit of our journey to Southern California, while reflecting Rotary's values — friendship, cultural exchange, and service beyond borders. Such partnerships strengthen Rotary's global impact.

PDG Sanjeev
Gupta — D 3040

The coverage of our club's anti-dengue drive by Muthukumaran went beyond words, reflecting the spirit, sacrifices and joy of the members of RC Manipal Hills. The story, paired with vibrant pictures, carried the

LETTERS

An amazing journal

As usual, the Sept issue is very rich with beautiful and impressive action photographs of service projects. The articles tell us a lot of good things inspiring Rotarians. In the Letters column, three Rotarians including PDG VR Muthu, RID 3212, have lauded the selfless service of Rajkumar Raman of RC Kodaikanal.

He has built pucca houses for 14 tribal families near the hill station. The coverage of this service project by the editor also prompted PDG Muthu to donate ₹1 lakh to bridge the funding gap to provide electricity in these homes. Congrats for making such novel projects known to other Rotary clubs, which will definitely motivate them to take up similar projects at their levels.

Our congratulations for publishing such exemplary service projects, which is also a service.

*R Srinivasan, RC Bengaluru
J P Nagar — D 3191*

Day-by-day, *Rotary News* is getting a new look with lots of interesting information and articles to read. 'Bringing water to villages of Maharashtra' has noteworthy content. Congrats to RC Hiranandani Estate, which constructed 12 dams and gave water to 3,000 villagers in the water starved region of Jawhar-Mokhada.

*Paramesh Dev Choudhury
RC Gauhati South — D 3240*

Our recent visit to your office gave us a new perspective; we saw the dedicated efforts in bringing out *Rotary News* and realised the hard work that goes into every colourful and inspiring edition that captures the spirit of Rotary. We read the magazine with joy; this visit showed us the commitment and teamwork required to bring it alive. We support and celebrate such efforts, as they are an important part of

keeping our Rotary family connected and inspired.

*Nagesh Kenjige
RC Chikmagalur-Coffee
Land — D 3182*

My appreciation for the well-crafted and balanced magazine edited by you; it gives us insight on the ongoing projects, opportunities like the RFE programme, and a snapshot of the incumbent DGs and incoming senior RI leaders. In an hour or two we can be up to date with what is happening in Rotary India, and that's no small achievement! Here's a small suggestion: please provide a QR code to access the magazine online.

*Dr Praveen Sarada, RC
Ahmedabad Metro — D 3055*

Thank you for your compliments. The QR code is already there — on Pg 10 and 11.

Editor

message to all Rotarians, uplifting our morale and giving us renewed energy.

*Suparna Shetty, RC
Manipal Hills — D 3182*

The August cover picture of a woman laughing made me read the amazing story of homes built for tribals.

I liked the article on empowering rural women, for such women can bring positive change in society.

*Atmaram Gupta, RC
Maharajganj — D 3120*

I was happy to see the article on homes built for Kodai tribals in the August issue. Rotary is playing a big role in building good communities across the world in sync with the Hindu philosophy of *Sarve Jana Sukhino Bhavantu* (May all people be happy).

*Suresh Kumar D
RC Rayachoti — D 3160*

In the August issue, the editor's note titled *Grace in giving* was superb. RI

director Muruganandam's message, *Say Yes to Rotary as we unite for good*, inspires Rotarians. TRF trustee Bharat Pandya says rightly "your gift transforms lives". Kudos to RID 3132 Rotarians for bringing digital learning to 100 rural schools in Maharashtra and RID 3141 clubs for giving free meals to poor homeless people.

*Daniel Chittilappilly
RC Kaloor — D 3205*

The prosthetic camp organised by RC Tinsukia (Aug'25) has put the spotlight on empowering youth, giving self-esteem to senior citizens and bringing joy to children, and hope to the underprivileged. The happiness on the faces of beneficiaries says it all.

*Kalpesh Modi
RC Palanpur Diamond
City — D 3055*

Cover: RI President
Francesco Arezzo and
his wife Anna Maria.
Pic: Rasheeda Bhagat

What community-led development looks like



October is Rotary's Community Economic Development Month, a time to spotlight our efforts to help communities build thriving, sustainable future. This month's observance aligns perfectly with the Rotary core value of leadership.

Leadership means empowering people to guide their own progress. That is precisely what Rotary's economic development projects aim to achieve.

Take, for example, a recent initiative in southern India in which Rotary members unlocked the power of women of the Adivasi tribal groups through sewing training to earn a living and regain social inclusion. Historically, widows and abandoned women in this region lose social standing and are shunned by society or blamed for their misfortunes. Opportunities to support themselves or obtain training are minimal.

This year, the Rotary Club of Windsor Roseland, Ontario, partnered with clubs in Districts 3203 and 3234 in India — and with the Indian organisation Sevalaya Trust — to provide sewing machines and training to 80 Adivasi women. They learned to stitch saree blouses, kurta tunics, and salwar suits, enabling them to support themselves and their families. Each woman received a certificate for completing the programme, and the sewing machine-provider offered free long-term maintenance for the machines. The project offered vital income and dignity to women ostracised by society after widowhood.

This story is one example of Rotary leadership in action: local people guiding solutions that address their community needs. Our role is not to deliver charity or

to impose outside models, but to foster self-reliance by investing in leadership, skills, and sustainable enterprise.

This October, I invite Rotary members worldwide to reflect on economic leadership in their communities. Who is stepping forward to lead local economic initiatives? Where is untapped talent that could be supported with training or mentorship? How can your club catalyse opportunity through partnerships with local businesses, vocational schools, or savings groups?

Leadership is not always about being visible. Sometimes it means listening, working collaboratively, and amplifying the voices of others. That approach lies at the heart of Rotary's philosophy and our lasting impact on economic development.

By building capacity — whether through micro-credit groups, vocational training workshops, or entrepreneurship programmes — we enable communities to lead their own transformation. When people take ownership of their progress, change becomes sustainable.

Let us lead with good intention and provide support with heart. By nurturing local leadership, we can create opportunities that ripple through communities, empowering individuals, families and societies.

Together, we can support economies that work for everyone and enact community development projects that last.

Francesco Arezzo
President, Rotary International



Goodbye... Sundance Kid

The last few weeks have brought heartbreaking news; the first was the passing on of SangKoo Yun, who was nominated RI President, but stepped down due to a terrible health condition. His loss has been captured in this issue with moving, heartfelt tributes by two past RI Presidents — KR Ravindran and Shekhar Mehta — who knew him well.

Another great tragedy was the demise of the swoon-worthy Hollywood icon Robert Redford. Almost every second woman of an era gone by who watched him on the silver screen, which he lit up with his magical smile, had a crush on him. And almost every man admired and envied him. Who can forget the dapper Sundance Kid in the space he shared with another great Hollywood legend Paul Newman in *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* (1969)?

Redford had a quiet charm and natural grace, and despite being a Hollywood celebrity, his friends say he displayed humility in all he did. His co-star Barbara Streisand in the movie *The way we were*, who had a massive crush on him, described him as a "smart private, shy but self-assured intellectual artist... whose work was skilfully subtle, restrained and yet deeply emotional." But, in the times to come, he will be remembered for being much more than a stunningly handsome man and great actor. Because he was much more than that.


He was also a keen listener, progressive thinker, a fierce environmentalist and a diversity warrior. Unlike most successful superstars he did not bask in his success to snuggle into an uber luxurious life. In 1981 he established the Sundance Institute to give new and struggling artists the platform to develop their skills, and give expression to new, bold and independent work. As he himself said, artists of every hue needed "to have the freedom of expression to tell our stories, in our own way about

the human condition, the complexities of life, the world around us."

And most, important, as an influential celebrity, he spoke up for what was right, unlike our Bollywood and other Indian film industry greats who have forgotten what it is like to have a spine. Not in a shrill voice, but firmly and with quiet and restrained dignity. While accepting an Oscar for lifetime achievement in 2002, addressing his peers in the audience, which included all-time great actors and directors, he talked about the "solid and healthy" film industry they shared. But he warned that in the coming years, they'd "have to make sure to embrace the risks as well as the sure things, to make sure that the freedom of our artistic expression is nurtured and kept alive, because I believe that keeping diversity alive will help keep our industry alive."

Next, he expressed his concern for the "sea change" that the world they lived in was undergoing. "And as we all struggle to find our way in it, to get a grip and make sense out of the chaos and the destruction and the tragedy, one word that emerges is the word freedom... its importance, its rarity... and how fortunate we are to have it. Such freedom is a gift and not to be taken lightly. The glory of art is not only that it can survive change, but lead it."

Ponder over his words, and the position of influence in the world of art that Redford held, when he uttered them. They are the words of a thinker, a leader... they are over two decades old, but even more relevant in our world which is fast spiralling into a deeper chaos, destruction and darkness...


Rasheeda Bhagat

From compost to community oasis

Jaishree

What was once an eyesore of garbage and debris has today blossomed into a lush green haven — the *Rotary Vanam* of Srikakulam. Spread across 1.3 acres on the banks of the River Nagavalli, this once-neglected compost yard has been completely transformed by the Rotary Club of Srikakulam, RID 3020.

Back in 2017, the city municipal corporation allotted the wasteland to the club. “It was filled with all kinds of trash — plastics, used clothes, construction material, liquor bottles... you name it,” recalls past president Sivashankar Devarasetty. The site’s location, close to a housing board colony, made its state even more disturbing. Determined to bring about change, the Rotarians embarked on what became an eight-month-long clean-up drive, with support from agrochemical manufacturer NACL Industries. The land was cleared and covered with three feet of fresh river sand to prepare it for new life.

The Andhra Pradesh Forest Department provided the club 500 saplings to be planted on the site, and the *Rotary Vanam* took shape. Since it was a compost yard, the club avoided planting fruit-bearing trees. Watering posed a challenge initially, but the municipal corporation stepped in to provide a dedicated water connection.

With funds from past governors MC Das and Guddati Viswanadh, the club added a walking track, open-air gym and compound wall, shaping the space into a true community park. A gardener and watchman were appointed, ensuring its upkeep, while club members began holding their Sunday meetings amidst the greenery.

“The park has enhanced Rotary’s public image to a great extent. The space is now a pride of the city, an oasis for walkers, fitness enthusiasts, children, and anyone longing for peace and fresh air,” says Devarasetty with quiet pride.

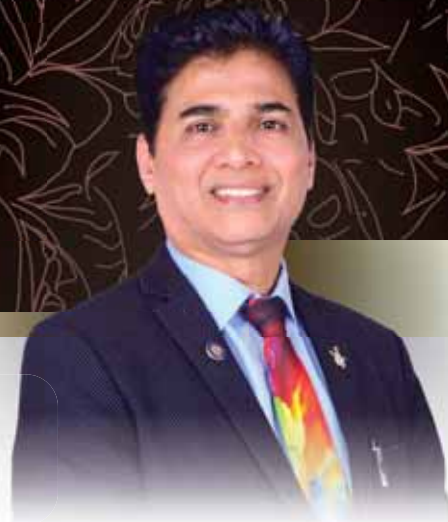
Building on the success of *Rotary Vanam*, the club is now preparing to launch a comprehensive waste management system. ■

Members of RC Srikakulam having their club meeting at the Rotary Vanam.



Director speak

Now, more than ever, the world needs Rotary



Dear friends in Rotary,
Time is flying by, and we already find ourselves in October — a quarter of the Rotary year behind us. October is always a meaningful month. Across Rotary, it is the Economic and Community Development month, and it is also the month in which we mark World Polio Day on October 24.

Since 1985, Rotary has been at the heart of one of humanity's most extraordinary missions — the fight to end polio. From 1,000 cases every day, to the very edge of eradication, our journey has been nothing short of remarkable. We have immunised over 2.5 billion children, contributed \$2.7 billion, and forged powerful partnerships, especially with the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. But the promise is not yet fulfilled. This World Polio Day, I invite every Rotarian across our zones to contribute \$50 to PolioPlus. With the 2-for-1 match from the Gates Foundation, your gift becomes \$150, bringing us closer to finishing this historic task.

We also know that the economic and development challenges facing our region and the world, is slowing growth. Rising living costs, poverty, youth unemployment and inequality continue to weigh heavily. But Rotary is uniquely placed to respond to these challenges. By creating livelihoods,

empowering women and youth, improving education and health, and developing sustainable projects, we can turn challenges into opportunities. Each act of service, however small, contributes to the progress of our communities and advances the Sustainable Development Goals.

The first quarter of this year has already been inspiring. Across our zones, we have welcomed nearly 12,000 new Rotarians, taking India's membership to close to 180,000 Rotarians. Rotaract continues to thrive with 38,357 members. And together, we have contributed over \$3 million to The Rotary Foundation. These achievements remind us of what is possible when we act with purpose.

The road ahead is about sustaining this momentum — by engaging our members deeply, serving our communities with heart, and working closely with CSR partners to expand our reach and impact.

The world needs Rotary — and it needs us now. Let us grow stronger, give more generously, and serve with renewed purpose. We can truly *Unite for Good*.

You make us proud every single day.

KP Nagesh

RI Director, 2025–27

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Young voices take the spotlight



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Rotaractors and young Rotarians are leaders at Rotary International conventions. The newest generation of members, including the ones pictured in Calgary, present onstage, share expertise, and shepherd service projects. They'll set the tone again in Taipei June 13–17.

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Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee Chair



Born of friendship

Friendship in Rotary often bears fruit that can change the world. When I was Rotary president-elect, I served on the Board of Directors alongside then Vice President Olayinka ‘Yinka’ Hakeem Babalola from Nigeria. My wife, Susanne, spent time with Yinka’s wife, Preba ‘Precy’ Babalola. Yinka and Precy support The Rotary Foundation, not only as Arch Klumph Society members, Benefactors and Major Donors but also as Rotary members who are deeply involved in Foundation projects.

Susanne and Precy’s friendship led to their clubs joining forces. For October, as Rotary marks Community Economic Development Month, I thought Precy Babalola could best capture the impact of their collaboration in her own words:

Obuama, Nigeria, was hit hard by Covid-19. Many families, especially women and young adults, were left without stable income or opportunity. The community urgently needed practical support and long-term solutions.

My club, the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Passport, decided to respond. We partnered with the Rotary E-Club of Hamburg-Connect and our districts to launch a global grant project focused on empowering people with skills that restore hope and dignity.

Over 250 women and young adults were trained in farming fish, poultry, and snails as well as bead making. Local facilitators led hands-on workshops, equipping participants with skills to start enterprises.

Families are now generating income and mothers can send their children to school. Youths are earning, teaching others, and contributing to the local economy.

Women, once stuck, are now leading their own businesses, training others, and finding a new sense of purpose. The project continues to ripple, creating not just jobs but confident community leaders.

This is what change looks like when dedicated Rotarians work together with the support of The Rotary Foundation.

Community economic development is an area of powerful projects for many reasons. We have experts in our clubs who know how businesses can strengthen their local economy. Such projects can be adapted nearly anywhere and often show early signs of success.

Our Foundation, too, provides the expertise of an engaged professional staff and the Cadre of Technical Advisers.

What began as dinner conversation led to a life-changing global grant. Isn’t it remarkable that in Rotary, the friendships we make can create opportunities that transform lives for generations?

Holger Knaack
TRF Trustee Chair

The quantum of service by Rotary in India highest in the world: RI Prez

Rasheeda Bhagat

RI President Francesco Arezzo and
his wife Anna Maria.



Rasheeda Bhagat



You expect any Italian male to be charming... for after all

charm is built into the Italian DNA. RI President Francesco Arezzo does ooze charm... but he is much more than charming... he is both cerebral and witty, but at the same time so easy to talk to as he wears his power lightly. He may falter a little while searching for difficult English words, or stumble a bit pronouncing the long ones... but his disarming smile and spontaneous laughter more than make up for it. When he delivers a speech, it takes a couple

of minutes to cut through the heavy Italian accent, but once you've done that, its content leaves you thinking.

I catch up with Arezzo, and his genial, ever-smiling spouse Anna Maria, on the sidelines of the Lead25 Conclave in Chennai for an interview for *Rotary News*. The time given is 20 minutes, but the couple end up discussing for 55 minutes their Rotary journey and sportingly posed for pictures in the limited space of their hotel suite!

Having done several olive oil tours around Europe, Turkey and North Africa, I quiz him on his family farm in Sicily, Italy, producing olive oil for 200 years. "That farm is close to my heart because my mother, father of my mother, grandfather of my mother... were involved in

the production. But today, more than me, Anna does all the hard work.”

Arezzo grew up in Sicily where his family has lived for 800–900 years. “We are completely Sicilian. I was born in a little city of 70,000 people... for you it’s a very tiny city. My childhood was great; the 1960s and ’70s were a wonderful time to be in Italy.”

He lost his father, a radiologist, at 10, and grew up with his mother. After training as a dentist elsewhere in Italy, he returned home to open his practice

as a dentist. When and how did he meet Anna? “I met her when I was 2 years old,” he grins. “Our families are very close and I’d call her parents uncle and aunt! We grew up together!”

So, who was the one who proposed? With a mischievous twinkle in his eye, he says, “Well, what can I say; she did a very strong campaign!” They got married in Oct 1979, and have two daughters and two grandchildren, one named after him and the other after Anna. “Just like you do in India,” quips Anna.



At the Lead25 Conclave in Chennai.



Helping at a food bank project in 2017.





Left: Anna (R) and President Arezzo working at a project for the disabled on RC Malta's Hands-on Day.



With his presidential aide John de Giorgio and his wife Monique Chambers at a stall in the Lead25 Conclave.



Rasheeda Bhagat

Yes, there are so many similarities between India and Italy, I comment, like family bonhomie, sharing food when dining in restaurants etc. “Both countries have a long history and culture, so we are very similar... but we are also very different in some aspects,” he adds.

Asked when and why he joined Rotary, Arezzo says that soon after returning home after his education, his father’s friends, members of the Rotary Club of Ragusa, proposed his name in 1989. “I have to confess that when I joined Rotary, I didn’t know exactly what Rotary was. But as all friends of my father, and many people in the city I knew, were members of that club, so when they proposed my name, it seemed like a good thing

to join. But as usual, you begin to understand what Rotary really is when you become club president. Then you understand how complex, beautiful and useful Rotary is for the community.”

It took him 10 years to become club president and another 10 to become governor, and he gradually developed “a network all over Sicily, Italy and the world. I met a lot of people who were very interesting, very passionate and very close to my soul! And now I have many of my best friends coming from Rotary. But,” he adds with a mock sigh, “only one thing went bad; I met John (de Giorgio),” pointing to his aide seated in the room.

So does he harass or bully him, I pick up the cue. “Oh yes, he tries everyday,” Arezzo grins, adding that when he was governor, he met de Giorgio, who was then president of

At a glance



Rasheeda Bhagat

Are you a foodie? Your favourite cuisine.

It is very simple. You like the food of your childhood. So I like the cuisine, not of Italy, but Sicily... yes, pasta. We eat a lot of fish, and many traditional dishes. What is amazing in Italy is that we have a traditional dish for every holiday... Christmas, St John's, as he is saint of the city, Easter, and so on. And I love all that food!

Do you cook, can you cook?

Anna, seated beside him, leans back, and shakes her head vigorously and says: 'Oh please!! He makes a mess... he likes very much to cook, but I have to clean!' John de Giorgio, chips in cheerfully: He is a better President than a cook!

Indian food, tolerance of spice: I do like Indian food. I like spicy, but not too much!

Religion: I am Catholic and go to church on Sundays. But I like to read about other religions. I know just a bit about your books like the *Bhagwad Gita*.

Reading; all-time favourite author:

I love to read... I read a lot of Pirandello, a writer from Sicily. I love to read the Turkish writer Orhan Pamuk (Nobel Prize for Literature in 2006), and the Russian writer Anton Chekhov. I have all of Pamuk's books at home; *My name is Red* is another great book... a little strange but so beautiful!

Music: Opera. I also like classical music.

Instruments: Oh no, but in my family my mother, grandmother and

aunt played the piano... my brother plays everything — trumpet, guitar... you name it! I play... just the bell of the house! (laughs heartily).

Favourite travel destination: Not the beach; I have the beach right at home. I like to travel to historic places, where there is a lot of history and culture. I like to go to the temples in India, because there you can find out about the culture of the place. Sicily is small, compared with India, but it is a continent for culture. You can find the ruins of Greeks, Romans, Arabs, Byzantines, Normans here. You can read all that history while walking through the city.

Most favourite city in the world: Naples; it is such a wonderful city... it's a big city, not so rich, a bit abandoned but its beauty is the ancient vibe it has... the atmosphere. Also, the people are very friendly and likeable. The food here is so good; the pizza was born here and the music in Naples is outstanding. The beauty of Italy is that even in a city no one knows, you can find a beautiful church! The beauty is spread all over the country... it is not concentrated, like for example, in France, it is concentrated in Paris.

Dream for Rotary: My dream is simple... to finish the campaign to eradicate polio and participate in the Nobel Prize... winning it is very difficult, but at least to participate in the process would be so good.

After polio, what: I told you I like Naples. In Naples the people are very superstitious... so it is bad luck to think now on what to do after Polio! ■

RC Malta, which forms a part of the same RI district. "We became good friends very fast!"

I ask Arezzo to spell out his vision and priorities for Rotary as RI President, even though he had virtually no time to plan his year. He responds: "Well, I just had a few days before I became President... such a short time to prepare. There are some things which are very important for Rotary, two of them are historical. One, the eradication of polio. It is so vital for our organisation. India did a great job, and was able to eradicate polio, doing something they said all over the world was impossible! It was a great, great job."

But now Rotary needs to finish the job as polio cases still remain in two countries, "where we are engaged — Afghanistan and Pakistan — and we have to complete the job."

The second one is the problem of membership "which probably you (India) ignore because you are growing. Tomorrow (at the Lead25 Conclave in Chennai) they are going to present 250 new clubs, something that is impossible in Europe. Membership all over the world is a big problem, so that is my second priority."

Another priority, or concern he has, is related to "the suffering caused by war. It is difficult for us to obtain peace between two countries that are fighting, but my aim is to work for peace." And this Rotary can do in a myriad of ways; "we work for peace when we give to people fresh water, sanitation, good and clean environment, education... all these are small but definite steps towards peace. Together we can create, and we are creating, a great network of Rotarians who can enhance better



President Arezzo and his family. Front row (from L): Arezzo, holding grandson Francesco; and Anna holding granddaughter Anna Maria. Standing (from L): Arezzo's daughter Elena; his son-in-law Magnus; and daughter Raffaella.

comprehension between people all over the world.”

RI President gives the example of his visit to India, where he has met not only existing friends but made new ones. “For me, India is a country where my friends live. If we have millions of people around the world who can comprehend the feelings, problems and challenges that people in other countries near them face, it is another small step towards peace. We have to enhance the comprehension between people. That is my aim... to improve what we can do, and have pacifist dialogues between countries.”

Asked about Israel and Palestine, he says, “Yes, that is another big problem. We cannot stop the war but we can help people to connect, to speak to each other and have a better comprehension, because very often war is the result of fear, and fear is

the result of ignorance. Because I am ignorant about another country, I fear it and its people. But if we can get to know each other, connect with each other, we will realise that they have the same dreams, the same problems, the same souls as we have. If we can meet, sit together and talk, we can have better understanding of one another. We can do small things, but we have to do them.”

These three are his main goals during this year... “or should I say the remaining months? Because an RI President usually has one and half years to plan. But I spent two months to understand what I should do!”

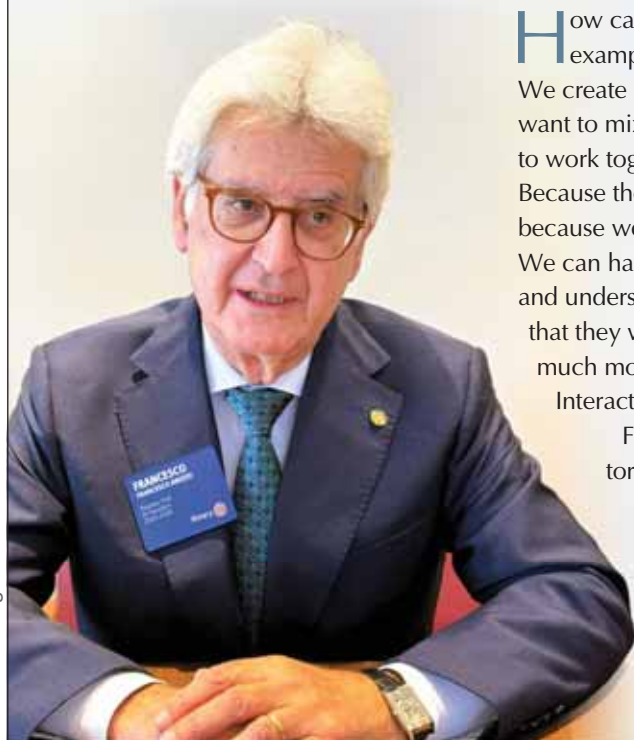
So did he feel disadvantaged or pressurised, I ask him. His answer tells us why he has reached the top post in RI. “No, I was actually

If millions
throughout the world
can comprehend the
feelings, problems, challenges
that people of other countries near
them face, it is another small
step towards peace.

excited... and when you have something that is more difficult to do, you are more motivated.”

But he admits that “now that my term has started, I understand that to have one year to prepare would have

President-speak on Rotaractors



How can we attract younger members to Rotary? Take the example of Europe; very often we remain isolated in Rotary. We create Rotaract clubs and then abandon them. We don't want to mix with them, because they are too young. But we have to work together with them. Why don't they become Rotarians? Because they don't believe in Rotary. They don't believe in us, because we don't work together and we don't know each other. We can have more Rotaractors become Rotarians if we admire and understand each other, and work together. We must ensure that they work with us in every project and should be involved much more than is happening today. And the same is true of Interactors.

For instance, I'm told I will be meeting 2,000 Rotaractors tomorrow; imagine this many Rotaractors in one room! We don't even have this many Rotaractors all over Europe and here you have them in one room. That's an incredible number! But at the same time, you have to involve them and make them feel a part of Rotary. To elevate Rotaract is not enough, we have to engage them and work together. ■

Anna's role in Arezzo's Rotary journey

When asked about Anna's role in his Rotary journey and if she has been resentful about Rotary taking away so much of his time, President Arezzo says, "It is impossible to be an effective RI President, and reach this position, without the support of your spouse and family. It's a great commitment, and very time consuming. So I need to be supported by her in many, many ways, and I have found that support from her."

Adds Anna jovially, "I organise his luggage." He responds: "I have to go here and there, and it is amazing how in a small suitcase she will put a lot of things and when I have to return and repack the bag I cannot understand how she managed to put so many things there. It seems impossible!"

Has Anna ever resented Arezzo giving so much time to Rotary? "Oh yes, because I am alone at home and I sometimes find it difficult to manage everything. Officially, I have no career but I really do a lot work, I work for the entire family." He chips in: "I always say I am an olive oil producer, but in reality, it is she who is the olive oil producer because I don't have the time to look after the farm. We have a small hotel; again,

I don't have the time. It is she who runs the hotel. She does a lot of things...."

Now that he has reached the topmost position in Rotary, is she happy? "Yes, I'm very happy, but at this moment I am a little confused. There are a lot of things to do, so many programmes to attend... because it was so fast, we didn't have time to prepare," sighs Anna.

Adds Arezzo, "We had to leave our home, farm and my office, and so fast.... Yes, we had absolutely no time to prepare. Luckily, at the office, we have my elder daughter, who is also a dentist and works with me... when I said I was elected RI President... she began to cry." From happiness, I ask: "Well yes, but also because she was worried, that now she would have to handle the office all alone!"

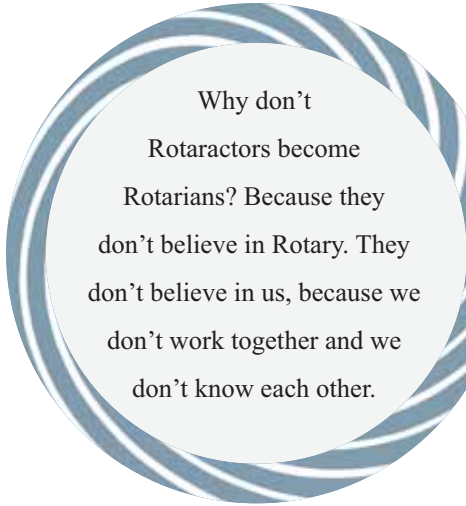
The last word should go to his aide de Giorgio, who describes Arezzo as "a very humane person. His relationship with people is very good and that is appreciated by Rotarians. At the same time, he is also very humble as a person... a nice combination."

"We've been friends for 15 years... and have the same problem — we have two daughters of the same age," smiles Arezzo. ■

been much better. But I have to do what I can!"

Does the shorter span make his job that much harder? "It means more hours of work. The life of any RI President is very busy; you have to travel around the world, you have

to take pictures with the Rotarians (laughs heartily!) That is one of the main jobs of the president! I told RIDs Nagesh and MMM that I am here for the Rotarians, to speak to them, meet them and take pictures with them. I have to motivate them



Why don't
Rotaractors become
Rotarians? Because they
don't believe in Rotary. They
don't believe in us, because we
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so I am available to them. I am very happy to meet people from the Rotary family."

This was Anna and Arezzo's third visit to India; the first was when he was RI President's representative at a meet in Lucknow, and the second during the Rotary Centennial in India celebrations in Kolkata. Expectedly, Anna is disappointed that she had no time for shopping! "Both of us love the culture, history and food of India and hopefully when we come for the Zone Institute this November, we will have some time for all this," he says.

"Oh yes, I would love to go shopping in India and I have told him to give me some time for shopping during the next visit," Anna says firmly!

Coming to Rotary in India and the kind of community service projects that Rotarians do here, Arezzo says, "The good thing, the very good thing, is what we saw earlier today... the number of projects that were launched is unbelievable and in so many different fields.

We saw 100 pink autos for women... through this you are giving 100 women the opportunity to earn and maintain their livelihood. It was an excellent project and so moving. In the House of Friendship there were so many projects on health, water, sanitation. The quantum of service that Rotarians in India do is probably the highest in the world. It is amazing.”

The other thing is the money the Rotarians in India give to The Rotary Foundation; it is huge. “Yesterday we had 29 new AKS members; that is amazing and probably possible in the US. But this is impossible in other parts of the world. In Europe it is absolutely impossible. So that is great. It is a vibrant Rotary in India with a lot of good



Rasheeda Bhagat



Anna, President Arezzo and de Giorgio.

projects, a lot of enthusiasm and passion among the Rotarians.”

What about the negative aspects the last few RI Presidents have been talking about? “What is bad in India? In some places Rotarians are fighting each other. When we are in a Board meeting, we receive a lot of complaints about elections. In Evanston, if 10 complaints come, eight are from India. This is a problem. The level of internal fighting in Rotary in India is something that we have to find a way to reduce. It is a pity, because the Rotarians here are so active, enthusiastic and passionate.”

Asked for a possible solution, Arezzo shrugs and says, “I don’t know. It is not easy to find a solution. It is a cultural problem and we have to work on the Rotarians to convince them that there is room for everybody. If you don’t become a club president or governor this year, you can wait. It is not such a big problem. But it is not easy to find a solution. The only way is to talk to the Rotarians and convince them!”

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S



Rotary, a lifeline of hope

Rasheeda Bhagat



RI President Francesco Arezzo presents a memento to TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin as (from L) School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi, PDG ISAK Nazar and conclave convener RI Director M Muruganandam look on.



From a young age I've seen the service being done by Rotary and have admired and been impressed by it. The way Rotarians work for the betterment of the people from disadvantaged families is no ordinary matter. Congratulations," said Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin, while inaugurating the Lead25 Conclave organised by RI director M Muruganandam in Chennai.

Launching a bunch of mammoth community service projects worth a whopping ₹250 crore, which will be done in a year, some of them in partnership with the Tamil Nadu government, he said he was most happy about one particular project he had flagged off that morning, which was related to women's empowerment. "We flagged off today 100 pink autos for women drivers which is an excellent example of women's empowerment. It is also wonderful to see the induction of 250 new Rotary clubs. These are great milestones which speak volumes about Rotary's commitment to progress."

Rotary's history was both "impressive and impactful"; since its founding in 1905 in Chicago, it had grown into a global family with 1.4 million members across 220 countries. "Standing here in this hall filled with some 10,000 participants, I can see and feel the enthusiasm, passion and spirit of service and fellowship that define Rotary, while experiencing how the global spirit of Rotary has come to *Namma Chennai*. I really admire Rotary's service to society through a range of projects. From education and health to community development, you are making a difference in every sphere of life."

Heaping high praise on Rotary, Udhayanidhi noted that one of its "greatest contributions to humanity" was its work to end polio in the

world. From the 1980s, the organisation “had led from the front to eradicate polio, investing \$2.7 billion and spending millions of voluntary hours. Rotarians have helped to reduce polio cases by 99.9 per cent worldwide, a great achievement. India’s story to become polio-free is incomplete without acknowledging Rotary’s role,” he added.

He proudly recalled how his grandfather and former Tamil Nadu CM M Karunanidhi had worked along with Rotary for the eradication of polio. “Because of the action taken by the TN government and the Rotarians of Tamil Nadu, we became the first state in India to eradicate polio. For this, the entire credit goes to Rotary. During the Covid pandemic too, Rotary’s work was truly outstanding in providing medical equipment, essential supplies and extending full support to the TN government. I have personal



From L: School Education Minister Poyyamozhi, PDG Nazar, President Arezzo, TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin and RID Muruganandam.

experience of working closely with Rotary during the pandemic, when we joined hands with TRF to provide masks, sanitation kits and other medical assistance.”

Other services extended by Rotary include support to schools in under-developed areas, setting up of dialysis centres benefitting thousands of

people and their families. “For all the service they render, Rotary is not just a service organisation but a lifeline of hope,” he added.

The Deputy CM said that RI director Muruganandam had shared with him some proposals for collaboration with the TN government. “Today, we’ve begun by signing the MoU on *Namma School Namma Ooru Palli* initiative and a statewide cervical cancer awareness and vaccination initiative to safeguard women’s health.” He had also suggested that state-level social service awards be given to outstanding Rotarians. “I assure you that our government has noted them all carefully and we will explore ways to take them forward.”

Udhayanidhi added that as the present TN government was also “committed to sports development, we will be happy to collaborate and partner with Rotary to work in sports for the empowerment of our youth.”

He concluded by saying such gatherings defined true leadership, which was not “just about position or power but service, sacrifice and responsibility. We in the government are also working along with the same values



TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin with beneficiaries of the *Pink Auto project*.

as Rotary does, to build a community based on social equity and gender justice. With partners like Rotary we can create greater impact.”

Addressing the inaugural session, TN Minister for School Education Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozhi welcomed the MoU between the TN government and Rotary to upgrade the infrastructure in 1,000 government-run schools under the *Namma School Namma Ooru Palli* initiative. He said this scheme was launched by TN Chief Minister MK Stalin in Dec 2022 to upgrade the infrastructure and facilities in government-run schools. “He had made the first contribution of ₹5 lakh; today this scheme has grown to ₹800 crore and being run transparently. You should see the condition of these schools before and after the renovation.”

Thanking Rotary for the collaborative venture under which 1,000 more schools would be renovated, he congratulated Muruganandam for the great work he was doing. “He is special not because of the post he holds but because he is a Rotarian who knows the pain of the underprivileged, the downtrodden and the physically-challenged. If your action inspires others to do more, become more, learn more and dream more, then you are an efficient leader.”

He said as the TN government lays great stress on education, Rotary’s help in improving the hygiene and sanitation in 1,000 schools is greatly valued. Quoting Gandhiji on “education is for life,” he said the state government had recently launched the TN Spark initiative, under which students will be taught how to handle AI tools, robotics, the fundamentals of computer science and other online tools

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee honoured



TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin presents the Lifetime Achievement Award to PRIP Kalyan Banerjee. From L: RID Muruganandam, President Arezzo, PRID C Basker and conclave chairman PDG John Daniel are also present.

Past RI President Kalyan Banerjee was honoured at the inaugural session of Lead25. Introducing him, PRID C Basker said he was being recognised for “the exemplary service and leadership he had provided during 50 years in Rotary from 1972,” which included his stint as trustee chair of TRF during its centennial year.

“We’ve all been moved by his dedication to Rotary and its values,” he said, and described a personal experience where he had found how a “collective will and compassionate leadership can achieve miracles.”

When thousands of homes were lost in the devastating floods in Kerala and Karnataka in 2018, Basker was then RI director and during the Rotary Institute in Chennai, when the DGs of the affected districts sought urgent help, an initiative was formed to “immediately mobilise funds from Rotary clubs and generous donors to help rebuild the homes and lives of some BPL families.” Banerjee was asked to lead this initiative. “He sprang into action and

attended every single meeting... guiding and encouraging us and ensuring that the project stayed on track and reached completion, and 60 homes were handed over to the beneficiaries in record time.”

In his address Banerjee thanked the organisers for the honour and said for half a century Rotary had been integrated into him like his morning breakfast and evening tea. “The past 50 years have been momentous... today as I look back on the last half a century I often wonder, did we do all the right things? Are we benefitting our town, community, organisation and the world? Do people know what we are doing and what Rotary stands for?”

Striking a melancholic note, he said he was reminded of these lines (from the poem of the English poet Walter Savage Landor, titled *Dying Speech of an Old Philosopher*): I strove with none, for none was worth my strife. / Nature I loved and, next to Nature, Art (and Rotary’s motto of doing, giving, serving) / I warm’d both hands before the fire of life. / It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

Service projects & MoUs

At the Lead25 Conclave, pan-India service projects worth ₹250 crore were launched and MoUs signed in Rotary's focus areas.

A major MoU was upgrading 1,000 government schools across Tamil Nadu by Rotary clubs under the *Namma School Namma Ooru Palli* with the TN government. Another was a three-year tie-up with the Martin Charitable Trust for a Miyawaki forest to promote green cover and restore native ecosystems in five locations in the state. Planting 50,000 trees through a three-year partnership with Ellappalayam Arumugam Trust; a one-year partnership with the Kaveri Group of Hospitals for paediatric heart care; and a



As President Arezzo undergoes an eye checkup at the *Project Orange* stall in the HoF, his spouse Anna Maria clicks a picture; RI Directors Muruganandam and KP Nagesh, and PDG S Muthupalaniappan look on.

one-year tie-up with Kamal Panpattu Maiyam to empower youngsters through leadership and vocational skills, and encourage innovation, entrepreneurship and environmental stewardship, were other MoUs.

Service projects launched at the event include upgrading school infrastructure, mobile classrooms for adult literacy, digital classrooms in schools; setting up dialysis centres,

blood banks, mobile clinics and ambulances for tribal and remote villages, TB and cancer care, human milk banks, giving smart glasses to the blind; building low-cost houses, check dams and toilets for communities, crematoriums, old age homes and skill development centres; and environment care initiatives such as waste recycling plant, lake restoration and creation of Miyawaki forests.



From L: RID 3234 DG Vinod Saraogi, President Arezzo, Anna, RID Muruganandam, Monique Chambers (wife of the President's aide John de Giorgio) and RID Nagesh with the *Pink Auto* beneficiaries.

using hi-tech labs, and “that too, at an early age.”

The aim of the government was that after completing school education, all students, “not only the privileged but even the children of autorickshaw drivers and other disadvantaged sections should go to the best of colleges, including the IITs, IIMs, Law universities, etc.”

Lead25 convenor Muruganandam said this conclave was being organised to give an opportunity to all Rotarians, particularly the Rotaractors and Interactors, to participate in such Rotary events. He said a record number of projects worth ₹250 crore were being launched at the two-day event and several partnerships and MoUs for service projects were being launched/signed (See box). He had requested the chief guest — the deputy CM of Tamil Nadu — to introduce the RYLA programme in schools, and also extend the benefits and



From L: President Arezzo, Anna, RI Director Christine Buering and TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya.

marks to Interactors and Rotaractors using similar criteria applied to NCC and NSS cadets.

The RI director also requested the TN government to introduce state-level social service awards to recognise outstanding Rotarians on Independence and Republic Days.

“We also request you to allocate land to Rotary either in Chennai or Trichy to set up a Rotary Disaster Relief and Community Centre,” he added.

Apart from RI President Francesco and his wife Anna Maria, co-convenor and RI director K P Nagesh, RI director from Germany Christine Buering, TRF trustee Bharat Pandya, past RI directors Ashok Mahajan, PT Prabhakar, C Basker, AS Venkatesh, Raju Subramanian and Anirudha Roychowdhury participated in the event.

Conclave chairman John Daniel welcomed the delegates and event secretary Y Kumanan delivered the vote of thanks. PRIP Kalyan Banerjee; actor and Rajya Sabha MP Kamal Haasan, Kaveri Group of Hospitals founder Dr S Chandrakumar and R S K Raguraam, pro-chairman, PSNA College of Engineering and Technology, Chennai, were given Lifetime Achievement Award.



TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin, School Education Minister Poyyamozhi and RID Muruganandam share a moment at the conclave.

Designed by
N Krishnamurthy



In Rotary giving is a celebration

V Muthukumaran

In India, generosity is woven into daily life. From *anna daan*, that is giving food to needy, and the great community kitchens of the gurudwaras, the acts of everyday kindness bring people together, said RI President Francesco Arezzo at the Pre-Lead event, held ahead of the Rotary India Leadership Conclave in Chennai.

Addressing a galaxy of Indian Rotary leaders, council of governors from India, Sri Lanka and Nepal zones, AKS and Endowment Fund donors, Arezzo said giving to TRF is not ‘abstract charity’ for “you are connecting to a network of 1.4 million Rotarians in 46,000 clubs across the world, turning generosity into sustainable, high-impact projects that create lasting change.” There are many reasons to give — moral duty, religious teaching or social responsibility — “but perhaps the most beautiful reason is the simplest:



On the left table: RID Nagesh, PRIP KR Ravindran, PRID P T Prabhakar, Trustee Pandya, PRIDs Raju Subramanian and Ashok Mahajan, PDG Raja Seenivasan and Lead25 secretary PDG Y Kumanan. **Table on the right (from R):** PRID A S Venkatesh, RID Muruganandam, Sumathi, Mala, PRID C Basker, RI President's aide John de Giorgio, his wife Monique Chambers, Anna Maria and RI President Francesco Arezzo.

Conclave co-convener RID K P Nagesh and RID Christine Buering light a lamp as (from R) TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, Anna Maria, RI President Francesco Arezzo, conclave convener RID M Muruganandam, Sumathi and Pre-Lead25 chairman PDG J Sridhar look on.

giving feels good.” Being an AKS member is a badge of honour, a shining testament to the “boundless compassion and unwavering commitment of Rotarians to serve humanity.”

In the last Rotary year (2024–25), India raised **over \$38.2 million** for the Foundation, and “this year, the Indian clubs have committed to surpass their fundraising goals,” Arezzo noted. The India region had a record-breaking **47 AKS members** last year, and for the first time, **13 RI districts have crossed \$1 million** in TRF-giving. RID 3141 as the global leader with the largest number of AKS members is “a beacon of hope, illuminating the path forward for us all.” India has the third highest count in AKS membership.

Citing modern research, Arezzo pointed out that helping others makes one happier, “something that the Indian sages had said centuries earlier. Generosity lifts our spirits, connects us to others, and reminds us of what really matters.”

Benefactor to partner

When Rotarians give not just their resources, but also their “time, attention and effort, we transform from benefactor to partner. Often the gift we receive is greater than the one we give,” he said.

This is true of Rotarians who not only fund scholarships, but also mentor their students, helping them get jobs; the polio vaccination drives when donors roll up their sleeves to give those precious drops of vaccine, knowing they are part of history, said the RI President.

With the Programs of Scale helping Indian farmers reap a better harvest, “a farmer who sowed once a year, now does two harvests; a mother who spent hours walking to fetch water, now attends classes or visits the market; a village that used to wait for rain now learns to capture and share

water.” For sages, true bliss (*ananda* in Sanskrit) is “when we forget ourselves in the act of love, compassion and service.” This is the joy of giving which grows the more we share it, he said. “In Rotary giving is not just an obligation, it is a celebration.”

The Lead Conclave was designed as a “mini RI convention for the 1.75 lakh Rotarians in India, some of whom would not have attended the Rotary convention. Our aim is to bring all Rotarians from across the country under one platform as a single family,” said RI director M Muruganandam. While India is no 2 in membership and TRF-giving, “we have set a target of \$50 million for the current year, apart from adding 100 new AKS members and 100 Endowment donors.”

Having joined Rotary as a 16-year-old Rotaractor, “I continue to enjoy my 36 years of journey in selfless service,” he said.

Recalling the past 18 months since their nomination, RI director KP Nagesh said after lengthy deliberations, “Muruganandam and I planned



10 programmes for goal-setting, but over time, it has now widened to 16.” Listing a few, he said the 1:2:3 formula and Red-Amber-Green strategy will do miracles for Rotary in India. “We aim to reach 200,000 members in India by this year-end. To tap CSR grants, Rotary-CSR National Awards will be given in the four zones, followed by the final event at the Rotary Institute in Delhi.”

The idea behind PreLead was to motivate the past district governors to guide the DGs and support their action, said Nagesh. “We urged them to help start new Rotaract and Interact clubs. The results are already showing as 1,000 Interact clubs were formed in less than a month, and 400 Rotaract clubs are being chartered in our zones.”

If Rotarians are the heart of Rotary, TRF is its backbone and “a window to the outside world in which we are touching and changing lives,” said trustee Bharat Pandya. The University

*When Rotarians give not
just their resources, but
also their time, attention
and effort, we transform
from benefactor to partner.*

Francesco Arezzo
RI President

of Notre Dame, US, through its Science of Generosity project found “that anything given freely and in abundance including our time, talent and money will benefit humanity in a great manner.” Like honeycombs, Rotarians will keep giving again and again to do good in the world, he noted.

TRF also works for a peaceful world through its Peace Scholars, and the Symbiosis University, Pune, will get the next Rotary Peace Centre by Jan-Feb 2026, after which the batches will start, he said. “TRF is an investment for our children and theirs, just like we enjoy the fruits of trees planted by our forefathers.”

RI director Christine Buering from Germany thanked the AKS donors “for trusting our Foundation that is changing lives across the world.”

Arezzo honoured 29 new AKS members and 31 new Endowment Fund donors at the PreLead which was attended by 475 delegates from India zones. While the two-day Lead Conclave had a registration of over 10,000 Rotarians and 2,850 Rotaractors from RIDs 3233 and 3234 of the Chennai region. PDG J Sridhar (RID 3234) was the event chair and PDG Rajasekhar Srinivasan (RID 3201), its secretary. ■

Olayinka Hakeem Babalola chosen 2026–27 RI President



RIPE Olayinka Hakeem Babalola

Olayinka Hakeem Babalola, a member of the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi, RID 9141, Nigeria, has been selected by the Board of Directors to become RI President for 2026–27. His term will begin on July 1, 2026.

The Board, guided by the RI’s code of policies, conducted a special session to select the organisation’s leader after the resignation of RI President-elect SangKoo Yun, who decided to step back from his Rotary responsibilities and focus on his recovery from recent cancer treatment. (SangKoo passed away on Sept 5).

Babalola began his Rotary journey in 1984 as a Rotaractor. He joined his club 10 years later. His leadership roles include serving as DG (2011–12), RI vice-president (2019–20), and member of the RI Board (2018–20). He was also an active leader and participant in RI committees such as the End Polio Now Countdown to History Campaign Committee (2017–23) and the Nigeria

National PolioPlus Committee (2013-present, adviser 2016-present).

Babalola received a university degree in engineering in 1988. He worked for 25 years in the oil and gas industry, holding senior positions in Shell PLC. He is the founder of two companies: Riviera Technical Services Ltd, an oil and gas infrastructure delivery company, and Lead and Change Consulting, an executive coaching and organisational performance advisory group.

Babalola and his wife, Preba, live in the city of Port Harcourt. He supports TRF with a named endowment and as an Arch Klumph Society member. A trustee of ShelterBox UK, he is a recipient of the Africa Centennial Heroes Award, the Regional Service Award for a Polio-Free World, the RI Service Above Self Award, and The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service.

Rotary.org

A STEM lab for Chennai students

Team Rotary News

At the Vidyodaya Girls Higher Secondary School, Chennai, students are now being trained to fly a drone, programme a robot and see their ideas come to life on 3D printers, all thanks to the Rotary Hallmark Srishti STEM Lab established at the school by RC Chennai Hallmark, RID 3234.

The high-tech lab, inaugurated by PDG J Sridhar in June, is equipped with hands-on modules on STEM, robotics, artificial intelligence, drone and 3D printing facilities. Through this initiative, the club aims to spark scientific temperament in students at an early age and prepare them to become future innovators, engineers and researchers, says S Anil Kumar, the club's IPP.

"We believe innovation must begin in classrooms. By exposing children to real-world innovative technologies at a young age, we are giving them the confidence to think differently



PDG J Sridhar (second from R) with RC Chennai Hallmark's IPP Anil Kumar (second from L) and project chair S Rhama (R) at the inauguration of the STEM Lab.

and solve problems creatively," says S Rhama, the club's charter president, who had envisioned and implemented the STEM lab project. This is the

second STEM lab set up by the club which plans to continue the project to benefit more schools.

The initiative was supported by Imperial Granites, and N Sankar from Singapore. Kalvishala Institute of Education and Skill Development LLP, Chennai, helped in setting up the lab infrastructure and training resources.

The enthusiasm was palpable on the faces of students as they worked on the robotic kits and printed their first models. A student from Class 9 exclaimed, "I didn't know I could create something like this. Now I want to learn more and build something useful."

With projects like *Hallmark Srishti*, Rotary is not just donating equipment, it is enabling dreams become real, smiles Anil Kumar. ■



Students going through various study models at the lab.



Rotary needs to look East: Prez Arezzo

Rasheeda Bhagat

Recalling a passage from the *Bible* when Baruch (disciple and friend of prophet Jeremiah), who was “in exile and despair, asked his people to do something unusual... look to the east,” RI President Francesco Arezzo, addressing the inaugural session of the Lead25 conclave in Chennai said, “I believe Rotary too gives us reason

at this moment to look east, not only in a metaphorical but in a real sense.”

He was saying this because in recent years, “our strongest and most vibrant membership growth has come from Asia, and here in India in particular, we are witnessing something extraordinary. Not just a growth in numbers but also an increase in meaning and clarity in serving the community.”

Underlining the importance of membership, and retaining members, he said RI was “not made just for clubs or projects. It is made of people. and people stay when they feel something deeper than obligation... they stay when they can connect, not just to the club but to one another.”

The RI President rued that during the entire previous decade, “each year we welcome tens of thousands of people worldwide, but nearly the same number departs.” Year-after-year.



RI President Francesco Arezzo

This tension between growth and departure is not only a Rotary problem but a mirror of the world we live in. “People are longing for meaning, but they do not always find it. They join because they admire what Rotary stands for but they leave when Rotary becomes just a structure where you simply spend time rather than do something meaningful.”

That is why, he said, this year’s call *Unite for good* “is more than just a slogan... we unite to do good, to reinforce every member’s sense of belonging to ensure that they feel an essential part of our organisation.”

“We unite for good by contributing to the communities we live in and by learning from one another how to create lasting change. And we unite for good by laying a foundation for peace, earning trust and giving opportunities to form friendship. Only a Rotary or Rotaract club can give this opportunity.”

Addressing the club leaders in the massive gathering which registered nearly 12,000 participants, Arezzo said, “Many of you are here. Check with your members to understand what they want and start a discussion on their goals and desires and connect personally as best as you can. Reach out to people in your community to find out how your clubs can do more to make a positive difference for them.”

Once they do that, they will get the opportunity to do service projects. Holding social events and having meaningful dialogues and conversations were just as important.

The RI President also advised the delegates to use Rotary as “an instrument for peace, for it gives you the opportunity to form connections with people you will otherwise never meet and render service to create more cohesive,

healthy and peaceful communities. Peace is of importance in these times.”

He believes that peace is meant to free people from “poverty, disease and environment destruction... free from unclean water and poor sanitation, and lack of educational opportunities. Free from poor access to medical treatment and polio. Peace is what we do best, and do every day. Sending a young scholar to a peace centre or to another country on a youth exchange programme is also peace. As is preventing and curing disease... providing healthcare and sanitation where there is none is working for peace. When women can live in a safe environment and take care of their children, that is working for peace. And improving the environment in which we live, educating girls and supporting livelihoods are ways to work for peace.” Rotary service makes the world a little more free every day and creates conditions for peace, Arezzo added.

Gandhi had said non-violence is the way of the strong and that there is strength in numbers, strength in compassion, and a world built on love and not greed. “I urge you to unite for good to create a new world, of love and friendship in our own communities and the ones we serve. We must renew ourselves through our values because service alone will not lead to the creation of a peaceful world. We must also lead by example,” he said.

Gently urging Rotarians to think and reflect, the RI President said Rotary and Rotarians today face many questions and challenges. “These are not bureaucratic but human questions. Whether it is Delhi, Mumbai or London, there are challenges related to digitalisation and the leap in modernity. At times like this, institutions feel lifeless.”



President Arezzo at the *Project Orange* stall at the HoF. RIDs M Muruganandam (L), KP Nagesh and HoF chairman PDG S Muthupalaniappan (R) are also seen.

But he was optimistic that Rotary can be more; a place where people are not measured by achievement or manipulated, but welcomed to dialogue. “But for this, we must reflect on what we do. Too often we do projects that end with the term of the presidents or the governors; the calendar defines our projects done during our terms. All of us, club presidents, governors and even the RI President, do our best during our term of one year, to achieve all we can and then pass on the baton. But the work that truly matters... such as peace or education or protecting the environment, require time and continuity.”

The RI President advised club leaders to work not as individuals, but as teams. “We must do more than move quickly, we must move gracefully and meaningfully. And prepare to help the next leader to succeed.”

It was also important to have a sense of direction and balance. Quoting from Lewis Carol’s *Alice in Wonderland*, Arezzo gave the example of Alice asking the Cheshire cat which way she should go from a certain point. And the cat responds: “That depends on where you want to go.”

“Oh, I don’t much care where,” says Alice. “Then it doesn’t much matter where you go,” says the cat.

Here, said Arezzo, lays a warning: “if we don’t know where we want to



go, then no direction will matter.” The crucial thing was not to abide only by the calendar of your year as the leader “but to lead for the long run and prepare the ground for those who come after us.”

Clearly an admirer of Indian history, culture and philosophy, the RI President said, “There is a culture of passion here... a civilisational memory that understands the importance of continuity and the value of passing the torch. Your Rotary clubs do no chase... they sustain vision. Perhaps that is why there is such natural harmony here... a spirit of selfless service reflected in the ancient Indian philosophy of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (a Sanskrit phrase meaning ‘the world is one family’).

Added Arezzo disarmingly: “I speak to you not as someone who claims to understand India from within

but one who learns from it. I admire your hospitality, your moral clarity, your generosity, and ask you a question: How do we bring in the new generation... how do we change without drifting. These are the same questions we will have to ask across the Rotary world.”

Quoting Rabindranath Tagore who once wrote: “I slept and dreamt that life was joy. I awoke and saw that life was service. I acted and behold, service was joy,” Arezzo said in conclusion, “In Rotary we make a promise to be trustworthy and human together. So let us look East... not because of Baruch, not only symbolically, but completely, joyfully, spiritually. If we can strengthen our clubs and practise the 4-Way Test as a reflex, if we can invite others into Rotary, not only for service but to belong, then we will be able to retain members and become a beacon, a gathering place, not all perfection, but built on trust. This for me is the true significance of our theme this year *Unite for good*.” ■

I speak to you not as someone
who claims to understand
India from within, but one
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your hospitality, your moral
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RC Ajmer looks ahead @ 80

V Muthukumaran

With a legacy of memorable projects over decades, RC Ajmer, RID 3053, the 80-year-old, longest servicing club in this pilgrim town, 130km south of Jaipur, is not yet resting on its laurels. “We organised a two-day electronic prosthetic hand fitment camp at our Rotary Bhawan, in partnership with Inali Foundation and RC Poona Downturn in July to mark the completion of our 80 years of social service,” says Shalabh Agarwal, club president.

Led by project chair Rajeev Toshniwal, a lot of planning and a social media campaign preceded the limb fitment camp. “We first got a list from the Social Welfare Department of the hand amputees in Rajasthan. Then our team contacted all the 300 of them, and 80 individuals were selected to be fitted with Inali prosthetic arms,” says Agarwal. However, only 65 turned up at the camp, and 61 electronic hands

were fitted on 58 beneficiaries as “three of them were double amputees.” Each Inali hand costs around ₹30,000, and the project was funded by a CSR grant of ₹25 lakh from NHPC.

Agarwal wants to set up a blood bank (₹1 crore) at the Rotary Bhawan with funding from all the three Ajmer clubs and a CSR grant. “We will set up this facility before June 2026.”

Secondly, a mammography van (CSR grant: ₹75 lakh) will be flagged off and it will tour remote villages within a 100km radius of Ajmer city to “screen at least 1,000 women for breast cancer.” An ‘oxygen zone’ will be created on the city suburbs by planting 5,000 trees at a place marked out by the DFO, Ajmer.

In the past, the club has donated furniture (benches, desks etc) worth



₹35 lakh, and built eight toilet blocks (₹15 lakh) at government schools. It has also given medical equipment and diagnostic kits to the Government Janana Hospital, Ajmer; and “executed a global grant (₹27 lakh) during Covid times in which we gave PPE kits, BiPAP machines and small incubators to the hospital,” says DG Nisha Shekhawat, a club member. The GG project was done jointly with RC Bikaner and RC Denver, US, as its global partner.

Recalling the club’s early days, DG Nisha says charter president Bhagchand Soni, fondly known as ‘Nagar Seth’ (the first citizen of Ajmer as he was the richest person), took the initiative to form RC Ajmer, which was chartered on June 18, 1945.

Another illustrious member was JTM Gibson, principal of Mayo College, the 150-year-old boarding school founded by the British. “The rich legacy left by our senior members is incredible,” she smiles. Chipping in, Agarwal adds, “blending social service with fellowship and camaraderie” is the USP of the Ajmer club. ■



Sheikh Hasan, a Rotarian from Pune, trains beneficiaries as (seated from L) RC Ajmer president Shalabh Agarwal, project chair Rajeev Toshniwal, secretary Manoj Dabral and RID 3053 DG Nisha Shekhawat look on.

The power of education

Jaishree

The years I spent in Interact and Rotaract taught me that service is beyond projects. It is about opening your heart and standing up for those who need it most,” said Sujith Kumar, founder of Maatram Foundation, at the Lead25 Conclave. Those formative experiences, he said, laid the foundation for a life devoted to education and empowerment, especially for girls.

Alongside service, those years also honed his public-speaking skills, for which he credited PDG CS Ramachandran (then RID 3230). This gift eventually carried him to classrooms and auditoriums, where he spoke on career guidance, often without charging a fee. On one such occasion in Madurai in 2013, he met Malar, the girl who changed his destiny. She stood outside the hall, hesitant to enter.

Kumar went out to meet her, and her story moved him deeply. “That day I told myself, with the money I earn, I can sponsor one child’s education. But then another question struck me: what about hundreds of other children like her?”

That question became the spark for Maatram Foundation. He requested a college chairman to give him one seat, but was surprised to get 20 free seats every year. What started as a small gesture soon expanded into a movement.

Today, the foundation supports over 4,000 students across 52 institutions in Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Bengaluru. Among the first was Malar, now an Amazon employee in San Francisco, who has built a home for her family and educated her siblings. Some alumni now sit on the foundation’s board; others have started

NGOs. “That’s the true cycle of giving back,” he said with quiet pride.

The foundation prioritises orphans, children of single parents, transgender students and differently-abled youngsters. His journey, he said, was powered “not by wealth but by willpower. People often say, I’ll learn, then earn, and after retirement, I’ll return what I can. But Rotary taught me something different... you don’t need to wait until 60. You can start giving back at 25.”

He traced this philosophy to his first project as Interact president in Class 9. Initially, his club did little beyond tea and samosas. That changed when a Rotarian nudged him to take up community service. Inspired by the Kanchi Sankaracharya’s *Pidiyarisi Thittam* (a handful of rice movement),

From L: RID Christine Buering, Sumathi Muruganandam, film artiste Abhirami, Uma Nagesh, Maatram Foundation founder Sujith Kumar and PRID A S Venkatesh.



Service, inclusivity and the future of Rotary...

PRID A S Venkatesh engaged Sujith Kumar, Christine Buerling, the first woman RI director from Germany, and film artiste Abhirami in a Q&A session.

"If I start serving my community, won't I deplete my own resources? How do I balance service with securing my future?" asked Venkatesh. Kumar, who is associate VP, HR, at the tech giant Infosys, replied: "Work and service are two distinct identities. If I confuse them, I'll fail in both." He referred to the "four-burner theory," where career, family, health and service all draw from the same gas cylinder. "Sometimes your cup is empty. You can't be an eternal giver. That's when you need to say no, and focus on what truly matters."

Asked to define happiness, he said: "Seeing my children succeed." By "children," he meant the 4,000 students supported by his foundation — 99 per cent first-generation graduates, 80 per cent girls, nearly a thousand orphans. He shared stories that tugged at the heartstrings: one girl dreamed only of a cupboard of her own; another rejoiced at ordering food without checking

prices. Many now work at Infosys, while their parents still serve as housekeeping or security staff. "If you can help someone move from one stage of life to another, that is happiness."

On whether his model could be scaled up, he explained that donor-dependent model collapse in crises like Covid. Instead, he preferred long-term partnerships with institutions that provide fully sponsored seats. "It's zero cost, and scalable," he said.

The early years were full of lessons. "When hostels closed, where would orphans go? For long, the third bedroom in my house was theirs. Now we run hostels." Today, the foundation has documented every process, creating a "plug-and-play" model that other NGOs are adopting. He is mentoring NGOs in Dehradun who want to replicate this model.

The conversation turned to inclusivity in Rotary — how to welcome people of different identities. Christine said, "Look at the person, not the gender. Gender is private. What counts is the individual's value." She urged clubs to "integrate

people as equals. Nobody wants to be showcased. They all want to belong."

On gender parity, she noted Germany still has only 14 per cent women in Rotary. Post-war West Germany expected women to return to homemaking, while East Germany created childcare systems that let women pursue careers. "Society changes when family care changes. That, to me, is equality."

Where does she see Rotary ten years from now? "In a world where people have unlearned to communicate, Rotary still brings people together. We can be the ferment for a new society — diverse, creative, respectful. What makes Rotary special is its human connection. When 10,000 people still choose to meet in person, when they could just have a Zoom call, that's our strength."

Abhirami spoke about how she planned her career and the challenges she faced. Her goal, she said, "is to grow through each experience while staying true to herself, and to inspire others by showing that success comes as much from resilience and faith as from planning."

he and his team went door-to-door asking for rice. People responded generously giving much more, and they collected 232 bags.

Not knowing where to donate, they turned to their Rotary sponsor, who led them to a leprosy sanatorium. "For a Class 9 boy, the sight of bandaged limbs and disfigured faces was too much. I left early," he said. Weeks later, a leprosy patient recognised him at a traffic signal and told his father, "Because of your son and his friends,

we now eat three meals a day." That blessing, "left a huge dent on my heart. It was the moment I understood the power of service," Kumar said.

Today, Maatram champions not only girls' education but also the rights of the marginalised. He cited India's first transgender nursing student, who fought a seven-year legal battle up to the Supreme Court to secure the right for transgenders to study nursing. Her victory mandated every nursing college to reserve a seat for a transgender student. Now

pursuing her Master's, "she embodies the sheer power of education to change destinies."

Kumar urged the audience to see education as one of the most powerful forms of service. "Planting a tree is important, it will outlive us. But if you educate a child, you transform an entire family. Education has no gender or boundaries. Talent has no gender either. When you give the most deserving access to quality education, miracles happen." ■



End Polio show wows Arezzo

V Muthukumaran

An awesome spectacle of the formation of the *End Polio Now* logo by 3,000 Rotaractors from RID 3234, a Guinness Book attempt, wowed RI President Francesco Arezzo on a bright Sunday morning in Chennai. “It is very impressive to see the EPN formation by such a large number of Rotaractors... only in India we can see such a vibrant Rotaract,” he exclaimed.

This EPN display, held at the Lead25 Conclave, visibly delighted Arezzo and his wife Anna Maria as they watched a massive gathering of around 5,000 Rotaractors for the record-making attempt to create awareness on Rotary’s End Polio campaign worldwide. The RI President said that the whole of Italy would not have 3,000 Rotaractors, “whereas a single Rotaract district in India has attempted a Guinness Record. Rotaractors find new ways and ideas of doing projects, which may seem impossible for Rotarians.”

Emphasising that Rotary has a rich legacy, proven integrity, leadership and fellowship traits, which will be passed on to Rotaractors, he urged the youth brigade to “show the way forward to Rotary. I wish all Rotaractors join Rotary clubs soon,” he said.

them is enough to create a big churn. The speed and power of youngsters are driving change. I enjoy Rotary because of my entry as a Rotaractor,” said RI director M Muruganandam.

Citing Mahatma Gandhi’s words: Be the change you want to see in the world, he said Rotaractors are critical for the Rotary wheel to move for yet another century. Only by taking responsibility, “a man is respected

as a father in his family, and a leader in his community. From Rotaractors, you have to become Rotarians.” Youth should aim to achieve big in their lives, he said, quoting former President Abdul Kalam: “Your entry may be unnoticed, but your exit must be remembered all time.”

Stating that both directors, Muruganandam and he have set a target of \$5 million for the India zones for the Polio Fund this year, RI director K P Nagesh said a cricket tournament titled the Rotary Premier League will be organised for all the four zones to raise funds for this cause. He complimented the RID 3234 Rotaractors “for a grand show in front of RI President Arezzo, thus projecting the strength of Indian Rotaract clubs.”

It was a proud moment for RID 3234, said DG Vinod Saraogi;



Youth power

“The youth are changing the world... just a single post on social media by

From L: RI Director M Muruganandam, RI President Francesco Arezzo, RID 3234 DG Vinod Saraogi, RI Director KP Nagesh and President Arezzo’s aide John de Giorgio from RC Malta.



Anna Maria Arezzo, Usha Saraogi, RID Nagesh, DG Saraogi, de Georgio, President Arezzo, RID Muruganandam, PDG J Sridhar and DRR Sathish Kumar cheer on the End Polio Now formation.

service projects worth ₹250 crore were launched at the inaugural session of the conclave. Of this, ₹40 crore worth projects will be executed by RID 3234; this includes autorickshaws gifted to 100 women under *Project Pink Auto*. They are being trained not only in driving but also martial arts, communication and personality development. The project was funded by a mix of CSR grants, club contributions and other donors, he said.



'End Polio Now' formation by 3,000 Rotaractors.

Recalling the birth of Rotaract in 1968 with the formation of the RAC University of North Carolina, Charlotte (US), IPDG NS Saravanan, RID 3234, pointed out, "we all know the capability and potential of our Rotaractors, they are the energy boosters for Rotarians." Last year (2024–25), the district's Rotaract clubs contributed \$33,373 to TRF.

PRID C Basker noted "65 per cent of India's population is below 35; our country depends on its youth. Our Rotaractors have once again demonstrated, through their End Polio display, the trust Swami Vivekananda had placed on them when he said, 'my faith is in the young generation'." Rotaract was formed by RI for global youth to "learn, lead and bring change in their communities. India, with the largest numbers of Rotaractors and Rotaract clubs, is the future of Rotary," he said.

DRR Sathish Kumar said that it was "a once-in-a-lifetime

opportunity for district Rotaractors to perform in front of RI President Arezzo," and thanked DG Saraogi for his support in staging the human formation.

The EPN logo formation is a branding exercise for district clubs and will create awareness on the global efforts of Rotary in eradicating polio, said Srinivasan Balaraman, EPN coordinator, RID 3234. "It was a great experience to anchor the entire formation," said Britto Manohar who coordinated the event. A past member of RAC Loyola College, he had earlier anchored two Guinness Book attempts by Rotaract — world's largest hand formation (7,000 members) and 'My Flag, My India' display (50,000 Rotaractors and public volunteers.)

Sharing her experience, faculty coordinator D Monika from A M Jain College, Meenambakkam, said "the young generation today is self-centred. Events like the End Polio display by Rotaract bring out the humanity, service-mindedness, along with leadership qualities, in them." ■



Rotary Headquarters in Chennai

V Muthukumaran

A notable feature of the House of Friendship at the Lead25 Conclave was the recreation of One Rotary Center, the Rotary headquarters in Evanston, Chicago.

Inaugurating the HoF, RI President Francesco Arezzo was all praise for the efforts that went into designing the Rotary HQ with attention to detail. “I have been to many HoFs at RI conventions... but this is one of the best I have ever visited,” he said while going around the Rotary stalls, along with RI directors M Muruganandam and K P Nagesh, and HoF chair S Muthupalaniappan.



RI Director M Muruganandam, RI President Francesco Arezzo and Anna Maria at the AKS Gallery in the House of Friendship.



President Arezzo and Anna share a lighter moment at one of the stalls. RID Muruganandam is also seen.

The HoF was created with two main purposes — “to give a feel of Rotary headquarters to Rotarians from our zones, and to showcase what happens at RI conventions for members who cannot attend the flagship global Rotary summit,” explained PDG Muthupalaniappan.

At the replica of One Rotary Center, Room 711 was recreated as a throwback to the vintage era when Rotary was born. It was at Room 711 of the Unity Building in downtown, Chicago, that the famed quartet of Rotary — its founder Paul Harris, Gustavus Loehr, Silvester Schiele and Hiram Shorey — met for what is considered as ‘the very first Rotary club meeting,’ on Feb 23, 1905. This was Loehr’s



office at that time. During the 1980 Convention in Chicago, local Rotarians rented that same office space and recreated the early 20th century magic by using period furnishing.

In 1989 the Unity Building was demolished, but Rotarians dismantled Room 711 and rebuilt it with similar settings at the RI headquarters in Evanston, Illinois. Rotarians visiting One Rotary Center at the HoF can step into Room 711 and “get a feel of the aura of the very first Rotary club meeting held in 1905,” he said.

An elaborate AKS Gallery at the HoF, replicated from the Rotary HQ, displayed the donors who had empowered the organisation over the decades.

With 20 project stalls of RI districts from all our four zones and 200 commercial exhibits, the HoF was spread over one lakh sqft, and attracted 10,500 visitors in two days.

The *Project Orange* stall screened over 300 visitors for “eye disorders and we replicated an Orange Vision Centre, complete with equipment and gadgets, for examining people.” *Project Orange*, a brainchild of Muthupalaniappan when he was DG of RID 3232 in 2020–21, has 160 vision centres supported by 15 hospitals across Tamil Nadu.

The HoF was partitioned into four zones — Rotary Action Area, Rotary Project Zone, Commercial Expo and Entertainment Zone that had non-stop dance, music, magic and fashion shows. The End Polio Gaming arena was action-packed, with delegates and their families bonding over games such as box cricket, foosball and mini bowling.

This enormous space also offered avid shoppers an exciting opportunity to shop to their heart’s content. ■

An expo empowers women

Team Rotary News



DG B Dhanasekar (centre), district coordinator S Loganathan (4th from L) and club president A Vivekanandan (2nd from R), with participants at the expo.

RC Tirupur Pioneers, RID 3203, organised Wow Joy - Serving Happiness, a two-day women’s empowerment carnival in Tirupur.

The event featured over 100 women entrepreneurs, most of them first-time exhibitors, who showcased their products through specially curated stalls. Alongside the expo a mobile cardiac care clinic provided free heart and sugar check-up for 50 visitors, while a Vision on Wheels eye camp screened 500 people and distributed spectacles.

Six women entrepreneurs were recognised with ‘Pioneer Mangai Awards’. Vendors and schoolchildren were also recognised under various categories. Twenty-five foldable tables with umbrellas and 100 large umbrellas were given to roadside vendors to improve their working conditions.

Drawing and chess contests attracted over 100 children. Tree plantation, breast milk donation, and Rotary projects were promoted at the venue. Over 5,000 people visited the expo, which had an overall project cost of ₹15.41 lakh. Chief guests included Tirupur Mayor N Dinesh Kumar and DG B Dhanasekar. ■

Conclave in frames



Above: RI President Francesco Arezzo and his wife Anna Maria display a copy of *Rotary News* to the Editor.

Below: President Arezzo's aide John de Giorgio takes a selfie with RI Director Christine Buering, his wife Monique Chambers and President Arezzo.





Left: TN Deputy CM Udhayanidhi Stalin lights a lamp as (from R) School Education Minister Anbil Mahesh Poyyamozi, Lead25 co-convenor RID KP Nagesh and event chairman PDG John Daniel look on.

Right: President Arezzo and Anna share a lighter moment with Lead25 convener RI Director M Muruganandam and Sumathi. PDG Daniel is seen behind.

Below: President Arezzo steps out of an autorickshaw at the inaugural of the *Pink Auto* project of RID 3234.



Left: (From L) TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, PRID AS Venkatesh, RID Christine and Vinita Venkatesh.



PRID C Basker and his wife Mala.



Above: RIDs Muruganandam and Nagesh with Lead Committee members.

Right: President Arezzo plays cricket at the House of Friendship.





Camaraderie: RID Muruganandam, President Arezzo, Anna, RID Nagesh, his wife Uma, and Sumathi, engage in banter as de Giorgio and Monique look on.

Below: Uma and RID Nagesh.

Right: RID Muruganandam and Sumathi. PDG J Sridhar and Vinita Venkatesh are also seen.



Left: Trustee Pandya greets President Arezzo and Anna.

Right: President Arezzo recognises RC Kodaikanal past president Rajkumar Raman and his wife Meera for building homes for tribals, as Anna looks on.



Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S
(ISRO chairman V Narayanan's and actor Kamal Haasan's sessions in the Nov issue.)

In memory of my friend, SangKoo Yun

KR Ravindran

Today Rotary weeps. The world has lost not only a leader of extraordinary promise, but above all, a man of rare goodness and grace.

SangKoo Yun was my dear friend. I was in touch with his family as the end drew near. And in the morning, when I called again, his son gave me the heartbreaking news that his father had slipped away just ten minutes earlier. The pain of that moment is one I will never forget.

He had been nominated to serve as President of Rotary International in 2026–27, yet fate willed otherwise. He will never hold that office, but in

truth, SangKoo had already led us all — through his example, vision, humility and his service.

Born into an aristocratic family — his father was the first President of Korea — he carried that heritage with discipline but never with arrogance. Educated in the United States, with a master's degree in architecture from Syracuse University and an honorary doctorate from Edinburgh, he built a highly successful company in construction materials and engineering. Queen Elizabeth II recognised him with the Order of Excellent Officer of the British Empire. He was honoured with the

Friendship Medal by the President of Mongolia, and by his own President and Prime Minister with a meritorious commendation. He served his nation in the Army and his faith as a Senior Elder at the Andong Presbyterian Church.

Yet behind all these honours stood a man of extraordinary simplicity. He could sit on a mat in a remote village sharing a humble meal, or just as naturally command a grand stage in a tuxedo before kings and leaders. He brought the best of East and West into perfect harmony, and wherever he went, he made people feel seen, valued and respected.

His devotion to Rotary was boundless. He personally travelled to 36 countries to ensure projects were implemented and sustained. When we expanded our very successful breast cancer project in Sri Lanka, SangKoo extended his hand of support and personally came to witness the progress. He was willing even to travel six long hours by train to the far north of Sri Lanka to see for himself a project carried out in partnership with Korean institutions outside Rotary. He believed service required presence — not just funding or reports, but walking alongside those who served and those who suffered.

He also brought professional brilliance to Rotary. When he chaired the Host Organizing Committee of the RI Convention in Korea, he managed it with such skill that it generated a profit exceeding \$2.5 million — an achievement



PRIP K R Ravindran (R) with SangKoo Yun.



SangKoo with PRIP Ravindran, TRF Trustee Chair Holger Knaack, Susanne Knaack and Vanathy Ravindran (third from L, front row).

perhaps unmatched before or since. That was SangKoo: principled, capable, determined and generous, always working not for himself but for the good of Rotary and humanity. I gave him a free hand

at the convention, except for three ‘small’ conditions — to bring UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, to have the Korean pop star Psy perform, and to create a hologram of Paul Harris on the stage. He

exclaimed, “Three small things!” But he delivered.

I thought, perhaps naively, that this same indomitable spirit would help him overcome the cancer that was devouring him. But alas, it was not to be.

To his beloved wife, Eunsun, who bore his struggles and triumphs with unwavering devotion, I extend my deepest sympathies. To his children and family, who shared him with the world, may you take solace in knowing that he lived with purpose and left a legacy few could equal. And to his mentor and guide, Past RI President DK Lee, I share in your grief at the loss of a protégé who was also like a son.

Goodbye, sweet prince. May a thousand angels lull you into your eternal rest. And may we, who remain, honour you not only with our words, but by walking in the path of service, humility and compassion that you showed us.



SangKoo and PRIP Ravindran with their granddaughters.

The writer is a past RI president

Remembering SangKoo Yun

Shekhar Mehta

Both of us have great memories of that visit for the Presidential Conference. SangKoo was the conference chair and despite the Covid pandemic, he organised various programmes across Korea over the next five days, taking us to different projects, sightseeing and his lovely home where Eun Sun hosted us so gracefully. We could see how highly respected he was in Korea by the Rotarians as well as others, whether at a dinner with former UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon or at the lunch by the Indian Ambassador. He was surely the frontrunner in Rotary Korea; no wonder he was chosen to be RI President — only the second person from Korea.

I was privileged to have him as moderator of my International Assembly. We visited Shingle Creek in Orlando, US, for a recce of the first IA to be held at that venue. Despite so many preparatory meetings, finally the IA had to be held virtually. Even at that time I realised how meticulous SangKoo was in his planning. He had foresight, sincerity, and passion for helping others. He was just the man to lead our wonderful organisation.

We created a thousand memories with him, at Evanston, in the board room, at the Seoul Convention, at our home, on the streets of Kolkata, in Korea's different cities, on the several Zoom calls. And we all looked forward to his presidentship. But unfortunately, fate had other plans.

His persona exemplified the true spirit of Rotary and his legacy of service with compassion will continue to inspire us always...

Dear SangKoo, you are remembered and truly missed... Rest in peace.

The writer is a past RI president

SangKoo Yun enjoying *pani puri* with PRIP Shekhar Mehta in Kolkata.

Rashi and I feared it was coming, just as everyone else, but we had not expected it would be so soon. SangKoo's passing has left a huge vacuum not only in the Rotary world, but also for thousands of people who knew him. We were no exception. What a wonderful soul he was. Soft spoken, very well spoken, full of positivity and ever smiling.

He was back-benching when I was on the Board of Directors and soon enough, we became good friends. In no time the bond became stronger and

I invited him to the installation ceremony of my club. He came and won the hearts of everyone. His stay in Kolkata with us was so special. The next three days that we spent together, including the one at the beautiful resort Rajbari Bawali, were truly memorable. We showed him around Kolkata and he loved the street food, specially the dosa. It reminded him of his favourite Korean dish and every time we met thereafter, he definitely remembered it. And I was amazed when he reciprocated, taking me out for a dosa meal in Seoul, Korea!.



From L: SangKoo and his wife Eun Sun with PRIP Mehta and Rashi.

A women's toilet complex in Kolkata

V Muthukumaran



DG Ramendu Homchaudhuri (R) and project chair Rakesh Bhatia (second from R), with members of RC Belur, in front of the toilet complex-cum-baby care centre.

room and a changing room. “There are seven rooms with two wash basins outside the cubicles, and the blocks are well-partitioned to ensure comfort for mothers and their babies.”

A sanitary napkin vending machine will be installed. At present, two women caretakers are employed by the club. “At least 100–120 women will visit this facility where we have made provision for running water in the washrooms.” For the monthly upkeep, the club spends ₹30,000 which is contributed by members.

During the inaugural, DG Ramendu Homchaudhuri said by transforming a corporation toilet into a modern, dignified sanitation centre for women, “RC Belur has created a new benchmark in public service — Bengal’s first modern ladies’ toilet. It has also helped to strengthen Rotary’s public image among the citizens as this facility is located in the heart of Kolkata.”

Club president Sharad Dugar said the members will ensure that this unique sanitation project will remain a sustainable initiative in the long run.

A couple of beneficiaries, who used the facility at the inaugural, appreciated it and thanked the Rotarians for taking up its maintenance.

Going ahead, the club plans to distribute recycled exercise books, diary pages and sparsely-used stationery for mothers under its adult literacy project. ■

Passersby on Mirza Ghalib Street in the heart of Kolkata can barely fail to notice the bold signage in Bengali announcing a ‘Ladies toilet and child care centre, the first of its kind in Bengal’. This exclusive women’s toilet complex and baby care centre was inaugurated in the city through a partnership between RC Belur, RID 3291, and the Kolkata Municipal Corporation.

Under a three-year contract, the club will maintain the 700sqft toilet complex-cum-breastfeeding centre built by the civic body. The contract

will be renewed to ensure that Rotary continues to provide a safe and secure zone for lactating mothers and their babies, said project chair Rakesh Bhatia.

Claiming that this is the first-of-its-kind sanitation facility for the women of Kolkata, he said, “no men will be allowed to enter the toilet complex. It has two cubicles with baby cots and stools for breastfeeding, and is an absolute safe zone for women.” The facility, open from 8am to 8pm on all days, except Sundays, has two Indian toilets, one western closet, a shower

We welcome your feedback on the content in Rotary News. Write to the Editor: rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com. Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos, to rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com. Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the Editor at rushbhagat@gmail.com or rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com. WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

Solar energy for Pune villages

Rasheeda Bhagat



From L: Project Director Dr Meena Borate, village volunteer Vikas Jadhav, Abhay Bansod, a senior official from corporate partner Emerson Electric Company, Ashwini Bansod and project treasurer Aditi Rahane atop a village home where solar panels were installed.

Two Rotary clubs — RCs Pune Hillside and Pune Yuva, RID 3131 — have done a clutch of community service projects in education, health and sanitation, water conservation, both for the farmers and the general community, and have now moved on to provide solar energy to rural schools and homes. With the help of CSR funds this project has helped put up solar panels in over 42 rural and semi-urban schools, and over 300 poor and underprivileged households in a radius of around 60km from Pune.

The CSR funds for this project costing upward of ₹1.61 crore have come from Emerson Electric Company India. “Last year our clubs completed a solar energy project for the village of Hatve Budruk, about 42km from Pune, and its success spurred other households to demand a similar project on a bigger scale. So we approached the same corporate, who has helped us for other projects earlier, to provide more funds as we were planning a much more ambitious project,” says past president of RC Pune Hillside Dr Meena Borate, project director, and the moving spirit behind these projects.

Last year our clubs completed a solar energy project for the village of Hatve Budruk, about 42km from Pune, and its success spurred other households to demand a similar project on a bigger scale.

Meena Borate
Project Director

She attributes the huge financial help from Emerson to the push given by a senior officer from the company, Abhay Bansod, “whose word really matters in that organisation. Year-after-year he has been bringing big money for Rotary service projects, but always chooses to remain invisible.”

Meena, whose passion for water conservation has earned her the nickname Pune’s *jalpari* (water fairy), is also passionate about the environment and concerned by the statistic that “nearly 60 per cent of India’s energy needs are met by burning coal, which is a disaster for the environment.”

The availability of extra funds added a big incentive to the rooftop solar project, “which we consider our gift to the environment of not only our country but the entire globe. The more tangible and concrete benefit for the families, almost all of them agri-based, is that their monthly electricity bill, which is around ₹700 to 800 is now reduced to ₹0,” she says. Of course, the households will still have to pay a monthly fee of ₹120 for the meter.

On the consumption pattern in these rural homes, she says that most of the houses in these villages have a kitchen and one room, so there are at least two bulbs, one fan, a small TV set, an electric mixie for the kitchen, and perhaps a small refrigerator in the more affluent homes. Most of the homes consume 1 kW per month and the solar energy system the Rotarians have installed on their rooftops is sufficient to meet their energy needs.

Coming to the zilla parishad (ZP) schools in which the Rotarians have installed solar panels, Meena says that their CSR partner agreed to provide funds for solar energy solutions on the condition that they choose

as beneficiaries the ZP schools in Chakan–Talegaon belt where the company facilities are located.

This was easier said than done and the Rotarians faced a major challenge in fitting solar panels on these schools. The problem here, as in most government schools, was that “most of these schools are in bad shape and do not pay their electricity bills for one or two years, often because the grants come late. We had to get this sorted and told them that you somehow find the money and settle your dues.”

Even before putting up the panels, both the Rotarians and the vendors faced challenges. Only schools and houses having an MSEDCL (Maharashtra State Electricity Distribution Company Ltd) connection with individual meters were selected for this project. Their average needs are less than what will be generated by the solar systems. From each of these installations, the surplus solar power generated will be fed into the MSEDCL grid and the schools and households will not have to pay any electricity bills. The average life of these solar plants is around 25 years, and if there are any maintenance issues, Rotarians will be available to help.

Also, the MSEDCL needs consumer’s sanctioned load — a minimum of 1 kW — to accept the application for a solar net meter. “Many of the smaller schools had a sanctioned load of 0.2, 0.3, or 0.6 kW. So they had to first apply for an increased load on the MSEDCL portal. Once this was done, it took 2–3 billing cycles to reflect the change. But in this difficult task, the liaison skills of our Rotary friends helped,” says another pillar of the project Aditi Rahane.

On the power requirements of the schools, in accordance with which the project had to earmark funds for the solar systems, Meena says that the size of the ZP schools vary from rather big

to small... with the result that while some of the schools need up to 14–15 kW, the smaller schools need only 1–3 kW. Here the Rotarians had to be judicious and do some balancing... and choose more of the smaller schools so that the money in their kitty could be spread further.

Apart from the solar panels with stands that were fitted on the roofs, generation meters/net meters and anti-lightning rods were fitted, and earthing done.

The Rotarians were happy to complete this project in three months. Now for the coming year, the project leaders want to take up the solar electrification of 250 more homes, as more village settlements in the region are requesting to give them solar energy too.

They also have a plan on how to meet this additional financial obligation. The solar systems for homes cost about ₹70,000 each, for which a Central government subsidy of ₹30,000 is available under the PM Suryaghar

Yojana. But this money comes only as reimbursement, after the solar systems are installed. “So we told the families that the subsidy money belongs to us and not them, as we are doing all the spending, and has to be handed over to us as a donation, so that more people could benefit.” Those who could afford it paid upfront, and those who could not were given credit on trust. “We realised that those who could not pay the subsidy amount upfront were the really needy ones who deserved our help, so we told them that we will trust you completely and install the solar systems, but once you get the subsidy, *hamarey saath beimani nahi karne ka* (please don’t betray our trust and cheat us).”

I am curious to know if those who got ‘credit,’ paid up once they got the subsidy. The Rotarian beams: “Oh yes, completely! You will be surprised how honest these people are; all of them have paid the total amount. These people live in a closely knit community in these villages which are really small, so if someone defaults on the payment, there will be gossip in the whole village and they don’t want to be seen as ungrateful or dishonest people.”



Above: Meena with Rotarians and villagers at Hatve Budruk village near Pune.

Below: Bansod and Meena with RC Rajgurunagar president Rajan Jambhale, and its members, at the solar panel installation at the Mahatma Gandhi School.





With the subsidy money that will flow back into the Rotary Trust which implements these service projects, an additional 250 homes will be done. Meena explains proudly that this is one of the main reasons why corporates choose to work with Rotary. Not only is it a reputed global organisation, its members come from different

professions and have varied expertise which they are willing to contribute free of cost, adding their own money if there is any shortfall, if it means better living conditions for that community.

Aditi Rahane explains that there are no administrative charges, and expert and voluntary hours are contributed by the Rotarians, who coordinate with the vendors for a better price, closely monitor proper end use of installed systems, submit information on the power generated by the systems, and help with maintenance/minor repairs. The grant of CSR funds requires timely submission of proper accounts and other details, and even though this is difficult at times as they are dealing with government systems and villagers, this was done meticulously. Otherwise, partnerships with corporates will not sustain, she adds.

In identifying the beneficiary schools and other liaison work, this

project got help from the Rotarians from local clubs such as RCs Chakan, Rajgurunagar and Talegaon Dabhade, who visited all the schools run by the government or reputed trusts and submitted detailed reports on the number of classes, students, grades etc. A few schools serving the physically or mentally-challenged students, and offering vocational courses such as nursing, were also included.

Meena is happy that the initial project meant for 50 homes, grew much bigger and continues to expand, thanks to both the social and media attention it got, and work in many of the homes chosen is continuing. “We hope that the beneficiary schools will be able to use the money saved from paying power bills to provide better educational infrastructure and the households will be able to use the saved money for better nutrition and education of their children.”

It will also lead to enhanced reliability, security and resilience of the state’s power grid, reduced carbon emission and air pollution from energy production, and expand clean energy access to rural schools, she adds. The CSR partner is happy that the money given to them was “fully spent on the actual project, and no overhead expenses or transport costs to visit the sites were taken from the grant.”

Ashwini Bansod and Abhay Bansod are two other pillars of this project which is under execution and will continue in this financial year (2025–26), at the end of which an audited utilisation report will be presented to the corporate as mandated.

The next big project these Rotarians are planning to take up is “proper garbage disposal; if you go one mile outside Pune city, and into the smaller towns and villages you will find there is no garbage disposal system of any kind. We hope to make a difference in this too in the coming days,” adds Meena. ■

The beneficiary schools will be able to use the money saved from paying power bills to provide better educational infrastructure and the households will be able to use the saved money for better nutrition and education of their children.

The optimist

Diana Schoberg

*As he begins to wind down his foundation,
Bill Gates makes his biggest plans yet.*

In May, Bill Gates gave himself a bold new challenge and a tough deadline: to give away virtually all his wealth in the next 20 years and close up his long-running philanthropic enterprise. The Gates Foundation, one of Rotary's partners in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, has already given away more than \$100 billion in its first 25 years. But for the foundation to wind down fully it first needs to ramp up — in order to spend more than twice that amount before it closes its doors on December 31, 2045.

Polio remains a priority. At the 2025 Rotary International Convention in Calgary, Alberta, Rotary and the Gates Foundation announced a joint commitment to direct up to \$450 million over the next three years to support polio eradication, a renewal of their long-standing partnership. Rotary will continue to raise \$50 million per year, with every dollar matched with two additional dollars from the Gates Foundation.

To learn more about his decision, how he views the foundation's legacy, and what lies ahead, *Rotary* posed some questions to Gates, who turns 70 this month. These are the responses he sent in their entirety.

As the Gates Foundation celebrates its 25th anniversary, what are you most proud of?

Over the past 25 years, we've witnessed and contributed to more progress than we ever thought possible.

I'm proud of the partnerships that have contributed to saving lives — not only the Global Polio Eradication Initiative but also the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Thanks to these programmes, the price of life-saving healthcare innovations — vaccines,

treatments, bed nets, and diagnostics — has dropped dramatically.

The impact is mind-blowing: Thus far, these collaborations have reached 1.1 billion children with life-saving vaccines, helped cut global child mortality in half, and saved more than 80 million lives. Hundreds of millions of people have risen out of poverty and into better lives.

As you wind down your foundation over the next 20 years, where do you think your money will make the biggest impact? What headwinds do you anticipate?

In spite of all of the progress I've just described, we are seeing the toughest headwinds in the history of our foundation. Countries are

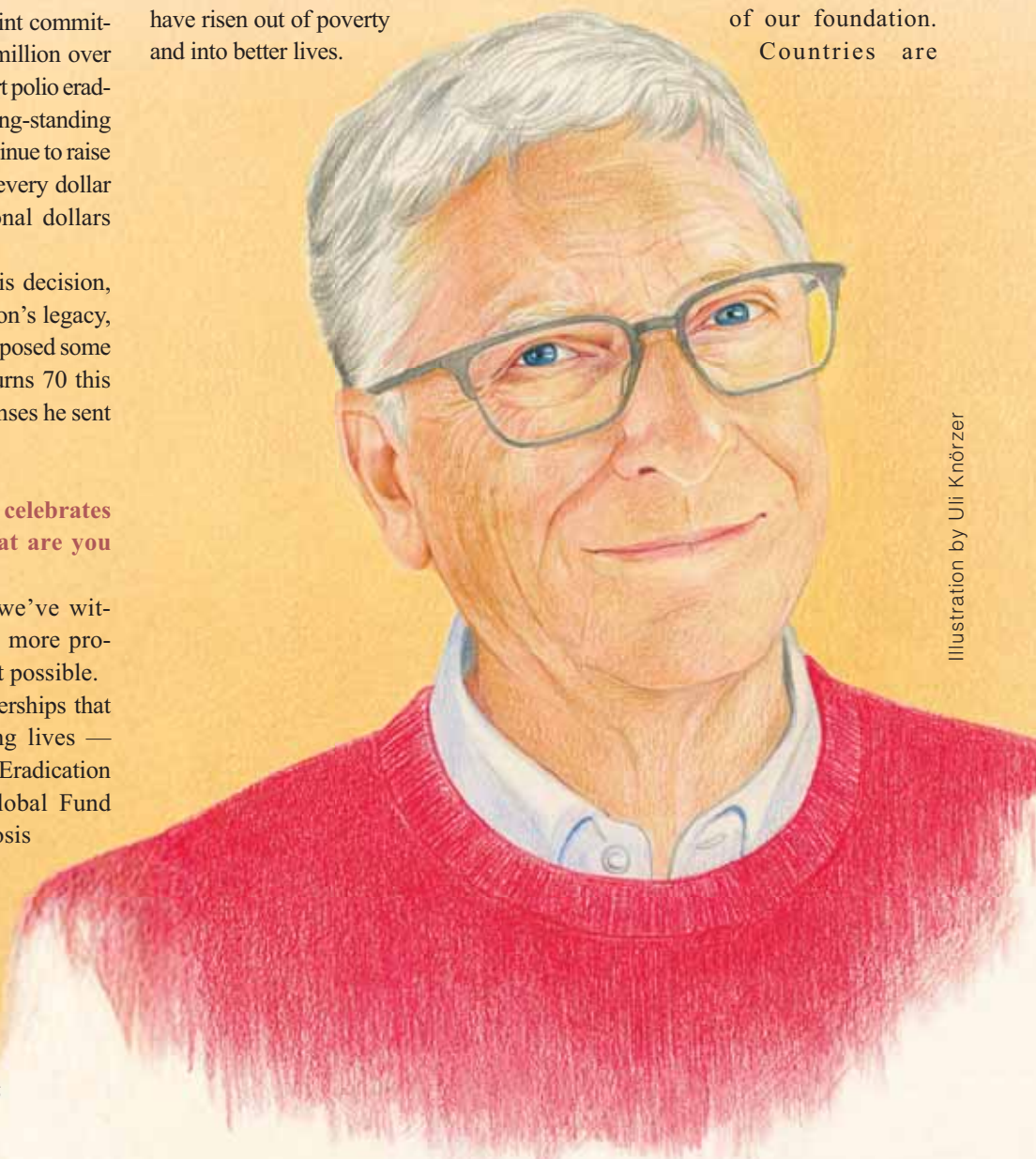


Illustration by Uli Knörzer

slashing tens of billions of dollars in global development funding, and the consequences will be deadly. In fact, this will be the first year in the new millennium when the number of kids dying around the world goes up instead of down — an unthinkable tragedy.

We need people who are committed to progress — like Rotarians — to stand against these deadly cuts and help us get back on a path to progress.

For our part, we will be accelerating our work over the next 20 years to solve urgent problems and save and improve more lives. We remain steadfastly focused on where we can have the most impact: reducing child mortality, eradicating or eliminating infectious diseases, and lifting millions more people out of poverty and onto a path to prosperity.

We're placing our bet on human ingenuity — on the scientists, health workers, educators, and farmers whose tireless work has already delivered some of the most dramatic gains in human history. They haven't given up, and neither will we.

How do you ensure sustainability?

Our goal at the Gates Foundation has always been to solve problems, not manage them in perpetuity. That means helping communities build capacity to take on the challenges they face. That will be our priority for the next 20 years, and we hope it will be the priority for the next generation of catalytic philanthropists who will take up the challenges of their time.

New innovations will continue to give these communities better tools than ever before to invest in their own health and prosperity. So, despite the challenges we face, I'm optimistic.

The past 25 years was one of the greatest

periods of human progress in history, and I believe that we can make the next 20 years even more transformative.

Wild poliovirus case counts rose in 2024. What makes you optimistic polio eradication is still possible?

I am as confident as ever that the global polio programme will end polio for good.

What keeps me optimistic, despite some challenges, are the innovation, frontline workers, and global commitment driving this effort forward. The next-generation polio vaccine, nOPV2, is helping to stop outbreaks, protecting children in under-immunised communities from paralysis. More than 1.6 billion doses have been administered as of July 2025 — that is an incredible number of children protected from this devastating disease. And we now have enough supply of this new vaccine to protect children wherever it emerges.

In the countries where wild polio remains endemic, Afghanistan and Pakistan, the programme is working closely with local authorities to tackle obstacles, improving cross-border coordination and strengthening community trust to reach all children with vaccines.

Despite the recent uptick in cases, we shouldn't lose sight of the broader progress, which really is remarkable: the Global Polio Eradication Initiative has eliminated wild poliovirus in almost every country in the world, reducing the number of polio cases by over 99 per cent. With continued commitment and collaboration, including from Rotarians around the globe, I am confident we can finish the job.

How is the polio programme pivoting given the current political and economic volatility? Is there any change to how your foundation is doing its work toward ending polio?

Help Rotary and its partners reach every child with the polio vaccine. Thanks to the Gates Foundation, your contribution will be tripled. Make your donation at my.rotary.org/polioplus-fund.

The polio programme has a long history of adapting to stop polio in some of the world's most complex settings — working closely with governments and communities to protect routine immunisation progress and stay focused on eradication.

Take Pakistan as an example. Security forces sometimes provide support in conflict areas so that vaccinators can do their jobs safely. But in areas of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province where conflict has been on the rise, the presence of those security forces was actually keeping families from feeling safe enough to go get vaccinated. So local influencers stepped in to keep vaccinators safe without having to involve security forces at all. The approach has been working well, with a reported 80 per cent of children being reached. It will be critical that the programme independently monitor these areas so we can be confident in the results.

Today, amid competing health priorities and growing political and financial pressures, we know tough challenges lie ahead. Some major donors are reducing support for global health, but new donors are also coming in with contributions, which is so critical at this time. And we are continuing to adapt as we do best, staying laser-focused on what works and using financial and human resources where

they will have the greatest impact to end polio for good.

What's the biggest lesson you've learned in your time working on polio eradication?

Progress depends on relentless collaboration. Success is only possible when polio workers, government officials, partners and donors — including Rotary — all work together to reach children with life-saving vaccines, even in the world's hardest-to-access areas.

We observed the power of this kind of collaboration recently in Madagascar during an outbreak of variant poliovirus. The government came in with strong political leadership to halt the spread; community partners worked quickly to strengthen vaccination campaigns; and international partners like UNICEF and the World Health Organisation surged support to bolster those efforts. Everyone worked to protect children with vaccines in some of the most distant and isolated regions of the country, and they succeeded in stopping the outbreak.

Ending polio for good will require more collaboration like this whenever and wherever the disease continues to emerge. Rotary members' roles as global advocates and civic leaders

To Rotarians everywhere:
Thank you for decades of
dedication and partnership.
Because of your efforts, we
will one day live in a world
where all children are safe
from this disease.

Gates Foundation



are critical to ensure polio eradication remains a top global priority.

The Gates Foundation has funded technical innovations in polio vaccines for two decades, including the development and rollout of nOPV2. What most excites you about what's in the research and development pipeline now?

Sustained investment in innovation is as critical as ever. As I mentioned, nOPV2 is already helping close outbreaks, and we continue to invest in more genetically stable vaccines to keep future generations safe from variant polioviruses. These advances are helping us stop transmission faster and protect more children with greater precision.

We're also excited about the hexavalent vaccine, which combines protection

for children into a single shot against six diseases: diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, Haemophilus influenzae type B, and hepatitis B, along with polio. This simplifies immunisation schedules and strengthens early protection for children, especially in regions that have limited health care resources. In fact, in July, Senegal (W Africa) and Mauritania (N W Africa) became the first countries to introduce this vaccine with support from Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance.

These innovative vaccines are giving frontline healthcare workers better tools to reach every child and stop transmission of all forms of polio for good.

Why did you choose to have the Gates Foundation partner with Rotary? What does Rotary bring to the table?



In June, Bill Gates dedicated an award he received from the Nigerian president to Chief Ayuba Gufwan. Paralyzed by polio at age 5, Gufwan serves as the executive secretary of Nigeria's National Commission for Persons with Disabilities and CEO of Wheelchairs for Nigeria.

Rotary was the first organisation to envision a world without polio, and members' leadership has been essential in driving this global effort for over four decades.

As a founding partner of the GPEI, Rotary has helped vaccinate nearly three billion children across hundreds of countries since 1985. Rotary members have contributed numerous volunteer hours and significant funding, and their advocacy has helped secure billions more from governments to support eradication efforts. Their global network allows them to deliver vaccines and engage communities in the toughest settings, from India to the Philippines to Ukraine.

Because of Rotary's leadership, we are closer than ever to our shared goal

of ensuring that families will never have to fear this disease again.

Why are you extending the Gates Foundation's 2-to-1 funding match with Rotary?

Together, we hope to mobilise up to \$450 million in new funding over the next three years. These funds will be used to support vaccine delivery, outbreak response, community engagement, and implementation and maintenance of polio eradication programmes in affected regions.

This extension comes at a critical time. Over the past year, we have seen wild polio case numbers rise in the last endemic countries, Afghanistan and Pakistan. And the detection of polio in places that were previously polio-free is a stark reminder that polio anywhere is a threat to people everywhere. While transmission overall remains low, our hard-won progress is at risk. Reductions in global aid, vaccine misinformation, and rising conflict and political instability are all contributing to polio's continued spread.

Continuing our partnership with Rotary will allow us to address these challenges and reach children around the world with life-saving vaccines.

It is critical that we finish the job on polio. Eradication is the only way to make sure that continuing challenges don't mean an ongoing risk for children today and for generations to come.

In 2009, your father, Bill Gates Sr, suggested to Seattle Rotarians that they work on malaria eradication. Over the years, their work has grown into the Rotary Healthy Communities Challenge, which the Gates Foundation supports through a \$13 million donation and technical assistance and guidance. How does this project fit into your overall strategy for malaria eradication and preventing childhood deaths?

Our long-standing partnership with Rotarians has been critical to the progress we've seen against malaria in recent decades — and it's more important today than ever, in the face of shifting agendas and uncertain financing that are putting this progress at risk.

Over the past 25 years, 2.2 billion cases of malaria and 12.7 million deaths have been averted — thanks to innovation, generous aid, and political commitment. For the first time, eradication is within our view, and the pipeline of next-generation tools to bring that vision to reality has never been stronger.

Rotary's work is essential to building the networks of community health workers who will bring these tools to the people who need them. Through the Healthy Communities Challenge, Rotary is helping to train thousands of community health workers across the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mozambique, Nigeria and Zambia who are treating malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhoea in their own communities. These community health workers know their communities in ways no one else could. They're the ones who will get us across the finish line in beating malaria in the toughest places — and in the process, they'll build the foundation for healthier, more resilient communities that can face multiple health challenges.

How will AI impact development? Paint us a picture of what health-care, agriculture, education etc might look like in 20 years.

Artificial intelligence has the potential to help solve some of the world's toughest challenges. One of the key ways AI is helping to shape the future is by providing critical support to frontline workers — including community health workers, farmers, and teachers — who are using AI to reach people more efficiently and effectively.



This September 2000 photo captures Gates giving the polio vaccine to a child in India, an illustration of his long-standing commitment to ending the disease.

In global health, AI-powered tools could significantly reduce pressure on overburdened healthcare systems by supporting frontline workers in diagnosing health problems and delivering better, more effective care. Imagine a nurse in a rural clinic using an AI tool to analyse a patient's symptoms, flag high-risk cases, and provide accurate diagnoses and treatment suggestions.

Our long-standing partnership with Rotarians has been critical to the progress we've seen against malaria in recent decades.

This kind of real-time clinical support could improve both accuracy and access, bridging long-standing gaps in care and bringing life-saving capabilities to those who need them most.

And this is just the beginning. In agriculture, AI is delivering tailored advice to smallholder farmers to increase agricultural production. In classrooms, AI-powered tools are helping teachers personalise lessons for students and improve learning outcomes.

If the world continues to prioritise equity and access at the forefront, AI can be a powerful force multiplier for development — expanding opportunity, reducing inequality, and improving millions of lives.

Rotary has been increasingly emphasising measurable impact in its projects. As someone who has long been

focused on data collection, can you give our members any advice?

Quality, timely data is critical for everything from development of AI-backed tools to vaccine delivery to advocacy. Through advances in how researchers collect and analyse global health data, we now know much more about what kills children, where these deaths occur, and why some kids are more vulnerable than others. By putting those insights to work, we've been able to make incredible progress over the last 25 years, reducing child mortality and saving lives. Over time, better data has revolutionised how we understand health challenges, target resources, and measure impact — and remains one of the most powerful tools we have to drive future progress.

Investing in data is a smart, cost-effective way to create impact. Continuing to improve data-gathering and to invest in the collection of quality data will give us a fuller picture of where our investments and programmes will have the greatest impact and help us build solutions to some of the world's toughest health challenges. Measuring impact and starting with quality data to design programmes will make Rotary initiatives even more effective.

What message do you have for Rotary members?

Most importantly, thank you for your unwavering support to eradicating polio. Rotary's leadership, advocacy, and sustained commitment have brought the world to the brink of eradication — something once thought to be impossible.

To Rotarians everywhere: Thank you for decades of dedication and partnership. Because of your efforts, we will one day live in a world where all children are safe from this disease. We look forward to leaving polio behind long before our foundation closes its doors in 2045.

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Digital mammography machine in Moradabad

RC Sanskruti Moradabad, along with RC Moradabad Achievers, RID 3100, installed a digital mammography machine at Cosmos Hospital, through GG support from RC Daegu North, RID 3700, Korea. The initiative, inaugurated in the presence of IPDG Deepa Khanna and PDG Lee Sang Chul from Korea, will make advanced screening accessible to women from underprivileged families.



IPDG Deepa Khanna (L) with Rotarians from Korea and Moradabad after inauguration of the project.

Blood donation van launched in Varanasi

RC Varanasi Downtown, RID 3120, provided a blood collection van worth ₹56 lakh to the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital in Purvanchal under a GG, in partnership with RC Rudramati Kathmandu, Nepal. The vehicle will enable safe and efficient blood collection, reaching remote areas. Equipped with modern medical facilities, it will support cancer patients.



From fourth left: IPDG Paritosh Bajaj and DG Dr Ashutosh Agarwal in front of the mobile blood collection facility.

Enhancing eye care in Mumbai

RC Bombay Uptown, RID 3141, completed its *Project EyeHope*, equipping Lokmanya Tilak Municipal General Hospital, Mumbai, with advanced ophthalmic surgical equipment worth \$108,561. The project is supported by Sunday Friends (MK Gandhi & K Gandhi Charitable Trust), Rtn Rajendra Barwale, RCs Bombay Midtown and Mumbai Elegant, and international partner RC Lippetal (Germany).



IPDG Chetan Desai (third from R) and RC Bombay Uptown IPP Suman Agarwal (R) at the inauguration of the equipment at the Lokmanya Tilak Hospital.

HPV vaccination drive

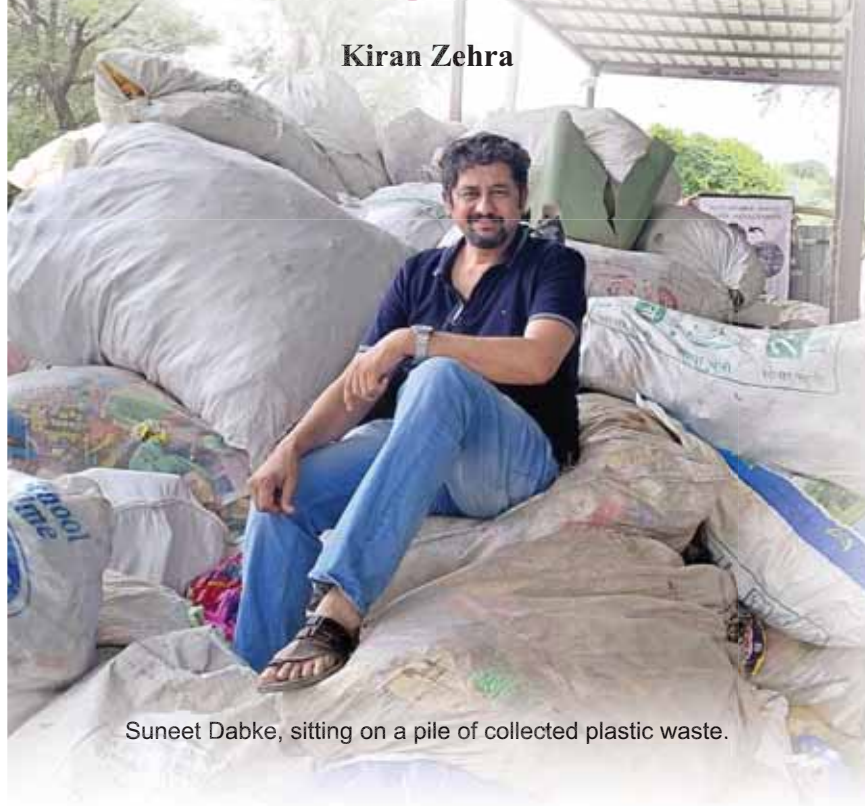
RC Gandevi, RID 3060, under the *Gift of Life* project in partnership with Nirali Hospital, provided HPV vaccines to 900 girls aged 9–14. The project, costing ₹26 lakh will benefit 1,000 girls and is supported by CSR donors and provides two doses of the vaccine. The club also donated an ultrasound (sonography) machine to the Amrutam Hospital. This ₹16 lakh project also attracted CSR funding.



School students being vaccinated under the *Gift of Life* Project.

A lesson in waste management

Kiran Zehra



Suneet Dabke, sitting on a pile of collected plastic waste.

There is a sense of urgency and enthusiasm in his voice when you ask Suneet Dabke, a waste management expert, about the project his club, RC Baroda Greens, RID 3060, and his Kachre se Azadi Foundation are carrying out in Asoj, a village 30km from Vadodara, Gujarat.

Dabke, who holds a doctorate in Waste Management and has worked with the government, found that policies for environmental conservation were neither strict nor comprehensive, “a gap that made community-led initiatives all the more vital.” His foundation works to “liberate villages from the burden of unmanaged waste by promoting segregation, recycling and sustainable community practices.”

“This is more than a project to preserve the pristine soil of our villages and keep their environment healthy,” he says. Urban cities are deeply dependent on villages for agriculture. “In recent times, people have even begun migrating back to villages, seeking a simple lifestyle and peace of mind. In cities, we have small green patches in the form of parks, but the very character of a village is green. The air quality is great and the food is fresh. We have a responsibility to preserve this pristine environment. Villages are the soul of our cities,” he says.

Plastic waste (shampoo sachets, chips and biscuit wrappers, PET bottles) has steadily crept into rural spaces. “Waste is a leading cause of

greenhouse gas emissions, and while urban waste management struggles to cope, most villages have no system in place. People simply dump garbage in their backyards, creating piles that have multiplied over the years. The plastic piles near their homes occupy the surroundings like an uninvited guest, creeping into every corner of the village. What began as a few discarded bags and wrappers soon became a stubborn problem that no one knew how to solve,” says Dabke.

Determined to address this, he launched a pilot waste management project in Manjusar village in 2014 under Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, with support from Banswara Syntex. The pilot began with door-to-door waste collection, simple waste segregation at home, and composting, creating a low-cost, community-friendly model that others could follow.

In 2016, he set up his Kachre se Azadi Foundation to scale-up this approach. The model expanded, through partnerships, to villages such as Dumad, Sakariya, Narmadpura, and Gulabpura. In 2019, an incentive-based programme in Dumad by L&T Technology Services to promote wet and dry waste segregation, with ongoing support from ESRAG (Environment Sustainability Rotary Action Group) of RID 3060 to strengthen sustainable practices, and efforts by Indian Oil Corporation at its Gujarat Refinery to address residual oily sludge and polymer waste disposal, led to the village being recognised as Gujarat’s number one village in waste management.

RC Baroda Greens also joined as an awareness partner, organising campaigns in schools, setting up village stalls, and engaging residents directly in conversations on waste segregation. CSR support from companies such as Polycab, NISOL and Apollo Tyres further extended

its scale. To sustain operations, his foundation invested in a ₹34 lakh e-vehicle for waste collection, “ensuring the system was as future-ready as it was community-driven,” he says.

This model was applied in Asoj last year in partnership with his club. Villagers were encouraged to exchange their segregated plastic waste for soap, detergent and notebooks. Every 500kg of the collected plastic was then transformed into benches and chairs, which were donated back to the gram panchayat for schools and community spaces. Asoj is now plastic-free. The club is also extending this initiative to Kunpad village.

“Villagers are now partners in shaping waste-free communities,” says Dabke, adding how practices such as traditional composting, local repair solutions and incentive-driven segregation keep the model practical and scalable. His ability to adapt

solutions locally even won him a Fullbright Scholarship to the North Carolina State University in 2010, where his thesis explored bioconversion of industrial sludge into non-toxic manure using vermi-technology.

His Rotary journey started in 2014, when RC Baroda Sayajinagari sponsored him for a VTT programme in the Netherlands, which eventually drew him to become a member of the club. He later joined RC Baroda Greens for its environment-focused initiatives. “Our club’s projects go beyond just planting trees. Planting saplings is only the first step, but real sustainability depends on their survival and the community’s involvement. If the trees are left uncared for, or if the fallen leaves are burnt, we lose the very purpose



A chair made from waste plastic.

of planting them, as burning releases methane and carbon dioxide. Instead, those leaves can be used for compost or mulching, which enriches the soil. Don’t plant and forget; include people to care for the trees and make sure the cycle is complete.”

Pointing to global studies and the Netflix documentary *Carbon*, he stresses that soil health is directly tied to climate resilience and food security.

“Start with your own home. Segregate your waste before disposing. When we do that, we stop treating everything as garbage. Food scraps become compost, recyclables turn into new products, and only a small fraction goes to the dump. It is the easiest step an ordinary household can take to keep our city cleaner, greener and healthier,” he insists. The club has even encouraged its members to practice this with a quirky incentive of a plate of free *pani puri* at specific stalls. “Who wouldn’t want free *pani puri* in Baroda?” he smiles.

At the Lead25 Conclave in Chennai this August, the club showcased its project, drawing strong footfall and sparking genuine interest, “a promising start for a cause that turns waste into worth.” ■



Club president Rajesh Chaubey (R), Dabke and club secretary Vivekh Srivastava handing over notebooks and soaps to a child.

Rotary relief for Kishtwar victims

Within days of the Kishtwar cloudburst tragedy, the Disaster Management Committee formed by DG Rohit Oberoi assessed the damage at this town in J&K, filed a report that identified relief materials needed for the victims, mostly pilgrims, and locals whose houses were washed away. "RC Katra sent ration and other essentials to the disaster site the very next day," he says.

From July 1, *Operation Hum for Himachal* reached out to the flood victims. "This was a massive relief effort praised by state officials, politicians and the print and social media. Relief kits worth over ₹20 lakh were distributed in a month, and our clubs are still helping victims." Oberoi wants to add 25 new clubs to the tally of 121 in the first six months, and "induct over 500 new Rotarians to the headcount of 3,149 for the year. We have already added over 100 new members."

A Rotary Rehab Centre (GG: ₹1.7 crore) to treat 30–35 patients with paralysis will be launched soon. A mobile mammography clinic will screen 2,500 rural women at its 100 check-up camps. His target for TRF-giving is \$250,000. As District Rotary Action Plan Champion (2023–26), he is wooing young professionals, by "making Rotary flexible for Gen Z." Oberoi joined Rotary in 2000, and is looking forward to his silver jubilee year. He will be District Learning Facilitator next year.



Rohit Oberoi
Educational institutes
RC Kapurthala
RID 3070

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran



M K Ravindra
Civil engineer
RC Chitradurga-Fort
RID 3160

GG projects transform lives

Global grant projects across RI's focus areas are bringing a lasting change across communities in North Karnataka and the Rayalseema areas of Andhra. "At present 18 service projects, including four in Davangere, worth ₹13–15 crore, are under implementation by our district clubs," says DG Ravindra. Ten dialysis machines (GG: ₹1.16 crore) were installed at the Rotary Seva Bhavana, Chitradurga, along with physiotherapy and skill development centres, thus benefitting rural people.

His home club gave a DDF of \$5,000 for the physiotherapy unit. Ravindra aims to charter 10 new clubs and add 500 new members to the existing tally of 78 and 2,509 respectively, and breach the headcount of 3,000 Rotarians by the year-end. A diagnostic lab (GG: ₹60 lakh) in Sandur; and Rotary Blood Bank (GG: ₹70 lakh) in Raichur were set-up recently. His district team is looking at a few CSR grant projects, including 15 smart classes in government schools, a cardiac ambulance, while a blood bank (GG: ₹70 lakh) is on the anvil in Ananthapur.

Ravindra aims to contribute \$400,000 to TRF. Recalling his early Rotary days, he says, "I joined the organisation in 1994 attracted by its platforms of friendship, fellowship and service." Now, he looks ahead with optimism as GG projects are transforming lives in this part of the world, he says.

Focus on health, hygiene, community

A third generation Rotarian, DG Karthik was inspired by his grandfather Narayanasamy Reddiar and father Jayaraman, who are charter members of his home club, to join Rotary in 1999. "I was moved by our projects' impact on communities, and this motivates me to continue my service," he says.

He has formed a district team for a mega cervical cancer awareness and vaccination project (GG: \$150,000) for school and college students. Several GG projects are on the anvil including 100 toilet blocks (GG: ₹7.5 lakh each block) at government schools; 200 interactive boards (GG: ₹2.4 crore) for 100 schools; and talks are on to install 50 dialysis machines at a government hospital (GG: ₹2.5 crore).

Karthik is tapping CSR funds for building a community hall (₹2.5 crore), indoor sports stadium (₹1.5 crore), and an auditorium (₹2.5 crore) for holding seminars and events — all coming up in Perambalur.

Fifty new clubs will be formed, and 2,000 new members will be inducted — 1,200 new Rotarians have joined so far. When he took over, there were 150 clubs and 5,850 Rotarians in the district. For TRF-giving, his target is \$1.5 million. A four-day RYLA at Kodaikanal will be held shortly with 50 college students including some from Nigeria, Australia, England and New Zealand. "Apart from leadership skills, we will focus on ethical values for a successful life," he smiles.



J Karthik
Transport
RC Perambalur
RID 3000

Project ROCCO — Rotary
Combating Childhood Obesity —
will create awareness on this
lifestyle disease among 10,000
children through events.

G N Ramesh, RID 3205



G N Ramesh
Gastroenterologist
RC Cochin Metropolis
RID 3205

Fighting obesity, autism

A couple of medical projects are being planned to boost the public image of Rotary in this newly-carved district which has 103 clubs and 3,600 members to begin with. DG Ramesh has plans to charter 20 new clubs with a net membership growth of 20 per cent during his tenure.

Project ROCCO — Rotary Combating Childhood Obesity — will create awareness on this lifestyle disease among 10,000 children through events and campaigns. "We will identify children in need of medical intervention, and offer medical support," he says. All the clubs will pool in funds and participate in the ROCCO campaign. Also, parents and caregivers of children with autism are invited for special sessions in Kochi, Thrissur and Muvattupuzha. "We will hold skilling classes for at least 50 children with autism and dyslexia. The hands-on training will enable the special children to get jobs in future."

Another project, in collaboration with the Believers Hospital, Thiruvalla, and Amrita Hospital, Kochi, will offer insulin-support to people with diabetes (GG: \$40,000). "We will provide all help including special pumps, devices, medicines etc for 50 patients to start with." A crematorium will be set up (CSR fund: ₹40 lakh) for pets and strays in Kochi. His target for TRF-giving is \$1.5 million. Having joined Rotary in 2001, he believes that "networking and service will attract more youth to Rotary." Industrialist Kochouseph Chittilappilly, a distinguished Rotarian, is his role model. ■

Making a difference

Eye camps at Pondicherry schools

Eye check-up camps are being held at schools by RC Puducherry Vision, RID 2981, as an ongoing project. The club also provides awareness lectures on eye donation in the schools. The club also donated a smart TV to a government primary school which will help students expand their knowledge.

Pamphlets on the importance of breastfeeding were distributed to lactating mothers at primary health centres. The club regularly provides food to special children.



An eye check-up camp in progress in a school.



PDG Ganesh Bhat (4th from L), with teachers, Rotarians and students, at the Panchayat Union Middle School, Kaparuthampatti.

WASH projects in Salem schools

During his visit to 11 out of 16 schools where GG projects for WASH were implemented some nine years ago in Salem (RID 2982), PDG Ganesh Bhat found that all aspects like toilets, urinals, handwash stations, water taps etc are being maintained under hygienic conditions.

He was asked to visit this WASH project during the TRF training programme at Makati, Philippines, for 20 Rotarians. Bhat interacted with school principals, teachers, students, district education officers, parents and community leaders. The WASH project has brought behavioural changes among students, parents and the general community which adopted the handwashing practices. The villages are open defecation-free now.



Digital tablets for Pune schools

With the aim to bridge the digital divide, educational tablets were given to 250 students in Class 8–9 at four rural schools by RC Pune Heritage, RID 3131, at the start of the academic year.

These tablets, preloaded with academic software and motivational content, will remain with the students till they pass out of the school. The digital learning project worth ₹50 lakh was made possible through a joint CSR initiative of Kuka India, Turck Automation, Festo India, Shagun Industries and Shakshi Medtech. The *Ask Didi* App will enable students to get clear, accurate answers on a wide range of subjects, thus bridging the gap between digital tech and education.



Students with their digital tablets.



Dr Usha Sagadhevan from Lotus Hospital presents a human milk sachet to a beneficiary. Also seen are (from R) RC Erode Nexus secretary R Madhumathi and project chairperson Dr Shruthi Rajendran.

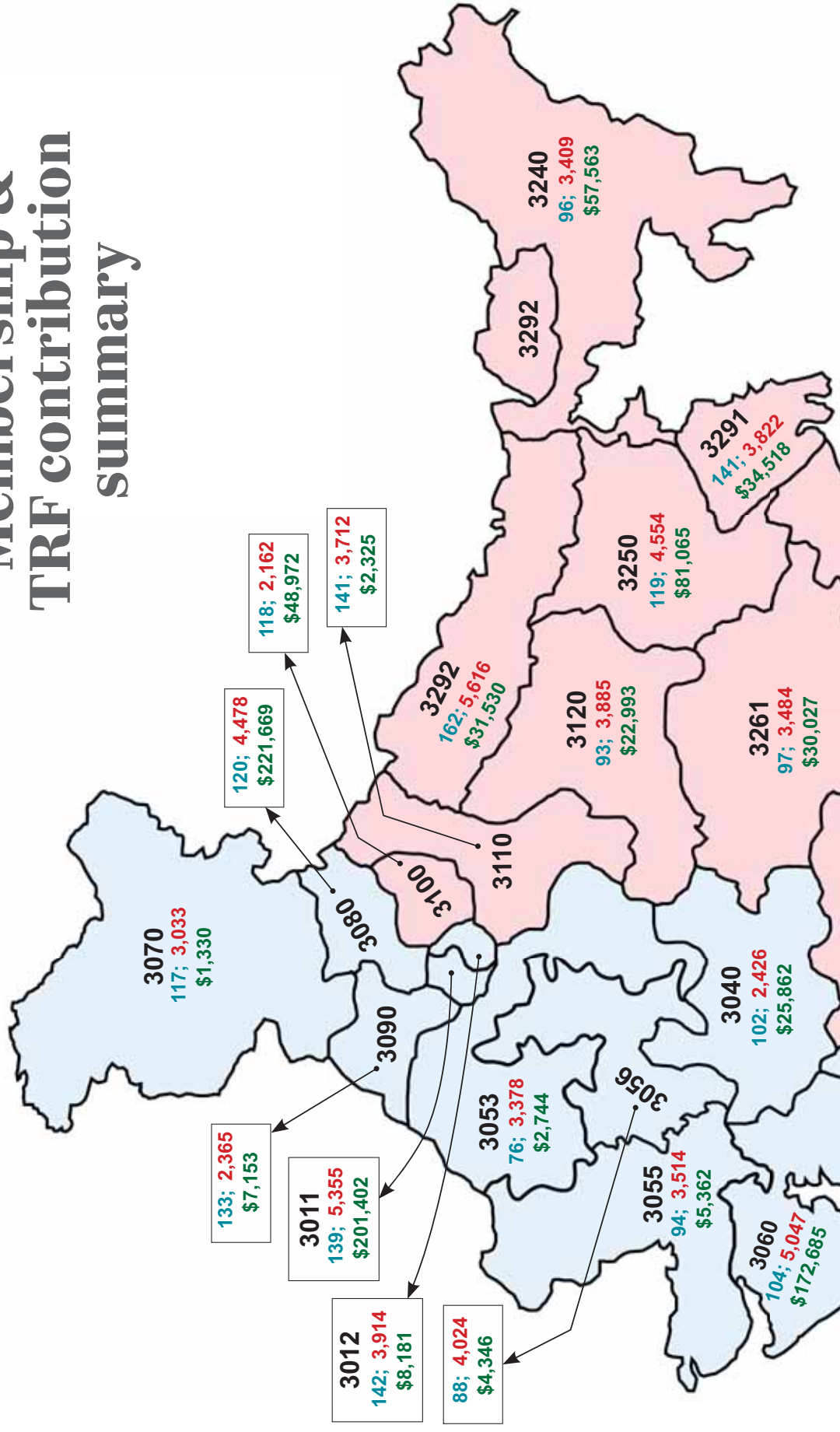
A human milk bank in Erode

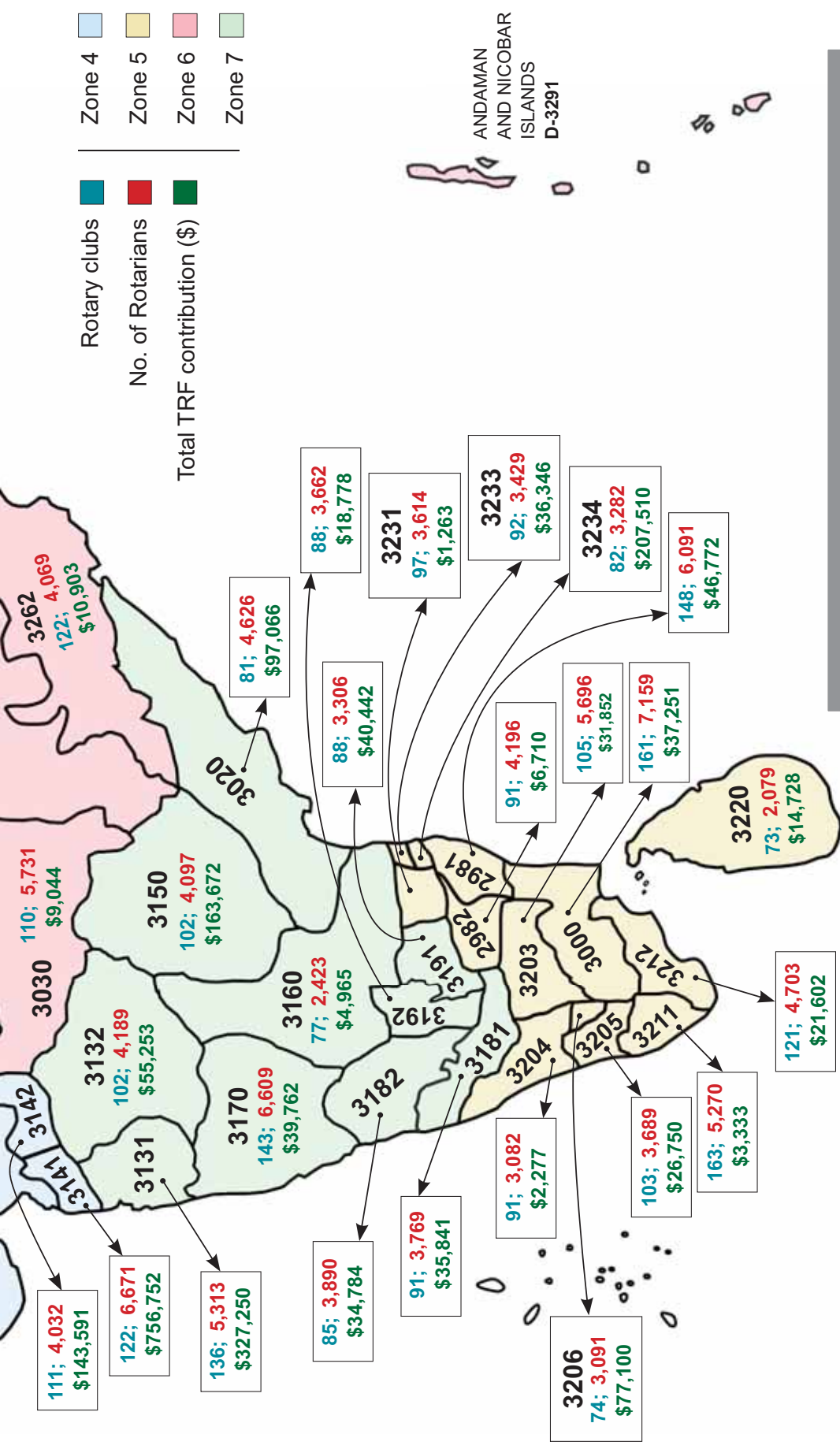
As part of its maternal and child health initiatives, RC Erode Nexus, RID 3203, set up a human milk bank called *Varam* at the Lotus Hospital. DG B Dhanasekar and AKS member K Srinivasan inaugurated the facility (₹2 lakh) which will ensure a safe and reliable source of breast milk to babies under treatment. Club president S Bharanidhar, secretary R Madhumathi, project chair Shruthi Rajendran, PDG EK Sagadhevan, RRFC N Dhavamani and AG K Ramalingam were present during the inaugural.

The club, in association with Erode Parenting Hub, an NGO, launched 'Mom Connect', a WhatsApp support group for lactating and pregnant mothers.



Membership & TRF contribution summary





Rotary worldwide

Rotaract clubs :	9,680	Rotaract members :	136,499
Interact clubs :	18,041	Interact members :	415,081
RCCs :	14,191		

As on September 23, 2025

*Membership figures as on September 1, 2025.
*TRF contribution figures as on August 31, 2025.



RID **3030**

RC Nagpur Ishanya

Three dialysis machines were installed at the Indira Gandhi Government Medical College and Hospital, Nagpur, through CSR funds from Vicco Products Bombay routed through Rotary Foundation India.



Club matters



RID **3080**

RC Ambala Industrial Area

Club members planted saplings at the Red Cross Old Age Home in the cantonment area as part of their ongoing greening mission.

RID **3090**

RC Samana

A water cooler was installed at the Government Elementary School, Mardaheri, which will benefit around 130 students. The project was chaired by Naresh Mittal.





RID **3131**

RC Khopoli

DG Santosh Marathe was the chief guest at the District Interact Assembly which was attended by 220 Interactors and teachers. A skit on how to conduct an Interact meeting was performed.

RID **3060**

RC Amreli Gir

Five sewing machines were donated to the Vocational Training Centre at the Deaf and Mute School, Amreli, to empower hearing-and-speech-impaired women.



RID **3142**

RC Navi Mumbai Hill Side

Raincoats were distributed to traffic policemen on duty at Taloja to recognise their efforts in regulating the vehicular flow during monsoon. Project chair Vijayrao Shinde led the initiative.

RID **3132**

RC Solapur Smart City

A special session was held for 100 women of self-help groups in Gulwanchi village by Shivganga Mendargi who guided them on marketing of their products. They were introduced to business avenues such as tailoring, papad-making, chutney-making and mehndi cone preparation.

What does your palm say?

Gita Mathai

People have long been fascinated by palmists. Can they really predict the future? Palmistry has attracted amateurs, professionals and self-taught enthusiasts. There are countless books on the subject, and even online palm readings.

The truth is that our palms and soles carry irrefutable evidence of identity. Palm prints and fingerprints, marked by unique whorls, arches and loops, are individualised and never identical, not even in twins. Long before DNA analysis, fingerprints were one of the earliest and most reliable biometric methods of identification.

Magicians and soothsayers noticed that the lines of the palms, shape of the hands, and length of the fingers varied from person to person. Palmistry soon became a lucrative profession, much like astrology. Experienced palmists are often well-read and observant, making shrewd assessments of body language and appearance. Even before looking at a palm, they may gauge a person's mental state, character or

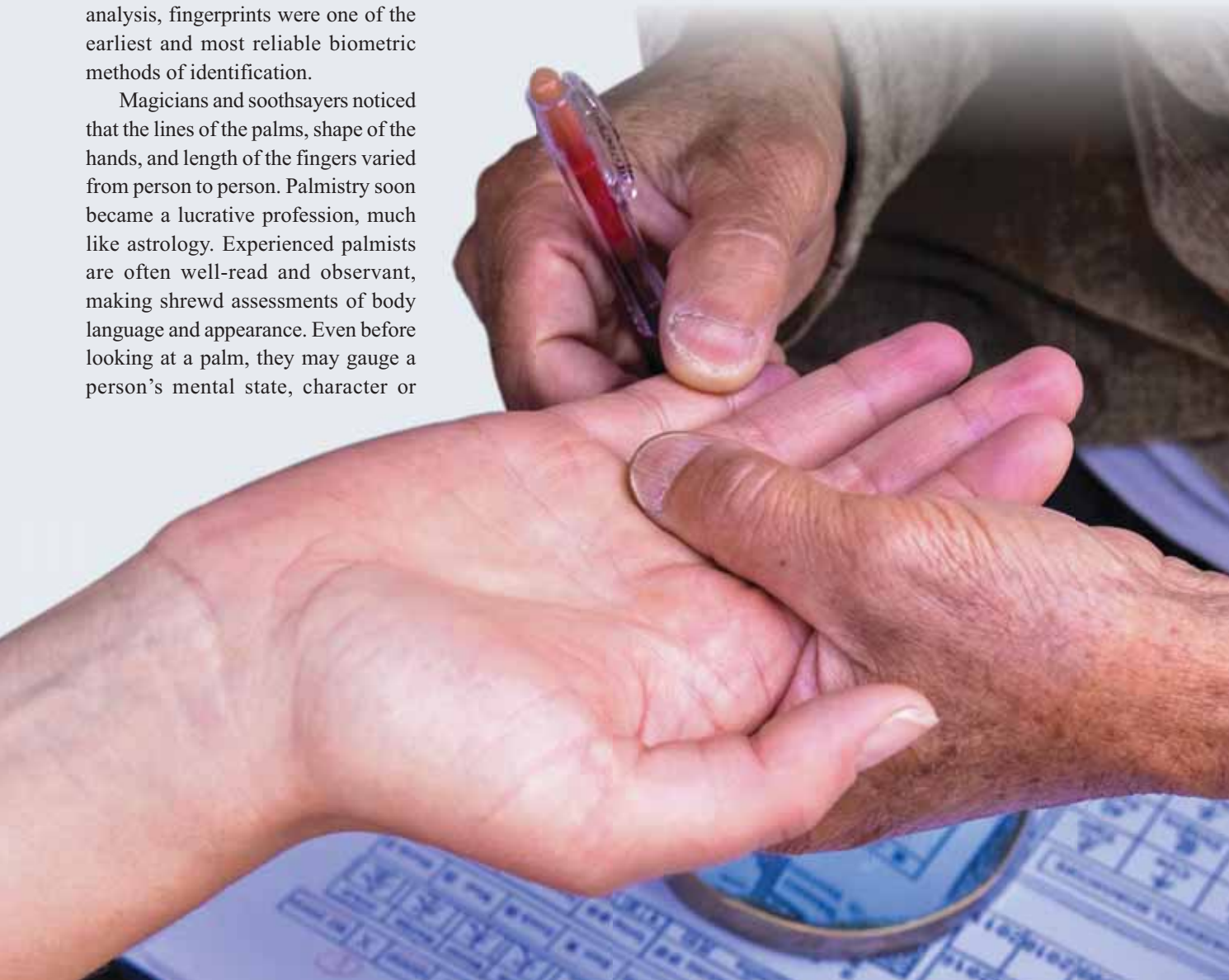
health simply by watching how they walk and carry themselves.

For instance, the way we hold our hands often reflects our body mass index (BMI). Those with a BMI above 30 (obese) tend to stand with their thumbs pointing backward. Overweight individuals (BMI 25–30) often hold their arms with thumbs sideways, while people of normal weight (BMI 20–25) naturally stand with palms facing forward. An obese, unhealthy

person is unlikely to live long, while an anxious, restless posture may reveal hidden psychological distress.

Interestingly, modern medicine now accepts what palmists have profited from for centuries, that a careful study of the palms and hands can indeed provide valuable insight into medical history, diagnosis, lifestyle and even life expectancy.

Palmar creases begin to form around the 12th week of pregnancy,



when the foetus keeps its hands tightly clenched in the womb. Normally, three distinct creases develop on each palm.

Any physical, medical, illness or drug-induced injury to the foetus during this critical first trimester can leave a permanent mark, altering the formation of these creases. Such abnormalities can sometimes be detected on ultrasound scans after the 12th week of pregnancy. If unusual palmar creases are observed, the foetus should be carefully monitored for associated developmental abnormalities in the kidneys, heart or other organs. After birth, these abnormal palmar creases, shaped by the clenched fists in-utero,

are clearly visible on the open palms of the infant.

Sometimes, the two upper palmar creases fuse to form a single crease across the palm, known as the *simian line*. This feature is often associated with chromosomal abnormalities. The most common condition linked to it is Down's syndrome (trisomy 21), where extra genetic material on chromosome 21 leads to developmental and physical differences. Other trisomies, such as those involving chromosomes 13 and 8, may also present with abnormal palmar creases.

Interestingly, a single palmar crease can also appear in one out of every 30 otherwise normal individuals. It is more common in males and usually affects only one hand, with the other showing the typical three creases. In some cases, one or both parents may also have this crease on a single palm.

While often harmless, this variation is considered a minor anomaly and it should prompt careful observation. Some children may later show subtle abnormalities in other organs, and studies suggest a slightly increased risk, about 50 per cent higher, of developing leukemia or other blood cancers.

Marfan's syndrome is a genetic disorder characterised by *arachnodactyly*—abnormally long, slender fingers resembling those of a spider. This condition can sometimes be detected before birth by measuring the length of the middle finger and hand on the ultrasound. Marfan's syndrome is often associated with abnormalities of the heart, eyes, blood vessels and the skeleton.

A tripartite hand, in which the index, middle, and ring fingers are of nearly equal length is associated with congenital hypothyroidism, some kidney disorders and specific forms of dwarfism.

Research shows that individuals with certain mental illnesses tend to have more open loops and fewer

whorls on their fingertips compared to the general population.

Abnormal palmar creases need not be inherited or caused by genetic disorders. Women who consume alcohol during pregnancy can give birth to children with foetal alcohol syndrome characterised by the presence of a single palmar crease.

Cigarette smokers, individuals with chronic respiratory problems, or with congenital heart disease have poor oxygenation and can develop discoloured bluish nails.

Certain lung conditions, such as bronchiectasis, and chronic intestinal diseases, can lead to clubbing of the fingers. In this condition, the nails become rounded and acquire a convex, parrot-beak appearance. Encouragingly, nail clubbing often reverses once the underlying disease is successfully treated. Even finger length ratios are influenced by hormone exposure in the womb. Regardless of gender, individuals with a shorter index finger than the ring finger were exposed to higher levels of testosterone before birth, while those with a longer index finger had greater exposure to oestrogen. The difference may be as little as 2–3 per cent, but it has been linked to personality traits and career inclinations.

Studies suggest that professional women and female scientists often have higher prenatal testosterone exposure, giving them certain cognitive traits more common in men. Conversely, men with higher relative oestrogen exposure are more often found in fields such as fine arts and social sciences.

With a little practice and careful observation, you too can learn to recognise the fascinating secrets hidden in the lines of the palms.

The writer is a paediatrician and author of Staying Healthy in Modern India.



Jodhpur Rotarian plants Rotary flag on Kilimanjaro

Kiran Zehra

Under a starlit African sky, Dungal Singh Rathore tightened his boots for the final push up Kilimanjaro. “The wind sliced through the darkness, my breath hung like mist in the frozen air, and every step felt heavier than the last,” he recalls. Yet, with the national flag and a Rotary flag tucked safely in his backpack and grit in his heart, he

pressed upward with his guide and five other Indian climbers. Hours later, at 19,341ft, Africa’s highest peak lay beneath him.

Trekking has been a lifelong passion for Rathore, secretary of RC Jodhpur Midtown, RID 3053. But Kilimanjaro was more than another adventure, “it was my boldest challenge yet,” he says. Battling altitude sickness,

numbing cold and punishing climbs, he embodied what he calls “the Rotary rhythm — discipline, consistency and the courage to keep moving forward.”

In 2022, he reached the Everest Base Camp at 17,598ft, and Rathore pushed himself even further this year, conquering Kilimanjaro’s Uhuru Peak at 19,341ft, nearly 1,800ft higher. “Kilimanjaro was not just about stamina. It was about believing in myself, and in the values of perseverance, fellowship and positivity that Rotary has taught me,” he reflects.

Back home in Jodhpur, dawn begins with the footsteps of a small Rotary walking group. PDG Priyesh Bhandari, AG Saurabh Rath, club president Rajesh Narula, club members Lalit Garg and Sushil Nahar gather with Rathore every morning for a brisk walk,



**Dungal Singh Rathore along
with other climbers.**



Above: Rathore with the Rotary flag at the Kilimanjaro summit.

Left: Displaying the Indian flag at the summit.



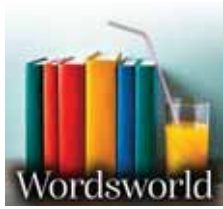
Rathore (L) with fellow climber SS Shekhawat.

laughter, and camaraderie. On the mountain, when exhaustion threatened to stop him, “it was their invisible presence that kept me going. I could almost hear their voices, encouraging me and keeping the rhythm alive. The energy we shared every morning was what carried me to the summit.”

The hardest part of the climb came in the final stretch, “a midnight start in biting sub-zero cold, trekking in pitch darkness towards Stella Point. Every step was a battle with fatigue and thin air.” Finally Rathore found himself on Uhuru Peak, overwhelmed by “a mix of exhaustion, gratitude and quiet joy.” He unfurled the National flag and then the Rotary flag.

For his club, the ascent was more than a personal victory. “Rathore has done something extraordinary, not just scaling a mountain, but proving that the Rotary motto *Service Above Self* also extends to self-mastery,” says Rajesh Narula. “He is a true inspiration to us all. His achievement has sparked conversations among Rotaractors and young members in Jodhpur about fitness, resilience and pushing boundaries.”

Like many trekkers, Rathore’s eyes are on Mount Everest now. “The lesson is not just about chasing peaks. When you stand at the top, looking at the horizon, you realise every mountain, whether on the earth or in life, is climbed the same way. One determined step at a time, and when those steps are supported by your Rotary family, even the impossible becomes possible,” he smiles. ■



Away from home

A travelogue-cum-memoir and a novel; both experiencing and evoking ideas of identity and otherness at this time in different ways, different places.

There is a point in Aatish Taseer's recently published travelogue-cum-memoir, *A Return to Self: Excursions in Exile*, where he describes travelling in Bolivia to attend the Feast of the Virgin in Copacabana. He examines the spirit and nature of pilgrimage in three countries — Bolivia, Mongolia and Iraq — while reflecting on the past upon which the political present of each is constructed. As he leaves behind the capital city of La Paz and catches his first glimpse of the Andes, he recalls a message sent to him by a friend familiar with South America. "They are the true Hindus," his friend writes. "They absorb everything and



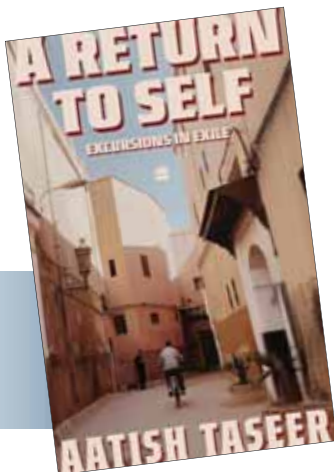
Sandhya Rao

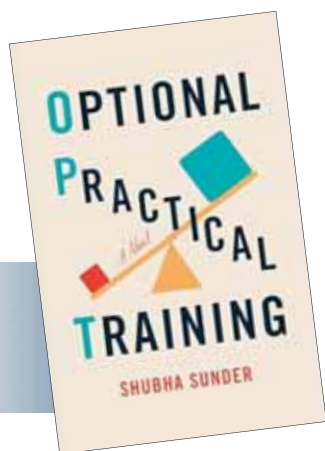
remain themselves." The reference is "to the hybridity he (the friend) had witnessed in the Altiplano," a high plateau next only to Tibet in size. Much of the Altiplano is in Bolivia, while the rest is in Peru, Chile and Argentina. In the north lies Lake Titicaca, and in the south are the Salar de Uyuni salt flats. More importantly, this is a region where many cultures existed.

Absorbing everything and remaining themselves — Is this the definition of a true-blue Hindu? There is plenty that prods and prompts and evokes in this remarkable collection of writings that is at once vivid in description and analogy, philosophical in rumination, and sensitive to the human condition. Which is why it's not something you can simply "read off" despite being barely 200 pages long. It demands mindfulness.

The writings emerge from a space unique to Aatish Taseer's life. His father, the Pakistani politician Salman Taseer, who was assassinated by his bodyguard for taking a stand against blasphemy laws in Pakistan, was practically a stranger to him; he was raised by his mother, journalist Tavleen Singh, one of the first Indian women to cover conflicts, and his grandmother, in India; he studied in India, the UK and the USA; his OCI status was revoked by the Government in 2019, banning him from ever returning to his country, despite his having, by then, written five books, four set in India. This was a body blow to Taseer who was just short of 40. About this, he writes: "To lose one's country is to know an intimate shame... Your country is so bound up with your sense of self that you do not realize what a ballast it has been until it is gone. It is one of the few things we are allowed to take for granted, and it is the basis of our curiosity about other places."

He carries this loss of home right through recent journeys recorded in this book; however, it runs like a silent cry reconciled beneath the surface as he explores other lands, other people, and weaves together their histories. The book's journey begins in Istanbul where "one lived in a perpetual state of cultural whiplash." He speaks of the unresolved differences within himself when he had visited the city 15 years earlier, and quotes Oscar Wilde: "A man whose desire is to be something separate from himself... invariably succeeds in being what he wants to be. That is his punishment. Those who want a mask have to wear it." This time round in Istanbul, the mask is stripped away and he is in "a true place of transparency, a place where the inner and outer lives were one." It would seem that Aatish Taseer managed a return to self.





The Istanbul chapter is the most personal piece in this collection. As he travels through Uzbekistan, Morocco, Spain, Mexico, Sri Lanka, Bolivia, Mongolia and Iraq, he attempts to experience each journey through a particular prism, and, in a fascinating account, even makes a socio-political journey of the senses through the medium of perfume. He goes to Mexico “in search of what was perhaps the quintessential, post-Hispanic ingredient — rice — and, almost immediately, I was confronted by the most reasonable question in the world: ‘Why rice?’”

In Sri Lanka, he follows the lotus, which you see everywhere in that

country, although the national flower is the waterlily. In M’hamid, the last town in Morocco near the Algerian border, he is sitting in an orchard of olives and date palms with Paru, the hotel proprietor, who directs him to a door: “I opened it, and there, in the crude doorframe, was the boundless expanse of crescent dunes edged with sharp black lunettes. It was arresting, unspeakably beautiful, and yet I felt an odd sense of trepidation at finding myself in this empty hotel on the edge of desolation almost the size of the United States.”

Travel, they say, enables you to understand yourself better. Through Aatish Taseer’s elegant, pellucid unravelling of his thoughts and feelings, we too are inspired to journey outside and within ourselves. Take time to linger and ponder as you slowly, mindfully, turn the pages of *A Return to Self*.

Shubha Sunder is back in this column with her debut novel, *Optional Practical Training*, after she appeared with her first book, *Boomtown Girl*, a collection of short stories (*Rotary News*, March 2024). If the title sounds like a self-help manual, nothing could be further from that impression.

OPT, as it’s called, refers to a year of temporary employment in the US that international students can apply for after they complete their degree. In an online interview with Sarah Anjum Bari for *Electric Lit*, Shubha says “... this is an immigrant story but it’s not so much an immigrant telling her story, as it is a story of America being reflected in the things Americans tell this young woman. She’s very young ... and the things that people say to her are really

going to form her sense of identity in this new context. And they also reflect back on who America is.” In this novel-in-voices, as the interviewer calls it, the protagonist Pavitra, regularly faces “microaggressions, cultural stereotyping and misunderstandings” throughout the time she spends the year teaching in a school in Boston.

In fact, Shubha herself comes to the novel with some 25 years of teaching experience and this informs the characters she presents, many of whom are teachers, and their teaching methods. Unlike the situation in India, she points out that in the US “Education is an entitlement that society provides with the view of turning out an educated citizenry, someone says that in the book too. I think a lot about how these two things are at odds. And I think this makes teachers quite stressed out.”

In the novel, Pavitra observes that “... what made Olga such a good teacher was not so much her efficiency but her charisma, her *brand* — how unique it was to her and therefore alluring to others. Marissa had made me realize that one’s teaching self is a character one slips into — and the more the character is an extension of one’s personality, the more natural the performance.” Pavitra justifies this by saying “You get up in front of an audience, often a hostile one...” adding that she finds that the character she “... performed — a character not of my choosing but the result of my efforts to simply do my job — was one my audience seemed reluctant to accept.”

Taut, lucid, unambiguous, resonant — these words aptly describe this neat, well-constructed novel that traverses a whole year in the protagonist’s life, ending when her visa expires, and then... What?

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist

To lose one’s country is to know an intimate shame... Your country is so bound up with your sense of self that you do not realize what a ballast it has been until it is gone...



RID 3150

RC Greater Hyderabad

Uniforms were distributed to students at different schools in Vijayawada in a joint initiative with local Rotarians and Lions club. The uniforms were sponsored by Jagisa Apparels. Rtns Naga Bhushanam and Y Sreenivas coordinated for the project.



Club matters



RID 3203

RC Pollachi

Medical equipment and essential material worth ₹1.65 lakh were donated to a primary health centre at Pethanayakanur village on Doctors' Day. The project will benefit around 10,000 people including those from nearby villages.

RID 3211

RC Alleppey Greater

Kargil Vijay Diwas was observed (July 26) with the club felicitating 21 former Army men at the Rotary Park. The colourful event lifted the public image of the club.





RID 3212

RC East Coast Ramnad

Wheelchairs (125 nos) were distributed to government hospitals, PHCs, old age homes and railway stations under *Project Rotary Wheels of Love* which had the participation of 120 Rotary clubs. DG Dhinesh Babu launched the project.

RID 3170

RC Curchorem Sanvordem

Over 60 special children, accompanied by teachers and parents, enjoyed the screening of the Hindi film *Sitaare Zameen Par* at a local theatre. Club president Balkrishna Hodarkar sponsored the movie screening.



RID 3231

RC Gudiyatham

Through its Rotary Community Corps, the club trained children to make clay toys and other items using pottery. Saplings and certificates were given to all the participants.



RID 3240

RC Durgapur Elite

Bird nests and trays for feeds and water were installed at the club's adopted park, Jibanananda Das Sishu Udyan, Kabiguru, as part of environmental projects. The concept is being scaled up.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



Joyous, eco-friendly celebrations

Preeti Mehra

Green is the way to go this festive season.

Festivals are celebratory by nature all over the world. People dress up for events, they let their hair down, forget their blues and spread good cheer. In India we take our festivals seriously and pull out all the stops in making them joyous and full of warmth. We are at that point of the year when we have three mega festivals ahead of us: Diwali, Christmas and the New Year.

Even 50 years ago if someone dared to write about making festivals environment-friendly, he or she would be dismissed as a killjoy and a party pooper. But today we know that while letting the good times roll, we must give Mother Nature a thought and make it easy on her. So, with the confidence that we have a much more enlightened and responsible citizenry, I thought it would not hurt too much

to share some information on how we could have cleaner and greener fun.

Before I venture forth, I must add the rider that I love festivals and the unadulterated joy and bonhomie that they bring. Last month was Ganesh Chaturthi and, in the colony where I live in Chennai, the occasion was celebrated with great enthusiasm. Ganesh pooja was held for several days and there was a *pandal* where an



idol of Ganesha was installed. It was later taken out in a procession to be immersed in the sea.

The pooja reminded me of how a friend of mine celebrated Ganesh Chaturthi in Delhi. Though she made it a point to install a Ganesha idol at home every year, she also scouted the markets for the most eco-friendly idol available of the right size. She would dress it in flowers and leaves, use earthenware diyas for the daily *aarti*, serve lunch to everyone in her clayware, and on the day of the immersion she would use a bucket to immerse her beloved idol. In around ten minutes, the idol would disintegrate and the water would be used for the plants, blessing her garden and home.

It is these little thoughtful gestures that differentiate a green warrior from the rest. With a wee bit of effort, it is possible to ensure that we celebrate a green Diwali this month. So, how does one go about it? The first step is to be aware that smoke-emitting crackers are a massive reason for deterioration in air quality, and a serious health hazard for infants, children, the sick and the elderly. If we can desist from buying such crackers and explain to our children their impact on the environment and health, we would have won half the eco-battle.

Some thought must also be given to avoid or minimise the use of loud crackers that add to the noise pollution levels in our cities. Pets, animals and birds find the sudden and intermittent burst of noise extremely disturbing. A weary foreign couple on a visit to Delhi told me that they had a rough, sleepless night on Diwali day and felt they were in a war zone!

Other gestures that will help to make it a sustainable festival include

wearing our best clothes, and not buying new ones as reducing our carbon footprint on Diwali is the best gift we can offer Goddess Lakshmi. If you use only clay earthenware or candles for lighting the house, use leaf plates for *prasadam* and larger leaf or sugarcane bagasse plates and wooden spoons if you are serving a meal, you would have done the planet a world of good. The rule holds true for Onam, Eid and other festivals too. Though single-use plastic is banned in India, cheap plastic cutlery is widely used across the country. A sad reality.

And if yours is a very large gathering in a colony or institution, it would be wisest to try and avoid using PET bottles for water. However, if that is unavoidable, it would be best to put in place a system of collecting and disposing them off responsibly. The



automatic bottle flaking machines manufactured by Biocrux installed in malls, railway stations and other public places are very useful. You just have to feed the empty PET bottle into the machine; it disintegrates, and the flaky remains are recycled to make other products.

Christmas too can be a truly green festival. Just use the same decorations for your Xmas tree year-after-year (I know of many people who do) and

you will not be tilting nature's balance. Here too, as in Diwali, the feast could be eco-friendly and the clothes, your Sunday best. The one thing that can make your Christmas even greener is if you ensure that every Christmas gift that you give is either made by hand or produced from sustainable material. That would go a long way in changing the thinking and expectations of the younger generations as well.

One of the pleasures of Christmas is playing the *Secret Santa* game in offices or classrooms. Here lots are drawn on who will prepare a Christmas gift for a colleague. I remember, at one of these I participated in, the rule was that the gift had to be simple, cost less than ₹100 and must be your own creation or it should fall within the 'green' ambit. It really set minds thinking and made colleagues aware of a host of eco-friendly options. People came up with the most innovative gifts.

Similar practices at New Year celebrations can do the trick.

It could make parties much cleaner, healthier, and generate much less or no waste. One of the party rules could be to clean up before leaving, segregate the garbage into 'wet' and 'dry' for the bins. It will give the hosts so much respite as well as inculcate a habit that will go a long way.

Last, but not the least, a perfect New Year game could be to make guests think of a resolution, (and commit to it) that helps them go green in the coming year!

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Planting 50,000 trees in a day

Gautam Shrestha

On a crisp morning in July, my heart raced with excitement as I joined Rotarians from the Rotary Club of Mount Everest — Ravi Lamichhane, Chand SJB Rana, and Suman Ratna Tuladhar — on a journey to plant saplings in central Nepal. We were headed for Dalchoki, a breathtaking village about 23km (14.2 miles) from Patan in the southern part of the Lalitpur district. It is a hill country ranging from 1,200 to 2,300ft (3,900 to 7,545ft) above sea level.

Rotary District 3292 has a proud history of massive tree plantings, but this year’s “50,000 Trees in One Day” campaign was our most ambitious yet. By uniting communities, wards, social organisations, educational institutions and local governments across Nepal and Bhutan, we aimed to make this the largest and most impactful tree-planting initiative in our history.

We reached Dalchoki after an hour’s journey along twisting roads with epic views. Once there, we waited for other Rotarians and members of the local community to join us as the fog lifted, skies cleared, and a chilly breeze kept us on our toes.

District Governor Binod Koirala’s vision had set the tone: “Together, we can create a lasting green legacy for our communities

and future generations. This is not just about planting trees; it is about planting hope and strengthening community ties.”

Young and old carried saplings, greeted each other with laughter, and brimmed with enthusiasm. We planted trees

in parks and hilly areas, near schools, public spaces, police stations and highways. We gradually transformed landscapes across urban and rural settings with hope and greenery.

After the trees were planted, Rotary clubs collaborated with



stakeholders to ensure the saplings' survival, providing protective fencing, regular watering, and community-led monitoring. In this way, sustainability was built into our project.

We felt inspired by the presidential message *Unite For Good*, considering our efforts a demonstration of how collective action can build a brighter, greener future. Our tree-planting campaign was more than an event, it was a movement. With every tree planted, our district left a legacy of hope, unity and environmental stewardship for generations to come.

The writer is assistant governor for RID 3292 (Nepal, Bhutan), and past president of RC Yala, Nepal. ■



Nepal Rotarians plant saplings at Dalchoki village as part of the '50,000 Trees in One Day' campaign.

From RI South Asia

Rotary Foundation (India) honoured with CSR Awards

At the India CSR & Sustainability Conclave 2025 organised by BrandsGlobal Media in August in New Delhi, Rotary Foundation (India) was recognised with the 'Excellence in Nationwide CSR Implementation' Award. This recognition celebrates RF(I)'s far-reaching and impactful CSR initiatives implemented across India, creating lasting change in diverse communities and development sectors.

At the Indian PSU CSR Impact Awards 2025, a digital platform dedicated to Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs), government institutions corporates, public policy and CSR, RF (I) received the Best NGO of the Year Award.

EVERY ROTARIAN EVERY YEAR

Your gift to TRF Annual Fund empowers Rotary members to take action and create positive change in communities in India and worldwide. When you donate to Annual Fund-SHARE, your contributions are transformed into grants that fund local and international projects, scholarships and other activities. Give today: rotary.org/donate; Learn more: my.rotary.org/annual-fund

2025-26 Annual Fund Excellence Award

We appreciate your enthusiastic participation in the Annual Fund Early Achiever Award, which concluded on August 31, 2025. Now, we are introducing the next opportunity: the Annual Fund Excellence Award, exclusive for districts in Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7. To qualify, districts must either raise at least \$250,000 towards the Annual Fund, or achieve 50 per cent of their AF Goal (as set during Disha) by October 31. Winners will be recognised at the Delhi Institute in November 2025.

Endowment Fund Challenge Awards

Under the guidance of TRF Trustee Dr Bharat Pandya, the Endowment/Major Gifts Advisors from Zones 4,5,6 and 7 have instituted a special Endowment Fund Award for districts across the four zones in the Rotary Year 2025–26.

Districts contributing a minimum \$50,000 between July 1 and October 31, 2025, can qualify for rolling trophies and zone-wise awards. Contributions to the Endowment Fund ensure sustained support to disadvantaged communities across the globe. For more details, contact the Endowment/Major Gifts Advisor of your zone. ■



Trauma Times

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



Have you ever been chased by a cow? I have. And believe me, it's the most terrifying experience you can have. The year was 1976. I had gone to visit my sister at her government flat. Being a *sarkari* colony there were usually no animals lurking, crouching or wandering on the roads.

My motorcycle was parked outside the gate and when I came out after bidding my sister goodbye, I saw a cow standing on the other side of the road, which was one of those 30ft-wide things with ditches on either side. The cow was looking at me placidly while chewing something. There was no menace at all. I climbed on to my bike and kicked the starter when, absolutely out of the blue, for no reason at all, the cow started running towards me. I was taken completely by surprise, as would you be. So in panic I put the bike in gear and shot off. But in my fright, I had forgotten to switch the fuel on.

Soon the bike stuttered to a stop. The cow was still coming at me and I did the only thing that any self-respecting man would do. I leapt off the bike letting it fall with a thud and jumped over a 5-foot-hedge to the safety of someone's garden. The cow whizzed by and was soon gone. But I was shaking and feeling utterly foolish. My knees were trembling and my hands quivering with fear. It took me some time to recover and finally I was able to drive away. That happened 49 years ago and I still get goosebumps when I recall the fear and embarrassment. Chased by a cow, of all of God's creatures on earth!

The next time was in 2012. I was living in Chennai for a year. I had gone for my usual morning walk at 5am. That's when it's still dark

and no traffic. Or so I thought. I was on an inner lane when, suddenly, out came a two-wheeler from inside a house. It was going quite fast and would have hit me if I hadn't jumped out of the way. Like the cow 36 years earlier, the driver shot off, oblivious to my shock and the indignity of banging my knee against a car. I also twisted my ankle quite badly and it hurts sometimes even now. Since then, I have been very scared of cows and two-wheelers, especially the latter. The new electric ones don't make any sound at all. They go past, silent as snakes. You can get hit if the driver doesn't stop looking at his phone.

Silent cows and soundless bikes, I thought, would be the sum total of dangers on roads until a few weeks ago I discovered a new threat: backpacks. It happened like this. I was trying to get into a lift which had, as far as I could see, only three people in it. It was a large office building and the lift was spacious. Yet, I was unable to get in. I kept trying to push my way through but there was no space. The doors slid shut and squeezed my shoulders quite hard. I more-or-less collapsed into the lift and as it started its descent, I saw what the problem was. There were three people — two male and one female — who were carrying normal sized backpacks but which they had stuffed in such a way that each pack jutted out about two feet. That's like having three other people in the lift. As there were three of these people it meant the volume occupied by them was equivalent to nine people. I was the tenth, which is why I couldn't get in easily.

So watch out for cows, electric scooters and backpacks when you step out. They can cause you real injuries. ■

Conclave moments



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee (R) and PRID PT Prabhakar.



Above: PRID Ashok Mahajan and RI Director M Muruganandam.

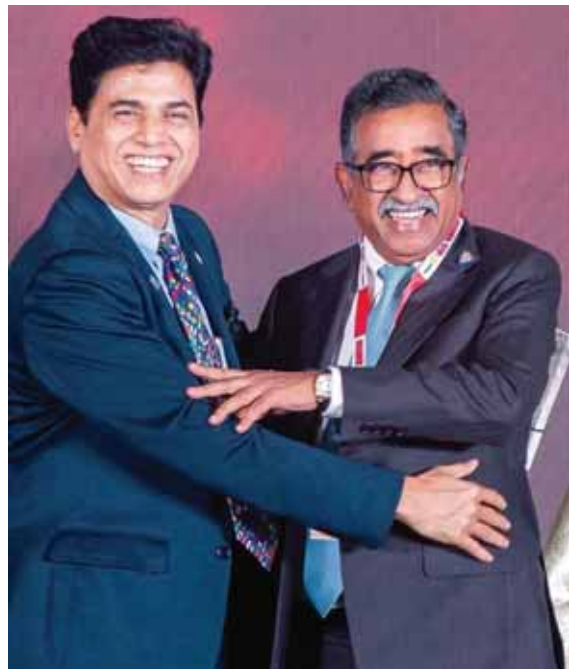


Left: RI Director KP Nagesh and PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury.

Below: RI Director Nagesh and PRID Raju Subramanian.



From L: RI Director Nagesh, PRIP KR Ravindran and RI Director Muruganandam.





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