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King of all I survey

This picture was clicked at the Tadoba National Park, Chandrapur in Maharashtra, in June 2019. We were on an afternoon safari and watching out for a tiger. Suddenly, from our Gypsy, I noticed this peacock sitting on the tree, and asked the driver to stop.

It was a leafless tree, and the shape and pose of the bird was compelling. But there was harsh sunlight from behind; I quickly changed my camera settings and clicked this shot. For me, this composition, the form of the tree and the peacock in this pose, is really dramatic... like a beautiful graphic or painting on canvas.

Text and picture by: Sanjay D,
member, RC Koregaon Park,
RID 3131.





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Inside

12 Pune Rotarians gift a home for homeless children

RC Pune Laxmi Road has gifted a complex worth ₹3 crore for the education and stay of destitute children in Kudal.



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22 Ukraine Devastated

Ukraine's Rotarians, aided by Rotarians across Europe and beyond, are working relentlessly to help the people of Ukraine devastated by the Russian military action.



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The Rotarians of RC Rudrapur cleaned the River Kalyani and created a garden on its banks.

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It was an evening of shared memories and bonhomie as DG Pankaj Shah honoured Rotarians for their long years of service to humanity.



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The club is skilling rural youngsters and women through its RCCs to help them earn a decent livelihood.

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The members of RCs Madras Midcity and Chennai Metrozone promote tap aerators through children to save water in their apartment complexes.



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Rotarians organise a special campaign to treat birds injured by the sharp threads of kites.

70 Food coupons to fight hunger in Jamshedpur

RC Jamshedpur West provides food to the underprivileged through their Project *Rotary Rasoi*.



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On the cover: Renu Gavaskar, founder, Eklavya Foundation, Pune, with children at the new facility donated by RC Pune Laxmi Road in Kudal, near Goa.



Scan our QR code & read our Magazine

Picture: Rasheeda Bhagat

Those not subscribing to *Rotary News* flout the 4-Way Test

For Tamil music lovers like me, the article on TMS (Feb issue) evoked nostalgia. Even today, no temple event is complete without playing his soulful songs (*Muruga Enru Azhaikkava* and similar numbers). Thanks for recognising TMS's contribution to Tamil film industry. I request you to follow it up with articles on legendary music composers — Viswanathan-Ramamoorthy, MSV and KV Mahadevan.

The services of Rotarians of Rourkela Royal, Calcutta, RI District 3141, Rudrapur and Hiriyyur are commendable and are an inspiration to others.

But in the midst of all such happy news is the disturbing



warning on the back cover for non-compliant clubs. Aren't we, Rotarians, expected to follow the 4-Way Test, and uphold high ideals of morality in our personal

life, business and professions? Aren't we supposed to be role models for others to follow? Don't these clubs realise that by not subscribing to *Rotary News* they are depriving their members of an opportunity to learn what Rotary is doing around the globe? It is sad to note that the RI Communications Committee has been forced to issue such a diktat due to the non-compliance by some Rotary clubs. There is one more solution to make them pay — deprive them of voting rights for the governor's election. This will work like magic. By the way, I subscribe to both *Rotary News* and *Rotary*.

K Ravindrakumar
RC Karur — D 3000

Paying ₹5 more is worth it

A price hike of ₹5 per copy of *Rotary News*, an esteemed magazine, from July, will be acceptable to all Rotarians, considering the cost involved and the rising cost of paper. RI President Shekhar Mehta in his message has dwelt rightly on empowering girls who have been affected badly by the pandemic. Editor's note is a fitting tribute to Lata Mangeshkar whose soothing melodies comforted the distressed for many years.

RI Director Mahesh Kotbagi explains well the digitalisation in Rotary

and its benefits. RI Director A S Venkatesh has focused on the benefits of hybrid meetings and the necessity for reducing club expenses in different ways. Trustee Chair John Germ explains the importance of water conservation in connection with World Water Day in March. Glad to note Houston 2022 convention arena has 500 parks and green spaces.

Delighted to read that in Pakistan no new cases of wild polio were reported over the last one year. Kudos to Trustee Aziz Memon, Pakistan's PolioPlus chair, for the dedication and hard work.

The interview with RI President-elect Jennifer Jones is inspiring for Rotarians. Articles like *An unforgettable ride in the North East*, *RC Madras Midtown turns 50 with a flourish*, *The nightingale falls silent*, *Rotary service projects inaugurated in Dhule*, *Joy of giving* and *Managing stress* are all fact-packed and worth reading. Thanks to the editorial team for this interesting issue.

Philip Mulappone MT
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211

Feeling connected to each other is a basic human need. In the article

The Connector, RIPE Jennifer Jones has rightly identified this need to help grow Rotary next year, by connecting with people. But her theme, 'Imagine Rotary' is not rightly coined, I feel, for the present occasion. Imagination prevents the perception of what is, as does comparison. The mind must put aside all imagination and speculation for the 'real' to be.

KMK Murthy, RC
Secunderabad — D 3150

Thank you for a very beautifully written article on RCCs of Bengaluru from each one of us who directly or indirectly interacted

LETTERS

with you. Sincere thanks to Jaishree for the long interview with the RCC presidents, which has translated into a very interesting article.

*Paul Mundackal
RI District 3190*

Nice magazine, well-compiled and presented. When I saw the cover and scrolled through the pages, I had the first impression that this magazine is either from Rotary International or from Rotary News Pakistan. An Indian success story on the corona pandemic is requested in the coming editions

*Col Vasant Ballewar
RC Pune
Camp — D 3131*

Please go through our back issues. You will find scores of such success stories from India on the pandemic.

— **Editor**

A fitting tribute to Lata Mangeshkar

Lata Mangeshkar is not just a legend; Her voice has mesmerised millions over generations and her work is loved across borders. Her voice was like that of an angel.... a celestial being. There was a divine quality to her singing that made her a phenomenon. Nobody could believe a woman in her seventies could sing a tender love

song, and sound like a 17-year-old. Lata had no equal. Over seven decades, she continued to reinvent herself to suit one generation after another and kept her audiences spellbound. She had other passions as well — cricket and photography. She was also a wildlife enthusiast. Her voice will remain with us always.

*Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080*

It is true that the demise of Lata Mangeshkar is a great loss to the Indian film industry and naturally, millions of her fans are in a state of shock. The editor rightly points out the great work done by Rotary volunteers during the Covid pandemic and they deserve a big salute from all of us.

Happy to know that Pakistan has crossed a major milestone of one year without a single wild poliovirus and the Taliban regime in Afghanistan is allowing polio workers to go door-to-door for giving oral drops to children. RI President Mehta has appreciated our work in increasing Rotary's membership. He wants Rotarians to think of innovative ways to empower girls when we are taking up big projects. All clubs must adhere to his instructions to empower women in our communities.

In the Feb issue, the editor has rightly focused

on the need to scale-up the waterwheel project which will lessen the burden of rural women. Jaishree has highlighted the good work done by six Rotary clubs and three Inner Wheel clubs in RID 3141 by providing waterwheels to women, thereby reducing their daily hardship. The LBW column has vividly described the trauma of living in a polluted city like Delhi.

*S Muniandi, RC Dindigul
Fort — D 3000*

Great articles to read

In recent years, the standard of *Rotary News* has improved a lot. Congrats to the editor and the team members for improving its content and quality.

The Editor's note in the Feb issue and Jaishree's article on waterwheel saving the drudgery of women,

was excellent. Kudos to Rotarians and Inner Wheel clubs in Mumbai for doing this project.

RID Mahesh Kotbagi's message on empowering girls was excellent.

Rasheeda's articles *Rourkela Rotarians extend the gift of hand* and *Cycling with a message* were very interesting. RC Bharuch's cyclothon to focus attention on health and fitness and the need to reduce our carbon imprint was excellent. My special appreciation for RC Puttur for training youth in life skills.

Celebrating generosity by Muthukumaran and Kiran Zehra was written well.

Nice to read that RC Delhi Ananta has launched a ₹8.5-crore hospital project which will also take up skill training.

*Daniel Chittilappilly
RC Kaloor — D 3201*

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor:

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Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos, to
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Our work to protect Earth must not affect growth



SERVE TO CHANGE LIVES

Greetings, dear changemakers of Rotary,

Friends, one of my mantras in Rotary has been *do more, grow more*. I am sure you are adopting this mantra. *Do more*, as in bigger and impactful service projects, and *grow more*, as in increasing our membership.

There is so much excitement across the Rotary world about our 'Each One, Bring One' effort. Everywhere I travel, club presidents, district governors, and Rotary members — both veteran and new — express appreciation that their membership efforts are inspiring the Rotary world.

We are growing more, and I cannot wait to celebrate all of this success with you at the Rotary International Convention in Houston in June. There is still time to register and make your plans to join us. We are looking forward to a once-in-a-lifetime experience that will unite our members after far too much time apart.

As we *grow more*, we will have so much more opportunity to *do more*. April is Maternal and Child Health Month, a great opportunity for your clubs to consider what you are doing to support the health of mothers and young children. Improving access to care and the quality of care for women and children worldwide is an important focus for us, and it also ties in very well with our 'Empowering

Girls' initiative. I appreciate the work being done by various clubs in this area of focus, and I would encourage you to think of ways to *do more*.

It has been so exciting to see Rotary members come together at the presidential conferences to share ideas about using our areas of focus to bring about big, lasting change in the world. The past and upcoming presidential conferences are looking at our new area of focus — the environment — and how our work to protect our planet must also support our efforts to grow local economies, especially in places with the greatest poverty.

I also had the honour to speak at the 26th United Nations climate change conference, known as COP26, in Glasgow, Scotland. This important meeting brought together nearly 100 heads of state and government over a two-week period to set new targets for fossil fuel emission. My call to action was to restore mangroves, a crucial ecosystem that can mitigate the effects of climate change in coastal areas. Already, countries across the world are showing great enthusiasm for this plan.

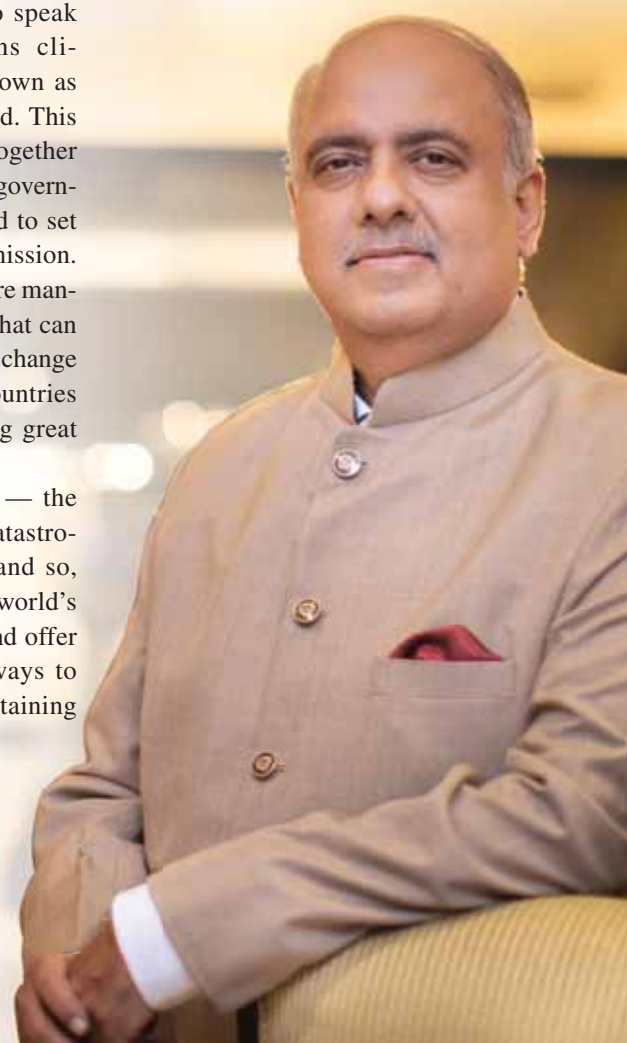
Our survival is at stake — the damage of environmental catastrophe is already upon us — and so, too, is our ability to lift the world's most needy out of poverty and offer them hope. We must find ways to protect our planet while sustaining

the economic growth necessary to achieve our highest humanitarian goals.

This is a very exciting time in Rotary, a time when the world needs us most. As we *Serve to Change Lives*, remember that we are also changing ourselves. We are becoming the world's great change-makers and peacebuilders.

The world is ready for us. It's time to rise to that call.

Shekhar Mehta
President, Rotary International





Ukraine's pain... and media bias in its reportage

As we wind up this issue of *Rotary News*, the war in Ukraine continues to rage; its cities are bombed, and people's homes and offices reduced to rubble. Overnight, just in the flash of an eye, thousands of people have been rendered homeless. Those who've managed to get out of the country, live on as refugees in neighbouring countries. Our world is no stranger to any kind of pain, devastation, trauma and incarceration caused by conflicts. The two world wars happened in the previous century; but the devastation caused, particularly by World War II, continues to haunt us... through museums with evidence of the horrors of the holocaust of Jews by Hitler's regime, through books, documentaries, movies and now multi-season serials on OTT platforms.

More recently, we've seen bombings in Syria, Yemen, Afghanistan; and before that, the wars in Iran and Iraq. Some of these, once proud and prosperous nations, have been turned into international beggars, slapped with international sanctions, with their citizens fleeing their homes. Often, the desperate search for a safe haven has resulted in women and children ending up being trafficked. Or, overloaded boats carrying people to European coasts sinking to watery graves. How long will it take for our minds and hearts to erase the heart-breaking image of three-year-old Alan Kurdi from Syria, dressed in a bright red T-shirt and shorts, washed up on a beach, lying face down in the sand and surf, near Turkey's fashionable resort town of Bodrum? There was no question of any kind of soul giving him, or his five-year-old brother, food and shelter. Because they were already dead. That was in 2015.

Closer to date, we saw the images of Afghans, particularly women, tearing at the wired fences at

the Kabul airport, in desperate, and unsuccessful, attempts to escape from their homeland, because their tormentors, the Taliban were back in power.

So much of strife, conflict and greed for power and hegemony rule our world. Yes, our hearts go out to Ukrainians fleeing their country to neighbouring countries, and this issue describes the commendable work Ukraine's Rotarians, and Rotaractors, helped by contributions from the rest of the Rotary world, are doing to help them. May their tribe increase, as we pray that soon this terrible conflict is resolved and they are able to return to their homes.

But we cannot remain blind to the two different sets of values with which some western journalists have been commenting on the horrific attacks on Ukraine. It was in utter horror that I watched clips of TV anchors telling the tragic story of Ukrainians fleeing their homeland; a real shocker was one of the world's most reputed media outlet's reporter saying: "It's very emotional for me because I see European people with blue eyes and blonde hair being killed with Putin's missiles." Said another, "We are in the 21st century, we are in a European city and we have cruise missile fire as though we were in Iraq or Afghanistan, can you imagine!"

Not surprisingly, the Arab and Middle Eastern Journalists Association asked western media organisations to refrain from such "racism" and bias in their coverage, and avoid commenting on the Caucasian race or better economic status of the victims of this attack, contrasting them with people from Middle Eastern and North African countries.

A human life is a human life. That's non-negotiable.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Director

Rotary's parliament — the Council on Legislation

All Rotarians view themselves as law-abiding citizens out to do good in the world. But barring the time of election disputes, Rotary bylaws, Manual of Procedure and Rotary Code of Policies gather dust on our shelves, if at all in our mental radar at any time.

A common thought and query for most Rotarians is that we are in Rotary to serve society and we should do so with humility and grace. So why do we need bylaws and policies? When Rotarians from diverse professions, socio-economic strata and cultures plan and implement service projects, prescribe the nature and scope of leadership roles/responsibilities, set goals and attach their self-esteem to Rotary positions, a need often arises to define rules, regulations, roles, personal conduct boundaries and responsibilities to ensure that well-intentioned Rotarians work in harmony, with minimal conflict, and as a team to improve the standard of life in local and international communities.

The Council on Legislation, called the parliament of Rotary, continuously sets, reviews and renews certain bylaws as edicts cast in stone. These enactments can only be amended once in three years, generally by elected representatives from each of the 540-plus world Rotary districts coming together in Chicago and voting on each RI bylaw and the standard constitution of a Rotary club designed to be a structural edifice which defines and dignifies a club, Rotary district and

Rotary officers including club officers, the RI board of directors and the RI president.

Within the framework of enactments the CoL delegates suggest resolutions, as working guidelines and policies, to the RI board. The board reviews these suggestions, generates some on their own and, in their collective wisdom, bring out in writing Rotary policies codified as a publication periodically.

These enactments and policies are the basis of our Rotary clubs' constitution and bylaws which mould the members into good Rotarians, and define their conduct and behaviour.

Witnessing a CoL meeting is fascinating. Representatives from various countries propose motions of enactments and resolutions. Real time interpretations take place. The process includes tabling the resolutions, moving amendments, waving coloured placards to speak for and against the motions and voting electronically under the guidance of the CoL chair and the top RI leadership in attendance.

The 2022 CoL will be held in Chicago from April 10–14. Representatives to the CoL should carefully go through the various sections of Rotary bylaws and code of policies. Feel the positive intent behind each codified section to improve our Rotary movement so as to enrich our lives and the community we serve.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mahesh".

Dr Mahesh Kotbagi
RI Director, 2021–23

Speak

Let's forge friendship with our club members

The pandemic is hopefully behind us as we cautiously tread into a changed world. It was heartening to see Rotarians rally behind each other, supporting one another and others around them during these difficult times. It reaffirms our faith in the goodness of mankind.

As we move into the last quarter of this Rotary year, it is time to focus on keeping our flock together. Clubs in our region have been fairly successful in adding to their numbers, a feat made even more significant when we look at what the rest of the Rotary world has been able to achieve collectively. However, data of the past has shown that the biggest challenge in our zones has been retaining our members. The reasons are many, and several of us may be aware of them. In my opinion, the single most important factor that can help in keeping our newly inducted Rotarians interested in our organisation is converting them from being fellow Rotarians to friends.

Many of us are guilty of not taking enough interest in getting to know our club members well. A human being is a social animal and the feeling that one is a part of a large group that is friendly, helpful and forthcoming, will go



a long way in any person deciding to stay on in that group. The onus is really on the senior members of our clubs to make the newer entrants feel wanted and cared for. One doesn't need a pandemic or a disaster to make friends. Rotary's survival in the future is dependent on this bond of friendship that we forge. Not only will our clubs grow in a sustainable manner, it will also lead to a greater sense of purpose and impact.

Let us all decide today that we will contribute our bit to convert our club into a group of close friends, all equitable and inclusive. Remember friendship is the key to unlock our collective potential and that *feeling good is a prerequisite to doing good.*

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

AS Venkatesh
RI Director, 2021-23

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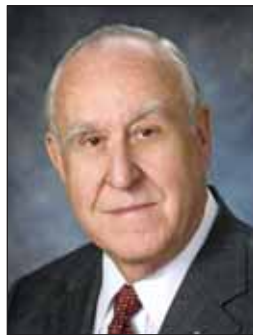
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Seize the moment



What’s your Rotary moment — a time that strengthened your dedication to Rotary and confirmed you would be a lifetime Rotarian? I have had many such moments over the years, and they all had one thing in common: They showed me Rotary’s tangible power of turning our dreams of a better world into reality.

Rotary members are exceptional at it. I see that power in my own club in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and now, as Rotary Foundation trustee chair, in clubs and districts around the world. Rotary members from Austria, Germany, Nigeria and Switzerland are realising their dream to help mothers and children in Nigeria. In partnership with several organisations, they have launched a multiyear, large-scale project to reduce unwanted births and drive down rates of maternal and child mortality. This project, once a vision of a few members but now the recipient of Foundation global grants, is training doctors, nurses and midwives throughout all 36 states of Nigeria.

Every great project begins in the minds of our members. You are the ones who see schools that adolescent girls have stopped attending because of the lack of private bathrooms. You are the ones who see families facing food shortages, children who can’t read, and communities with health problems caused by mosquitoes. Not only do you see these things, because you are in Rotary, you also do something about them.

And because of your engagement, over the past decade, the amount of money the Foundation has awarded for global grants has grown by more than 100 per cent. As more and more Rotarians have become involved, to keep our grants going we have had to adjust and stretch those funds by reducing overhead and by other means. The reason is simple: While the need for these projects is increasing and grant participation is also on the rise, annual giving from Rotary members has stayed relatively static for years.

Quite simply, we need more clubs and individuals to give to the Annual Fund to help keep our district and global grant programmes thriving. This year, we set a goal of raising \$125 million for the Annual Fund. We can’t realise your Rotary dreams or those of your fellow members without everyone’s support.

Remember: It’s not about the money, but about what our money can do. I am a firm believer that when we all give what we can, both as clubs and individuals, to the Foundation every year, we take another step toward making the world a better place. Imagine the Rotary dreams we could make real if every member and every club got together and made a gift to our Foundation today. That would be quite a Rotary moment — for all of us.

John F Germ
Foundation Trustee Chair

TRF reaches out to Ukraine

The war in Ukraine has left death, destruction and ruin in its wake. As Japanese philosopher Daisaku Ikeda so succinctly put it, “For both victor and vanquished, war leaves only a sense of endless futility.” Indeed, the victims of war today are largely civilians, and mostly women and children. It is this hapless



populace that is desperately in need of humanitarian aid, to simply survive. The trustees of The Rotary Foundation realised that the crisis in Ukraine called for an immediate response in terms of aid through the Disaster Response Fund and on March 3, they decided, inter alia,

- ❖ that disaster response grants to support relief and recovery efforts in districts that have been affected by the Ukraine war crisis will receive priority access until June 30, 2022 or earlier if all funds have been spent;
- ❖ that Districts 1911 (Hungary), 2231 (Poland), 2232 (Belarus and Ukraine), 2240 (Czech Republic and Slovakia) and 2241 (Republic of Moldova and Romania) are eligible for a Disaster Response Grant of up to \$50,000 until June 30, 2022.

Rotarians were informed of the above decisions a few days later and were given the option to contribute funds online. Districts were requested to give from their DDF. Many Rotarians immediately opened their hearts and purses, and till March 19, in less than 16 days, outright contributions have reached \$1,895,793 and DDF received are \$1,335,962, totalling \$3,231,755.

So far TRF staff have approved 11 grants worth \$375,000 and several more applications are likely to be submitted soon. Peace and conflict resolution are the cornerstone of the mission of Rotary. Rotary’s commitment to peacebuilding takes many forms, including supporting our Peace Centers and offering Peace Fellowships and Scholarships. Our work in conflict prevention is exemplified by a quote from Gene Roddenberry, legendary screenwriter and producer of *Star Trek*: “The strength of a civilisation is not measured by its ability to fight wars, but rather, its ability to prevent them.”

What TRF seeks to do through the aegis of over 35,000 clubs across the world is best summed up by that famous John Lennon anti-war song ‘Imagine’. May peace prevail.

Gulam A Vahanvaty
Trustee, The Rotary Foundation

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Pune Rotarians gift a home for homeless children

Rasheeda Bhagat



Renu Gavaskar, founder, Eklavya Foundation, Pune, and her daughter Indirani, with Malhari Kamble (fourth from L) and other children at the new facility in Kudal.



For me, it's a dream come true... this place is wonderful, fantastic, unimaginable.

Particularly as I have watched in the last two years how hard these Rotarians have struggled against all odds associated with Covid and fundraising, etc to give us this wonderful place... *itney chhotey chhotey vichar hei isme...* (small details have been taken care of) that the *jaali* should be such that not even a fly should be able to come into the children's room. Then there is provision for solar panels... there are boilers, a generator as a back-up, if there is electricity failure, so that the children should not get scared in the dark."

This ecstasy is expressed by Renu Gavaskar, president of the Pune-based Eklavya Foundation, an NGO that she runs, which is an all-encompassing educational facility for children of sex workers, street children and those who are about to be trafficked or rescued after being trafficked.

Exactly four years ago, in the April 2018 issue of *Rotary News* (<https://rotarynewsonline.org/she-wages-a-war-against-child-trafficking/>), the work of Renutai, as she is universally and affectionately called in the social service circles of Maharashtra, helped by members of the Rotary Club of Pune Laxmi Road, RID 3131, was featured as the cover story. It described the passion and dedication with which the members of this club, led by its past presidents, Sadanand Bhagwat and his wife Deepa, were helping her in the challenging task of protecting and saving as many children as

she could from being sucked into the black hole of the flesh trade or the world of crime including theft, drug peddling and the like.

The crux of that story was that Renutai was conducting her classes for children from a makeshift corporation facility which was under litigation and could be taken away anytime. "It was a constant sword hanging over her head and we promised to give her a home for her children," recalls Bhagwat.

Even then he had identified some donors of Indian origin in the US, who were willing to donate funds for the land and the building of a hostel-cum-school, but the funds had to be channelled through a Rotary club in the US to save on taxes. But that scheme got caught up in all kinds of bottlenecks and fell through.

But the determined Rotarians of this Pune club, led by the determined Bhagwats, raised the money required, nearly ₹3 crore, including ₹1.1 crore to buy a plot of 2.5 acres in Kudal, on the border of Maharashtra and Goa, about 85km from Panjim. "We were not able to find anyone to donate the land, so we purchased it at commercial rates, but I brought down the rate by pleading with the seller that this land is being

Such small details have been taken care of that the *jaali* should be such that not even a fly should be able to come into the children's room.

Renu Gavaskar



We still have to raise ₹45 lakh to pay the contractor. He was so gracious and said I will complete the work; you can pay me later.

Sadanand Bhagwat

lizards can get into the room; these have been so designed to keep out these creatures and yet provide ventilation,” he says. Adds Deepa, “not only lizards, but also snakes can get in. When the work was on here, we found about five or six snakes on the plot.”

While the land cost ₹1.1 crore, the construction and plot development cost ₹1.9 crore in Phase 1 of this project, almost half of which was donated by a

philanthropic family who wishes to remain anonymous. “The involvement and passion of the Rotarians who have come for the inauguration, done by RI director Mahesh Kotbagi, is palpable and many of them have done the 8-hour journey in a bus from Pune to share the children’s joy at finding a permanent home. Small wonder then that the club’s charitable trust raised a whopping ₹1.08 crore through donors in India and overseas. “We still have to raise ₹45 lakh to pay the bill of the contractor, who was so gracious that he said I will complete all the work; you can pay me later,” says Bhagwat.

He explains that as there are frequent power outages in the area — sometimes the power doesn’t come back for 8 days, I am told — the urgent need of this facility was a genset and Bhagwat’s persuasive powers got him ₹7.2 lakh from a Rotarian’s friend, to buy the generator set!

The entire building was virtually built in five-and-a-half months. “We started the work and then there was a month-long

lockdown due to Covid.” I understand what Renutai meant about attention to little details when I am shown the space reserved for drying girls’ clothes with the comment.... “girls’ undergarments should not be visible when they are hung out to dry in the open, so we have provided this space.” This very thoughtful gesture to preserve the dignity of the girl child really warms your heart.

Kotbagi complimented Renutai for her selfless service and compassion displayed in changing the lives of so many underprivileged children and said this was an exemplary project done by RC Pune Laxmi Road.

I sit down for a chat with Renutai and the first question is if she will stay in Pune, where the Eklavya headquarter is or Kudal, quite a distance away from Pune. “Well I will be travelling between Pune and Kudal, but will stay here, for the emotional reason



Renutai, Indirani, Malhari with other children.

that I consider myself a Konkani *kanya*; my native place is about 20km from here, so in this last phase of my life, I want to do service from my region.”

Talking about the major issues facing today’s children, she says we’re seeing an increasing number of suicides committed by teenagers in India, and when the reason was probed it was found that they felt unwanted, uncared for or unloved. “They come out of class, pull out their mobiles and see there are no missed calls, no messages and feel depressed and unwanted. Our generation did not have that; we knew for sure that we were loved by our parents, our siblings, our families.”

Quoting Bertrand Russell, who had always maintained that a child who has been allowed to play, laugh, run around, scream in joy is a happy child, Renutai links up such children to Tagore’s famous poem on “where the mind is without fear, and the head is

held high”, and says: “This is the young India that I dream of.”

Now that this beautiful building has been gifted to her and Eklavya, what is her next plan? “I’ve been in this field for over 40 years, and realise that the opportunities denied to so many of our children, who had a childhood without play or laughter and love, have resulted in a horrible life for them. They feel so helpless; they need both home and education but more important is the home. People like us may not understand the importance of the home but those born without it feel it most acutely. I am thrilled that at last some of these children have got a permanent home from where no one will ask them to go away, where there will be safety, security and mental solace for them.” She admits that this

problem is huge but at least one step has been taken and it will go a long way. The beginning is always difficult but once it comes, “you go a long way. I am very much obliged to the Rotarians of RC Pune Laxmi Road and especially Sadanand and Deepa Bhagwat who have helped me so much during the last four years.”

Recalling the cover story in *Rotary News*, she says after that article in 2018, so many mediapersons picked up this story, and she got a lot of help for her children from “the common man of Pune”.

Though the new facility can accommodate 100 children, Renutai feels that immediately she won’t be able to find so many children in Kudal. A survey will first be done; for eg, corona had made many children orphans... “what about their home, their education, their future? We will try and bring them here; though there may be space for 100 children, we

need the resources too for all of them. So we will begin with 20–30 and then gradually and steadily increase the strength.”

The Pune facility of Eklavya will be looked after by one of her own ‘boys’ — Malhari Kamble, who was 10 years old and in Class 4 when she first met him. “He was

I have worked with such children for 40 years. People like us may not understand the importance of the home but those born without it feel it most acutely.

Renu Gavaskar

brought up by the institution, has completed his higher education and now works for Eklavya as both teacher and manager. He has been with the Foundation for 15 years, and is experienced enough to manage our Pune operations.”

Malhari’s story is poignant; his father was an alcoholic and extremely abusive; he had four children and a wife and “out of extreme frustration and a lot of abuse, she left the house for Dubai where she is now working.” Eventually three children came to be under her care. Malhari decided to stay with Eklavya and while pursuing his PG course in Economics, is teaching the younger children math and science.

Renutai ensures that all the children who are interested in learning are sent for higher

education; “they all study at the Vigyan Ashram and the money for their education and living comes from the common man, Rotary and Lions clubs, and individual donors.”

Extremely conscious about protecting the dignity of children, she hasn’t forgotten what a teenager told her once; “people always give us old clothes. They treat us like a wastepaper basket; during Diwali they buy new clothes for their children and give us old clothes. I made a promise then and there that I will never accept old clothes for my children.” Since then all her children have been getting four sets of new clothes every year. We ensure that along with the clothes they also get “dignity and self-respect,” she adds.



We have to stop girls' early marriage



About the children who will inhabit this beautiful facility in Kudal, Renu Gavaskar says that sex workers' children in Kudal will be much smaller in number compared to a Pune or Mumbai, but as everywhere, here too, the dice is heavily loaded against the girl child. "Traditionally, when the parents die, the children are accommodated in the larger family, the uncles and aunts take over, so there is much less chance of the girls being trafficked as in a Mumbai or Pune."

But the girl child continues to be greatly disadvantaged; "even

though they accommodate the children, a major hurdle is that the *chachi* or *mausi*, at the first available opportunity, wants to get the girl married... so that she is no longer their responsibility. The girl readily agrees because she is too young to know what is good or bad for her. She gets new clothes, a *mangalsutra*, and a new home, and is excited. But with an early marriage their future is over. The girl gets married at 15, and gets a child at 16, when she is herself a child."

Making a strong plea for stopping the marriage of teenage girls,

Renutai says, "at that tender age she is not prepared, either physically or mentally, to look after the children. And education ends with her marriage."

So does she welcome the government's move to increase the age of marriage from 18 to 21? "Yes of course, but even that comes riddled with a problem... between 16, 17, 18 and 21, what will the girls do? This proposed Act, when we study it, comes with its own repercussions and implications. What will these girls do, because there is no money available with the families for the girls' higher education."

And hence, at the Kudal centre, Renutai and the Rotarians are planning several skilling and training courses to ensure that the girls who have completed high school get vocational training which can get them economic empowerment.

Renutai, who has closely studied and grappled with the issues confronting teenage Indian girls for 40 long years, says these girls face various problems and dilemmas, depending on their cultural, communal and family background. "Now take the hijab controversy and the girl (Muskan) who loudly chanted Allahu Akbar and insisted she will wear the hijab. Why? Because she wants an identity and feels insecure and unprotected without the hijab."

She adds that whether it is the hijab of Muslim girls or the ghunghat adorned by thousands of Rajasthani women even today, it is all done for an identity or tradition. Hitting the nail on the head, this social reformer says that what matters is not that a girl wears a hijab or a ghunghat; "the important thing is that she has to be educated, feel loved and respected." ■

Asked how many children she will be able to transfer from Pune to Kudal, Renu tai says, “Under the Juvenile Justice Act we cannot take children from one area or region to another and for each and every little thing, we need to get government permission. But sometimes the children are in dire need of immediate and urgent help. That’s why I have had discussion with several government authorities saying that you have to be liberal, please trust me as I have

The hostel-cum-school built by RC Pune Laxmi Road in Kudal.

worked for 40 years with children. Sometimes they agree, sometimes they don’t.”

But she is determined that she will help as many children as she can, with or without government help, but without breaking any rules. Giving an example of some urgent situations that need immediate action, she says that in normal circumstances a child from Pune can’t be brought to Kudal, even though both are in Maharashtra, but if there is an extreme case, such as one involving murder, “and if we put a proposal, I am hopeful of getting the required clearance.” She is presently grappling with a case of two young girls who were eye-witness to murder and have been brought to Pune, and urgently need a secure shelter.

She proudly points out that none of the children she shelters and educates have any addiction problems... to drugs, drinking, etc. “I once attended a de-addiction session and was very badly affected by what I saw, returned and made all my children promise me that they will not take tobacco or liquor.” What helped was one of their own voluntary teachers,

Once a child told me; “people always give us old clothes. They treat us like a wastepaper basket; I made a promise that day that I will never accept old clothes for my children.

Renu Gavaskar

who had lost her son to alcohol addiction, opening out her heart to them. “They were so deeply affected that they made this promise to me.”

Indirani, Renu tai’s 40-year-old daughter, has joined Eklavya and helps with its management; she is the CEO and her mother is the president. Pointing to the huge expanse of land at their Kudal hostel, she says, “We are so fortunate to get this facility; in Pune, for long years we have been struggling to find adequate space for our children. We have never owned any place; we always felt



like a *dhoom tara*... we've always aspired for at least a tiny space that we could call our own... and now we've got it."

She is all praise for the "dignity and respect with which the Rotarians from RC Pune Laxmi Road have always treated us and our children. They've never ever made us feel that we were accepting charity from anybody."

Endorsing her views, Renutai says the Rotarians always deal with the children with the utmost affection. "For example, helping us celebrate the children's birthdays. When he was a child, on his birthday, Malhari, who used to attend other children's birthday parties, would sit outside, banging away on a drum, light a diya, and a firecracker and wish himself: 'Happy birthday'. Because there was nobody to celebrate his

birthday. But these Rotarians have changed that!"

I chat with a bunch of older kids who have grown up with Renutai, completed their schooling and are now undergoing further education/training at the Vigyan Ashram in Pune. Ganesh Salamtappe, 17, is undergoing training there in rural technology, and operating machine parts, learning welding and electrical wiring etc. He wants to come to the Kudal facility as a faculty member. While Prakash Patole (14) wants to become an engineer, Rekhraj Gautam wants to "study computers".

Lakshmi Yadav, all of 17, exudes confidence and is all set



(From L) Rtns Vaishali Patil, Deepa Bhagwat, Renutai, club secretary Dr Manisha Suryawanshi and Vaishali Ghanekar.





RID Kotbagi and Amita, with Renutai and members of RC Pune Laxmi Road, in front of the home in Kudal.

to shatter gender stereotypes by studying rural technology, and is training to repair machine parts, and learning welding, fitting and fixing electrical appliances. “She is very good at drawing... is multitalented, and a very bright girl, who passed her higher secondary exam with flying colours,” says her mentor.

Chandni speaks with great confidence and is studying biology; she wants to become a doctor, following the footsteps of Sujata, who was looked after by Eklavya and is now a qualified doctor employed by a nursing home in Pune. “She is the daughter of a sex worker, and is now married, but had a very difficult time during marriage because her background was known to the boy’s parents. But she is happy now,” smiles Renutai.

So who is their role model? Two very clear winners emerge — Renutai and Malhari. Says

Lakshmi, “Mine is Renutai, because we were nothing, we were mere duds, but she talked to us and made us believe in ourselves... that we could get educated and become somebody in society... and our lives changed for ever!”

Another narrative that comes through is how much the children want to do for their mothers. Most of them saw their mothers, either abandoned or abused by their fathers, struggled to give them food and clothes. Watching the girls, one of them render the invocation at the inaugural event in a mellifluous voice, it is difficult to believe that these girls, at the age of 7 or 8, were employed as domestic servants, and despite the hard labour they put in, were often thrashed by the women employing them, till Renutai rescued them.

But now they have been rescued, and educated, “they want

to do something for their mothers, particularly the girls...”

Little Raj sums it up neatly when he says, “Both Renutai and Dada (Malhari) have given us the best of things... from head to toe what we wear, has been given by them. And now she is going to give this beautiful new home to children like us. We owe it to her, Dada and ourselves, to work very hard, study well and make something of our lives.”

It’s an ecstatic Renutai to whom I say goodbye at Kudal: “Life is really beautiful; you heard these children say I have given them so much. But trust me, they have given me back so much more. Some of the most precious moments of my life have come from these children.”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



Ukraine Devastated

Rasheeda Bhagat

In a heartrending interaction organised for Rotary regional magazine editors, Mykola Stebljanko, the publisher for *Rotariets*, the Rotary regional magazine for Ukraine, a past district governor and public image coordinator, RI District 2232, informed the Rotary world about the work being done in the war-ravaged country by the Rotary clubs of Ukraine to help the battered people of their country.

This, the Rotarians are doing, placing their own lives in danger. Some of the stories



related on the virtual meet were deeply moving and distressing.

Oleksii Lukash, past president of RC Kyiv, described how his full-term pregnant wife woke him up in the morning saying that Russia had attacked Ukraine. "I couldn't believe such a thing can happen in the 21st century. So I told her let's go back to sleep! But within minutes, we had to wake up as I started receiving dozens

of calls from colleagues and friends, saying that it is actually a war!"

Kyiv, the capital, is the biggest and most populated city of Ukraine. "Everywhere around us, we could see people jumping into their cars and moving in different directions. For the first few days (the zoom meet was on March 8) we remained in Kyiv, which was still normal. He of course had a special reason not to leave; his wife

could deliver any day, any time. "It was horrible, because virtually every hour we were listening to raid alarms all over the city. My colleague had to stay in bomb proof shelter for one week, and only after one week, and risking his life, he left the shelter safely."

But others were not so lucky; "I know so many of my friends tried to run, but were shot. Luckily, they survived, and we were desperately searching for blood plasma, and for the treatment of the injured." Lukash and his wife had to stay put under these terrifying circumstances, "for three more days. It was really very tough, as my wife was constantly crying and I was very scared that it would affect the baby."

Curfew was imposed regularly. Luckily three days after the war started, she was admitted to the nursing home and delivered a baby boy, but within few hours "we were forced to go to the bomb shelter. We soon noticed that the situation was becoming worse and worse, there was shortage of both petrol and food and we managed to first move to the country house of our friends in the western part of Ukraine who had already left and they were kind to provide us their house. But next day something exploded loudly right outside the house and we found that the airport was very close!"

Lukash is grateful as "my colleagues from RC Kyiv are constantly in touch with us." Along with delivering humanitarian aid to civilians injured in the bombing, Kyiv Rotarians are also helping to give supplies to military hospitals "as there are lot of injured soldiers. So several projects are going on and we are constantly in touch with volunteers and hospitals to reach medicines wherever they are required."

At present Lukash is in Poland with his family, including his baby boy the couple has named Elisey. "I am grateful to the Polish people who are helping us a lot," he adds gratefully.





A wounded child being treated at a hospital.

Addressing the meeting from the city of Odesa, in south Ukraine, where he lives, PDG Stebljanko, a



Mykola Stebljanko, publisher, *Rotariets*, Rotary regional magazine for Ukraine and Belarus.

member of Rotary E-Club of Ukraine, gave an overview of the sufferings of the people of Ukraine now under attack from Russia and the steps Rotary International and Rotary clubs across Ukraine have been taking to render humanitarian aid to the affected people. He is also the coordinator for foreign partnerships for the Ukraine crisis.

Displaying a map of his country, which showed the areas under Russian bombardment (as on March 8), he said “many cities in Ukraine are under military action; almost half of the cities in the east and south Ukraine are under either occupation or some form of military activities. So many people have left for Poland, Hungary, Moldova, Romania and Slovenia.”

He said that from the “beginning of the war, Rotary in Ukraine has started different kinds of activities...

we created a special coordination committee which meets twice daily and discusses what we can do for the different challenges that we face now.”

One of Rotary’s main areas of focus in Ukraine right now is to help the hospitals, which are now full with wounded civilians. “We opened special accounts in euro, US dollars, pounds and (Swiss) francs, and from the donations we have received from Rotary clubs and districts, we have been reaching medicines that are required urgently by the hospitals. Also, RI has opened a special disaster fund to support Ukraine and Rotarians around the world can donate to this fund to support the people of Ukraine.”

Till the previous day, (March 7), the RI fund had already collected over \$1 million; “this money will be spent on special disaster relief grants. There is a difference between a GG

and disaster funds, the main one being the procedure for getting an approval is very fast.”

Giving an example, he said his district had already applied for this grant, “and the application is only one sheet of paper.” The grant was also available to help Ukraine refugees in Slovakia, Romania and Hungary and all the information is available on www.myrotary.org, and the application for these grants could go up to \$50,000.

Stebljanko explained that “our need mainly is humanitarian help. Lots of countries have sent to Ukraine humanitarian help by planes, for eg, from Poland, and that is transferred by road and distributed to the cities where help is required. We have also created Rotary humanitarian units, where aid is collected and distributed to different cities. Our activities have helped our Rotary families, their relatives and friends.”

He added: “My city, Odesa, is presently not under military action but each morning we wake up with the thought that any moment military

We opened special accounts in euro, US dollars, pounds and (Swiss) francs, and from the donations we have received from Rotary clubs and districts, we have been reaching medicines that are required urgently by the hospitals.

Mykola Stebljanko
PDG and publisher, *Rotariets*





I used to just say that Rotary International is a big family, now I really believe it, and am convinced that this is a family that will stand by you.

Rtr Iryna Bushmina
the DRR from Ukraine
RID 2232

action can come... we are facing a very, very anxious situation.”

Sharing her personal and club experience, Irina Ivanova, secretary, RC Kharkiv New Level, said that her city, Kharkiv, was “one of the most destroyed cities in Ukraine. Every day, our factories, offices and houses are being ruined. Public transport doesn’t work.” Living in one of the bigger cities in Ukraine with a population of 2 million, the Rotarians of Kharkiv, “started our humanitarian project as fast as we could. First, we started giving out warm waterproof blankets to civilians who had lost their houses. Because of war most of the time people live in bomb shelters; we need 6,000 more blankets and are continuing to raise money.” Rotarians are also organising volunteers to deliver food and medicines “but they are working in a very dangerous situation,” she added.

The clubs have also organised “many thousands of kg of chicken; many countries have offered to send us help which is welcome. The Rotary clubs are also making special efforts to help single mothers, disabled and the elderly, who can’t help themselves.

Europe's Rotaractors mobilise 2,000 families for Ukrainian refugees

Really inspiring is the story of Rtr Iryna Bushmina, the DRR from Ukraine, RI District 2232. In her first-person account, published as an RI blog, she says she left Kyiv "in the first hours of the war. My sister, her husband, her three-month-old baby and a cat, were in the car." When they reached the border, men were prevented from leaving the country, so she, her sister and nephew continued to drive.

After a harrowing six days, they reached Vienna, staying the nights in three different countries, thankfully, not in hotels but the homes of Rotarians and their families. "I used to just say that Rotary International is a big family, now I really believe it. And I am convinced that this is a family that will stand by you. These are no longer beautiful words to me, this is reality."

But while driving, the traumatised Rotaractor thought positively; surely she wasn't the only person who needed help and support. Why not mobilise Rotaractors in Europe? As her sister was driving, "I had my hands free. I started writing in groups where there were Rotaractors about the situation in Ukraine. A lot of Rotaractors instantly responded. People immediately created groups with different focus areas and helped me to



DRR Iryna Bushmina
Ukraine, RID 2232

lead them. These were not perfectly thought-out projects, but they were projects that started working from the first day."

Amazingly, and with the speed of the young, Rotaractors responded quickly, and "we began with small projects to help Rotarians and Rotaractors of Ukraine find accommodation in other countries. Now, the project has grown, and we are helping many Ukrainians find a new home for the first time. We have lined up more than 2,000 host families to take in refugees."

Apart from helping the fleeing Rotarians find homes, the Rotaractors are also providing humanitarian aid; "the biggest need now is to

find helmets, thermal images, body armour and the like for the Ukraine defence forces," writes Iryna.

She says that "what hurts the most" is that they are not able to fulfil simple requests for food and water for the people in Ukraine, as the "the Russian army is blocking us from bringing humanitarian aid to civilians and they are dying from hunger and dehydration."

Her international team of Rotaractors has over 100 people, and her team in Ukraine has some 50 people. They are all working to disseminate the right information on the present state of affairs in Ukraine; find accommodation and hosts for Ukrainians fleeing the war zone; sending humanitarian aid and securing financial support for those who need it.

The young woman says that not all those they have helped have written back to express their gratitude, but this is understandable as they are under huge "fear and stress, spending three to four days at the border... we do not need them to say, "thank you". We just need to make sure these people are safe and that they get what they need to survive and help others. Now is the time for understanding. Of course, when some of the people do write their appreciation, it is a pleasure!"



Irina Ivanova
secretary
RC Kharkiv
New Level

Many people are without any financial support, and we transfer 100 euros to such people... have spent 30,000 euros on this project alone."

In the special kitchens "we supply vegetables, meat, flour, sugar and have invited volunteers who can cook for 1,000 people." Irina and her family have left Kharkiv and now live in western

Ukraine. "I hope war will end soon and we can return to our homes safe," she adds poignantly.

Orest Semotiuk, the public image chair, RC Lviv International, who lives



Rotarians ready with relief material for distribution to war victims.

in Lviv, said he helps to coordinate with international journalists who have been coming to the war-ravaged country in the last 10 days. “Many Ukrainians are counting days for the war to get over; today is the 16th day of our struggle since the Russian invasion, and the UN has estimated that already there are 200,000 refugees (as on March 8) from Ukraine who have fled to other countries. In 2012, we had built a huge stadium and it has become a big centre for refugees, there is a hotline where people can call and register.”

He added that the city has curfew and also “city patrols units, and they have weapons and thanks to them, many ‘bad instances’ were prevented.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

PRID Kamal Sanghvi helps Indian students in Ukraine

Rasheeda Bhagat

Since the attack on Ukraine brought stories of thousands of Indian students stuck in the war-ravaged country, past RI director Kamal Sanghvi started working quietly behind the scene to help Indian students get out of Ukraine to the nearest possible neighbouring country. This was even as Operation Ganga was being launched by our government.

Speaking to *Rotary News*, he said, “I am really grateful to the Counsellor, Economy and Trade, Embassy of Hungary in India, Patrik Maruzs, for helping so many trapped Indian

students in Ukraine who managed to cross over the border to Hungary.”

As providence would have it, on the very day the attacks began, Sanghvi was hosted a dinner in Delhi by the ambassador of Paraguay, along with the ambassadors of Cuba and Hungary. “On that day, I put the Rotary pin on Maruzs, and inducted him as a Rotarian in the Rotary E-club of Progressive Thinkers in Delhi. The charter president of that club is Jjulia Gangwani, and being in trade and business herself, she is well connected with these embassies and diplomats.”

As he started getting calls from anxious Rotarians about their children trapped in Ukraine with requests to help them get back home safe, Sanghvi sought help from Maruzs and Jjulia.

“And they were helped greatly by the Embassy of Hungary in India, thanks to the personal interest and intervention of my kind Rotarian friend Maruzs. There must have been 15 to 20 such students who managed to reach the Hungary border, and I shared all their numbers with Maruzs. Can you imagine he personally called up each of the students, assured them that they would be



From L: Jjulia Gangwani, charter president, Rotary E-club of Progressive Thinkers; PRID Kamal Sanghvi; Patrik Maruzs, Economic and Commercial Counsellor, Embassy of Hungary in India and Paraguay Ambassador Fleming Raul Duarte Ramos.

safe in Hungary, and the Hungarian government made arrangements for their immediate accommodation, and gave them food, till they left for the airport to take the flights back home.”

Maruzs himself is self-effacing about the role he played. Talking to *Rotary News*, he said, “I didn’t have to do too much as the Indian government’s Operation Ganga went off smoothly.” Having said that, he quietly discloses that he did offer financial assistance and his own flat in Budapest to a few Indian students who had no place once they crossed over the Hungarian border. But the accommodation was not needed as they were able to return home soon.” Incidentally, Budapest is about 300–400km from these borders.

But Maruzs played a crucial role in being a bridge between the Indian students who had managed to cross over to Hungary from Kyiv and Kharkiv and had problems in contacting the Indian embassy there. “The Indian embassy in Hungary was flooded with requests for help; I know some of the Indian and Hungarian staff working in the Indian embassy and connected the students who approached Rotary in India for help to these staff members. The rest was done by the Indian embassy.”



Indian student Siddharth with his father K Sridharan from RC Tirupur West.

But he also got in touch with a Rotary club in the area to provide food and shelter to the students who were trapped.

Another critical role he played was as a translator! “At the Hungarian border there were a couple of people who did not speak English, so a few Indian students faced a problem. As they had my mobile number, they called me and I could help in talking to those guards.” He also got a request from some parents from Kerala to organise a bus for the desperate students and helped.

Added Sanghvi, “Just imagine the kind of comfort and solace the youngsters would have got to be

able to communicate on their mobile phones to a representative of the Hungarian government, assuring them that they will be taken care of in that country.” His grateful club president Jjulia says, “we are proud to have him in our club.” Incidentally, Sanghvi also motivated the Cuban ambassador to become a Rotarian and join the same club.

All’s well that ends well. “Many grateful parents called and thanked me, and described how wonderful it was for them to get a call from the Embassy of Hungary in Delhi, to tell them that their child was safe in Hungary, and would return home soon,” Sanghvi added. ■

Rotary RI statement on Ukraine conflict

It is a tragic and sad time for the people of Ukraine and the world.

At Rotary, we are deeply concerned by the deteriorating situation in Ukraine and the escalating loss of life and humanitarian hardship there. Continued military action against Ukraine will not only devastate the region, but also risk spreading tragic consequences across Europe and the world.

As one of the world’s largest humanitarian organisations, we have made peace the cornerstone of our global mission. We join the international community in calling for an immediate ceasefire, withdrawal of Russian forces and a restoration of diplomatic efforts to resolve this conflict through dialogue.

In the past decade, Rotary clubs in Ukraine, Russia and nearby countries have transcended national differences

and have actively engaged in peace-building projects to promote goodwill and to marshal assistance for the victims of war and violence. Today, our thoughts are with our fellow Rotary members and others in Ukraine coping with these tragic events. Rotary International will do everything in its power to bring aid, support and peace to the region.

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The Rotary Foundation

Creates Channel for Direct Humanitarian Support in Ukraine Region

In response to the deepening humanitarian crisis in Ukraine, The Rotary Foundation has created an official channel for Rotary members around the world to contribute funds to support the relief efforts underway by Rotary districts and has designated its Disaster Response Fund as the main avenue for contributions.

To this end, The Rotary Foundation has approved:

- Now through June 30, 2022, the designated Rotary districts that border Ukraine and the Rotary district in Ukraine may apply for grants of up to \$50,000 each from the Disaster Response Fund. These expedited disaster response grants can be used to provide relief to refugees or other victims of the crisis including items such as water, food, shelter, medicine and clothing.
- During this same period, other impacted Rotary districts that wish to offer support to refugees or other victims of the crisis in their district can apply for \$25,000 grants from the Disaster Response Fund.
- Now through April 30, 2022, Rotary districts can transfer unallocated District Designated Funds (DDF) to support the Disaster Response Fund, directly supporting these Ukraine-specific humanitarian grants.
- Contributions to the Disaster Relief Fund in support of Ukraine can be made on <https://my.rotary.org/en/disaster-response-fund>. All funds need to be received into the Disaster Response Fund by April 30, 2022 in order to qualify for use in support of the Ukrainian relief efforts.
- Although the Disaster Response Fund will be the main avenue for Rotary Foundation support, Rotary and Rotaract clubs are also

encouraged to create their own responses to the humanitarian crisis in Ukraine.

In addition to support provided through the Disaster Response Fund, the Foundation is coordinating with partners and regional leaders, exploring effective solutions to the increased humanitarian needs.

- We are in contact with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees – USA to prepare for and respond to the needs of those being displaced in Ukraine and to neighbouring countries.
- ShelterBox, our project partner for disaster response, is in communication with Rotary members in Eastern Europe to explore how it may offer support with temporary transitional housing and other essential supplies.
- The Rotary Action Group for Refugees, Forced Displacement and Migration is also mobilising its resources to assist in this crisis.

A million people have fled Ukraine and are in dire need of emergency aid. The United Nations estimates that number could grow to as many as 5 million people displaced. Rotary clubs in Europe and around the world have stepped up their relief work, some working on the ground to help displaced families.

We will continue to monitor the situation in Ukraine and neighbouring countries. Visit *My Rotary* and follow Rotary on social media to stay updated on how clubs can get involved and what actions Rotary members have taken and the impact it has had for people in the region.

For all other questions and to obtain more information, please contact the Rotary Support Center at rotarysupportcenter@rotary.org.

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WWS14

WASH AWAY POLIO

REGISTER NOW! HOUSTON, USA Friday, June 3, 2022



Appropriate technologies and good habits prevent disease

Stop the transmission of disease through barriers: the proper use of appropriate technologies together with improved habits. Pathogens – things that make us sick – can travel from faeces (poop) into the mouth of another person, making them sick.

This can happen through many routes that are not immediately obvious. Effective water management, sanitation and hygiene can provide effective barriers to disease transmission. Join us to learn more about how your WASH programmes can help keep us healthy!

Join us on Friday, June 3, the day before the Rotary Convention, for World Water Summit 14.



For registration information see:
wash-rag.org

Rotary brings to life a lost river

Kiran Zehra

Members of RC Rudrapur, RID 3110, spent an afternoon in mid-February planting saplings as part of an ambitious ₹20-lakh re-greening and rejuvenation project along the River Kalyani in Rudrapur, Uttarakhand. They were joined by the local people living along the river, Rotaractors, college students, volunteers and local political leaders in the clean-up and setting up of the Kalyani Vatika (garden). “Our rivers are depleting due to the pressures of population and development. Floods and droughts are becoming increasingly frequent as vanished rivers come to life during the monsoon and dry-up once the rainy season is over. Climate change crises are at an all-time high. We cannot afford to lose our rivers,” says Dr D K Bhatt, club member and initiator of the project.

Plastic and chemical waste, worn-out furniture, heaps of clothes, used face masks and sometimes even dead animals, float in the river, “making it a horrible sight and giving out an unbearable odour,” says Bhatt who





Above: Rotarians and children cleaning the River Kalyani in Rudrapur.

Below: Rotarians plant saplings and create a garden on the river bank.



Now it is an absolute delight to watch people come here for a walk, or schoolchildren enjoy a picnic.

discussed the issue at a club meeting and “almost every member wanted to do something about it.”

The project team learnt that the river once served as a major source of water for the city. “Unfortunately, we lost it along the way to population explosion and rapid urbanisation,” he says. A plan was chalked out and the club approached the municipal corporation. “Both the mayor and municipal commissioner were impressed with our plan and granted official permission to start the work.”

The club also released a documentary on the history of the river which resulted in people participating in an online appeal to close an industrial waste canal that was polluting it. To sensitise the local community and gain support for this cause, *nukkad nataks* (street plays), painting competitions and awareness drives were organised by club members, Rotaractors and school and college students. Children from the community living along the river banks were so inspired by the street plays and the frequent awareness drives that “they too wanted to volunteer in the clean-up. While a few joined our weekly awareness rally, close to 10 children wearing gloves and holding gardening forks walked up to the site to help us. Pictures from the clean-up went viral and in

no time, we had more people and organisations wanting to participate. Now a CSR partnership with Tata Chemicals is in progress.”

In the initial stage, along with the help of volunteers from across Rudrapur, a 100-metre area leading up to the river was cleaned. “It was the most difficult part because piles of garbage made it look like a waste dumping site. It took us a couple of days to clear the surface to reach the water,” he says. Cleaning a river isn’t just about the water. “We wanted to ensure that the waste was responsibly segregated and everything that could be recycled was put away separately.”



Children create awareness about the river rejuvenation project.



Youngsters performing a nukkad natak.

This was followed by cleaning and desilting of the river bed and securing the soil with vegetation to avoid erosion. “A catchment-based approach not only improves the health of the river but also the land. This in turn will benefit the whole landscape of our city,” says club president Vikas Sharma.

For the Kalyani Vatika, around 500 saplings of native trees were planted along the river that stretches to 2km. The club has also installed a dozen benches and seats “to give local people an area to relax and enjoy the scenery. This works both as an awareness programme and enhances the club’s public image,” says Sharma.

Bhat points out that the cleaning of the River Kalyani and setting up of the garden is a great example of how “Rotary-funded and partnered projects have a direct and positive impact on the local community. It is an absolute delight to watch people come here for a walk, or schoolchildren enjoy a picnic. To top it all our club has moved its meeting venue to the Vatika,” smiles Bhat.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Project Vignettes

Team Rotary News

An OPD for senior citizens



Orthopaedic surgeon Dr Sudhir Babhulkar inaugurating the centre in the presence of club members.

RC Nagpur Metro, RID 3030, in association with the Central Neurological Medical Institute, has opened a multi-specialty OPD for senior citizens. Free consultancy will be provided for the elderly for various ailments.

RID 3090 sponsors students' fees



DG Parveen Jindal (centre) with Rotarians and students at a school in Patiala, Punjab.

Under Project *Prayas Ek Muskaan*, RID 3090, has paid the school fee of ₹5,000 for 300 students who lost their parents to Covid-19. The fees for 100 students were arranged by the District-CSR vice-chair Rajiv Goyal.

PDG Chari conferred Service Above Self Award



PDG Krishnan V Chari
RID 3232

The RI Board of Directors recently conferred the Service Above Self Award on PDG Krishnan V Chari, RID 3232. He is one of the 150 recipients chosen from across the world for this prestigious award. He served as editor of *Rotary News* during 1998–2005.

RID 3232 gifts TV sets to Sri Lankan refugee camps

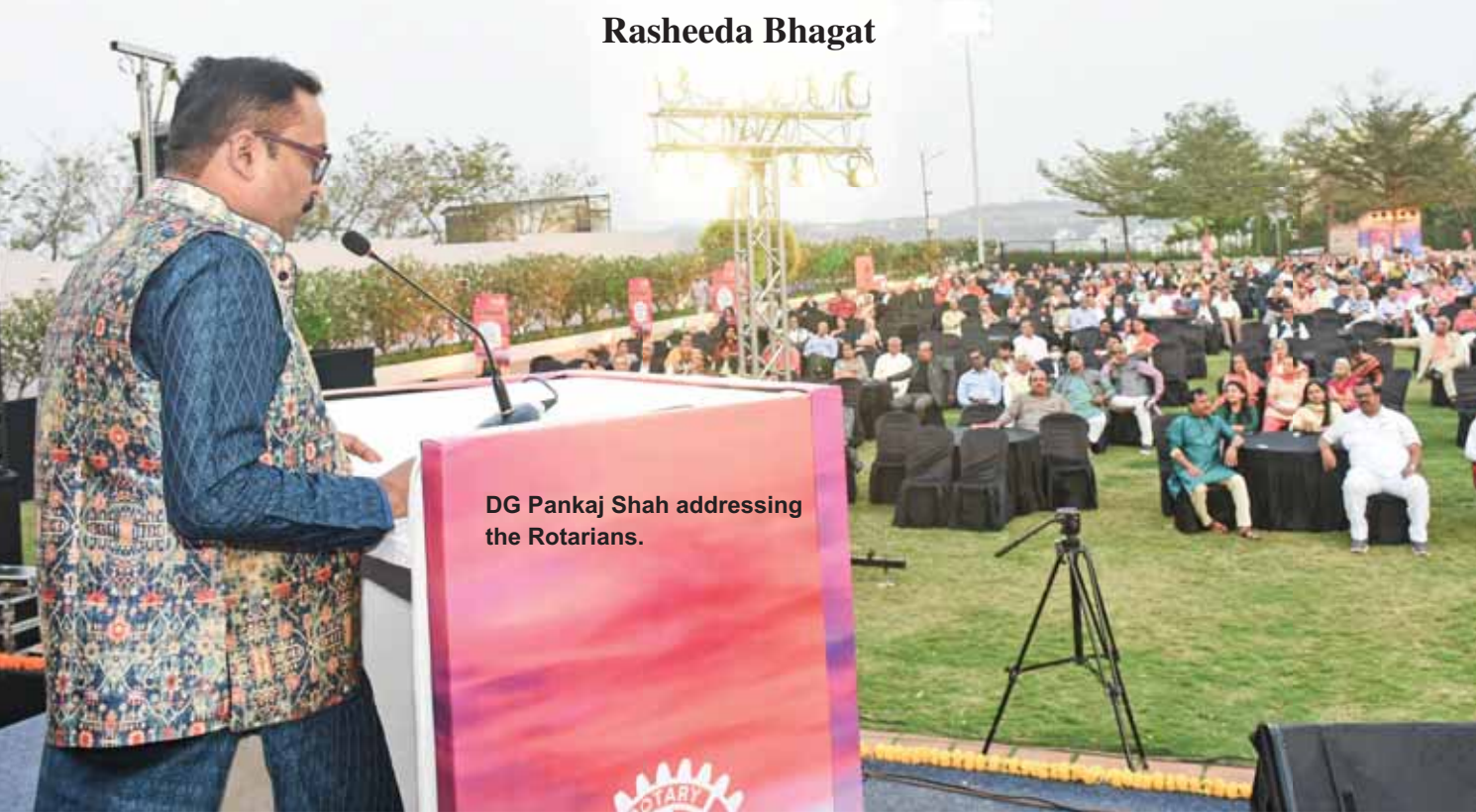


Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin (3rd from L) hands over a TV set to a refugee camp in the presence of DG J Sridhar (3rd from R) and district secretary R Ravi Shankar (2nd from R).

Following a request from the Commissionerate of Refugee Welfare, RID 3232 donated 109 TV sets to 102 Sri Lankan refugee camps to help the children access online education on the government's Kalvi channel. Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin presented the TV sets to the camp representatives.

500 Rotarians honoured for completing 25 years in Rotary

Rasheeda Bhagat



DG Pankaj Shah addressing the Rotarians.

DG Pankaj Shah and his wife Priya with Rotarians who have completed 25 years in Rotary.



During an era when the buzz in Rotary circles across the world is getting in more young members and decreasing Rotarians' mean age, RI District 3131 DG Pankaj Shah thought of a novel programme to crystallise his immense respect for silver-haired Rotarians who had long served their community through Rotary, and continue to do so.

"I discussed with my district team the idea of identifying and honouring those Rotarians from our district who have completed 25 years in Rotary, and honouring each of them and thanking them for the service they have rendered this organisation, at a special event in Pune," says DG Shah.

The process began to find out how many such persons were there in the district with help from RI and the club leaders, and to the pleasant surprise of the district team, it was found that there are 500 such Rotarians in RID 3131. "I have always had great respect for the senior Rotarians, who are still serving humanity through their Rotary clubs, and have been

nurturing the district tirelessly for so many years. They still continue to guide and mentor the incoming Rotarians in our district," he says.

The day to hold this unique event was chosen as Feb 27, 2022, just after Rotary celebrated its 117th birthday. The project was aptly titled *Baghban* (gardener); "I thought of this title because it is the gardener who carefully nurtures the beautiful garden by pulling out all the weeds and lovingly tending the soil so that beautiful and vibrant-coloured flowers can bloom in the area," says Shah.

While over 400 of the senior Rotarians had completed 25 or more years in a single club, "we also found many Rotarians in our district, who had been Rotarians for this period, but not in a single club due to some reason or the other. We decided to felicitate them too, because they too have nurtured the organisation for long years and inspired other Rotarians."

10 women Rotarians

But the most interesting discovery during this drive to identify senior Rotarians was that the team found there were 10 women Rotarians in

**Today, I am standing here
as the governor because
you inspired me to make a
contribution and become a
district leader.**

Pankaj Shah
District Governor

the district who had completed 25 years in Rotary. "This was really heartening because 25 years ago, the percentage of women joining Rotary was very small."

Once all the 500 were identified, invitation letters by snail mail and e-mail were sent out to all of them inviting them and their partners for the event.

Organised with a lot of care to make it a very special event, the district leaders, beginning with Shah and his wife, Priya, dressed up in traditional Maharashtrian clothes and the invitees were also asked to dress thus. This added a lot of colour and vibrancy to the venue, where the décor was traditional and the guests were greeted with live traditional music playing in the background. Each one was taken to a special backdrop for a photograph, and copies of their pictures were given to them before they left.

Addressing the meeting Shah said, "It is such a delight to welcome and recognise you because Rotary is the organisation that you have built over the years that inspired me to join it in 2009. It was your commitment to social causes that inspired me to make my



DG Shah, Priya and Amita Kotbagi with past district governors of RID 3131.



personal contribution too. Today, I am standing here as the governor because you inspired me to make a contribution and become a district leader.”

Giving them credit for building “a strong foundation that we find RID 3131 standing on today, when it comes to so many avenues of service, it was made possible only because of the groundwork done by senior Rotarians like you,” he said.

It was thanks to their effort that the district has become ISO 9001 compliant; it is No 2 in India in TRF contribution, and among the top 5 districts in the world when it comes to membership, he added.

Events chair Suresh Natu, who completed 25 years in Rotary this



Women Rotarians of RID 3131.





Rotarians interacting with each other at the venue.

The senior Rotarians returned home, with a glow on their faces and joy in their hearts, happy at the respect and recognition they had got from the district leadership.

year, became emotional while expressing his gratitude. Several of the seniors are PDGs, who were also recognised, and recorded their appreciation. The feedback was excellent; overwhelmed, the participants said that they felt very special being singled out for such an honour. One Rotarian said he was overjoyed to participate in an event which he was “sure has never been celebrated in this manner in the entire history of Rotary.”

Another one “urged governors all over the Rotary world to organise such an event which will help not only increase the membership of Rotary but also improve the retention rate.”

About 370 persons participated in the colourful evening, which ended with a delicious, traditional Maharashtrian dinner.

RI President Shekhar Mehta and RI Director Mahesh Kotbagi sent video clips congratulating the DG for this “wonderful initiative”. Kotbagi is from the same district and has also completed over 25 years in Rotary. RIPN Gordan McNally also sent his greetings through a video clip. All the video clips were screened during the programme. DGE Anil Parmar, DGN Manjoo Phadke and DGND Shital Shah also participated.

At the end of the day, the programme provided an excellent opportunity for many of the super seniors, who are not able to attend regular Rotary meetings due to advanced age or health conditions, to come out, meet and interact with their old friends. “They returned home, with a glow on their faces and joy in their hearts, happy at the respect and recognition they had got from the district leadership,” added DG Shah. ■





Rtn Shekhar Mehta
RI President



Rtn Ramesh Meher
District Governor

GLIMPSES OF

RCNV's EK Nayi Pehchaan - Singer tailoring centre



RC Nagpur Vision embarked upon a landmark project of setting up 'Ek Nayi Pehchaan' Singer tailoring training centre at the Chitnavis Wada, Mahal, Nagpur which was inaugurated on January 28, 2022.

Present during the inauguration were DG Ramesh Meher, Rupali Kale, Director, Provincial Automobiles Co, Hrishikesh Dhanwatey and Rahul Kale, Trustees of Chitnavis Trust, Shivraj Kale, Assistant Governor Mahesh R Lahoti, PDGs Dr Satish Sule and Vishwas Sahasrabhojane, RCNV president Vikram Naidu, his spouse Shalini Naidu, club secretary Jaishree Chhabrani, Dr Jugalkishor Agrawal, director, Vocational Service, Nidhi Gandhi, Nitya Agarwal, Amit Chandak, Ajay Uplanchiwar, Madhumati Dhawad, Ritika Singhvi, Vivek Garge Deoyani Shirkhedkar, Mrs Nirmala Mokadam, Nisha Thakur, S Puri, Rotarians, spouses, staff of Chitnavis Trust, and the trainees (women and girls) at the Ek Nayi Pehchaan Singer Tailoring Training Centre.

DG Meher said that the district will be opening 20 such centres to train underprivileged women to ensure that they get a decent livelihood. Singer has trained over 3,400 women in the National Capital region under its CSR activity. He also announced new projects like smokeless chulla to benefit rural women.

Club president Naidu explained the modalities of the project and the fundraising through CSR of Provincial Automobiles. Chitnavis



Trust has provided the hall at Chitnavis Wada and the staff to conduct the training programme. The Vocational Committee chair Nitya Agarwal took care of the project. Chairperson Nidhi Gandhi conducted the proceedings.

Paper plate making machine donated by RC Nagpur South



Sweekar Ashiyana is an organisation for autistic people. RC Nagpur South sponsored a paper plate making machine which was handed over to the home by DG Ramesh Meher. He appreciated the club and said that motivational speeches will be given by district trainers for parents of these children.

AG Mahesh Lahoti called upon the club to showcase this project as a branding exercise. The programme was attended by club president Vivek Garge, secretary Deoyani Shirkhedkar, PP Satish Raipure, Rtn Ashok Marathe, service director Dr Rajesh Ballal, treasurer Sanjay Dhawad, Anns Dr Leena Ballal, Vanashree Garge and Mamta Gourkhede.



DISTRICT 3030



Gardens with open gyms set up by RC Amalner

During the pandemic, these two projects created awareness about health issues to fight Covid. At the end of Rotary year 2020–21 (also end of second Covid wave), a need for health awareness is seen among all age groups. Installing open gym equipment in gardens on the roadside in big cities has been on the agenda for a long time. The plan to develop a garden with separate play area for children and an open gym was planned during the last Rotary year by RC Amalner led by then president Abhijeet Bhandarkar. This year's president Vrushabh Parakh and his team finalised the financial aspects for setting up such a facility at two places — one at the Mangalgraha Temple and another at the Rotary Garden Gaytri Colony.

The Mangalgraha Temple is one of the only two temples in India for God Mangal, a famous pilgrim spot where many worshippers visit daily, especially on Tuesday. Families stay there for the whole day. Rotary has developed a garden so that in spare time, the devotees can enjoy the greenery and also make use of the gym equipment installed there. Over one lakh people visit



the temple in a week. On Tuesdays alone, over 50,000 visit here. The Rotary garden with gym equipment cost ₹4-5 lakh for the club which also got a donor for this project.

The second project was for families living in and around Gaytri Colony and Patil Colony in the heart of Amalner. The garden is being used by children, elderly men and women and youngsters living in the neighbourhood. Equipment costing ₹2–3 lakh were installed and the residents too contributed to the project. The maintenance is taken care of by a committee formed by the club and senior citizens from the colony.

Club president Parakh, secretary Pratik Jain, IPP Abhijeet Bhandarkar, project chairman Rohit Singhavi, Kirtikumar Kothari and Rotarians supported the project with generous contributions. The club has plans to create such colony gardens with gym equipment in the coming year.



Thalassaemia patients adopted by RC Jalgaon Midtown



Thalassaemia is an inherited blood disorder where there is low production of red blood cells and decreased oxygen carrying capacity in circulation. RC Jalgaon reached out to the Red Cross Society as some of the thalassaemia patients have to undergo frequent blood transfusion. Dr Vivek Vadjikar, president, RC Jalgaon Midtown, decided to extend help. Dr Usha Sharma and Sunanda Deshmukh contributed ₹11,000 to adopt the patients. Dr Vadjikar delivered a speech to create awareness about thalassaemia so that more people will come forward to sponsor the treatment for patients. Dr Aparna Makasare was the project coordinator. The NAT blood test was sponsored for the patients.

RC Calcutta focuses on vocational training

Jaishree

Rotary Club of Calcutta, RID 3291, has launched two important initiatives — *Prastuti* and *Gati* — to provide technical skills to youngsters and women.

Under Project *Prastuti*, the club has installed computer labs in five remote villages with the help of local RCCs. “When the Covid pandemic began to wane a little we found many

children restless and reluctant to attend online classes. Village children were not interested to go back to school and the parents were happy to engage them in household chores or as extra hands to boost family income. So we came up with this idea to teach basic computer lessons to the children so that they get motivated to learn,” says Arindam Roy Chowdhury, the club’s

community service chairman, who aims to provide computer education to at least 500 children every month.

The club has come a long way from training just four students with two computers in its first lab set up in September 2021 at RCC Pragati Sangha in Dara, a remote village in the Sundarbans. As word spread, the centre grew to 15 computers to cater to 175 students. “The number is still growing and we have so many more students on the waiting list,” he says. He is particularly happy with the progress made by two girls — 18-year-old Mamata Mondal and Alpana Sardar who had enrolled with this computer centre last December. “Until then they had not seen a computer. Now they surprised everyone by doing their college course projects and have even designed their CVs online.”

The next centre was set up at Ucchaal Prabaha in Bishnupur, 140km from Kolkata. The local RCC runs a school here for 150 students. RC Calcutta has equipped it with four computers and trains 97 children.

One more centre was installed at the Chintan Academy in Baramangwa village, Darjeeling, with five computers. The school, established by the club, was inaugurated last November. “Both the school and the computer lab will be of immense help for the children of the local Lepcha and Gorkha tribes, as the hilly terrain does not have proper education facilities,” says Chowdhury. Twenty-five students are enrolled in the lab here.

The fourth centre is set up at the RCC Jadugoda Adhibashi Bikash Kendra at Ayodhya Pahar, Purulia. Here again the RCC is running a residential-cum-day school for 200 students. One hundred tribal students are being trained in this lab.

“More labs will be added in more villages. We want to train youngsters in these backward, remote areas with



A computer class in progress in one of the RCCs.

core employability skills so that they can earn a decent livelihood,” he says. Each course is for six months and all basic lessons in computer concepts such as making presentations, creating databases, browsing internet, and sending and receiving mails, are taught. Students from Class 6 are included in the digital literacy programme. The club takes care of the administration, maintenance and all related expenses through a special corpus created for the cause.

Post the pandemic, as schools reopened, the club distributed school bags and stationery to children to motivate them to go to school.

Tailoring classes

To empower rural women and support their livelihood, the club has installed tailoring institutes under Project *Gati* in remote villages of West Bengal. “Covid has turned everyone’s lives upside down but it is worse for the underprivileged living on the edge, and on a hand-to-mouth existence. For them, extra income is much more valuable. The tailoring classes will help the women with better employment opportunities,” says Chowdhury.

The club installed 40 Singer sewing machines procured from the manufacturer at various RCCs in the district. The community service committee coordinates with the RCC members in identifying the beneficiaries.

We want to train youngsters in these backward, remote areas with core employability skills so that they can earn a decent livelihood.



From L: Shaswati and Arindam Roy Chowdhury, Tandra Sarkar and Saumen Ray at a tailoring institute under the club’s Project *Gati*.

The tailoring institutes are named ‘Silai School’ in all the RCCs.

The first batch of tailoring classes, began in November, trains 150 women across villages. Each 6-month course, teaches them to stitch salwar suits, blouses, petticoats, bedsheets, bags and pouches. “We will be assisting them in setting up their own tailoring units and identifying the market for their produce,” he says. The RCC members help in recruiting qualified teachers for both the programmes and are also marketing the products stitched by the women in the local wholesale markets.

The Silai School at RCC Joygram Social Welfare, Hasnabad, has bagged an order to stitch 1,400 school uniforms for government schools. “The women are excited and ready to do the job.”

Project *Gati* is funded equally by the club and the Eastern India Rotary Welfare Trust. Exams will be conducted and certificates will be issued under both the projects.

On March 6, the club inaugurated its mobile repair training centre at RCC Pragati Sangha, Dara, and 25 youngsters are being trained there now.

More recently the club set up an 18-bed sophisticated paediatric ward worth ₹60 lakh at the Ramakrishna Sarada Matribhavan, a 100-bed hospital run by the Ramakrishna Mission, Dakshineswar. The hospital will provide an additional 50 per cent concession above its existing subsidy to patients referred by the club. “This project was executed entirely by our women members led by our president Sujata Pyne.” The club has 278 members, including 60 women. ■

A thoughtful menstrual hygiene kit for girls

Kiran Zehra



Members of RC Deonar with schoolchildren after distributing menstrual hygiene kits to them.

The contents of a menstrual hygiene kit must be put together taking into consideration the inputs and preferences of women and girls in the community you plan to help. Sometimes it is more than giving free sanitary napkins,” says Sudhir Mehta, president RC Deonar, RID 3141. Through Project Red, the club is distributing “context-specific items to school girls from underprivileged backgrounds.”

Initially the club, with the help of its RCC, visited schools on the

outskirts of Mumbai to study the menstruation-related needs of adolescent students. Project chair Dr Rajashri Mokashi was shocked to find that many girls weren’t attending school because of poor menstrual hygiene management. “The teachers and few students hesitantly told us that they had no underwear to place a sanitary napkin on. We realised that the issue wasn’t about the availability of napkins, it was more basic and we had to address it in a meaningful way.” More items were added to the menstrual hygiene kit which now

includes a set of underwears, sanitary napkins, hand and detergent soap, sanitiser and a towel.

Apart from having “a direct impact on the dignity, health, education, community involvement, and security of women and girls, the distribution of these kits is also an entry point for introducing educational material on sexual, reproductive health and rights for these girls who have always been told that periods are taboo,” Rajashri points out.

The awareness programme under Project Red addresses the stigmas and challenges associated with menstruation.

“But more importantly, it helps students understand the biology behind it,” she adds. The club aims to spread the knowledge for a sustainable change in hygiene management among the girl students from various schools around Karjat and the slums of Chembur and Mankhurd, in Mumbai. A DDF funded the first 1,000 menstrual hygiene kits. The club members raised funds for the remaining 3,000 kits.

Other projects

After receiving a request for baby warmers from the Shatabdi

Hospital, Mumbai, Mehta and Rajashri visited the neonatal unit at the BMC-run hospital only to find that although it had “high footfalls, most of the equipment was outdated and the number of neonatal transfers to other hospitals for issues like neonatal jaundice was high”. Instead of baby warmers, the club donated four phototherapy units and decided to adopt this neonatal unit.

With the support of the Tandarust Bharat Foundation, Mumbai, the

club has set up a water filter at the Bal Kalyan Nagari Children’s Home in Mankhurd, which has over 60 children.

The club conducted a cancer detection camp for the Brihanmumbai Electric Supply and Transport Undertaking (BEST) bus drivers and conductors, in association with the Cancer Patients Aids Association, a non-profit from Mumbai. Over 100 individuals were screened at the BEST Shivaji Nagar bus depot at Govandi. ■



An infant being treated on a phototherapy unit donated by the club at the Shatabdi Hospital in Mumbai.

2022 Convention

Breakout sessions

John M Cunningham



One of the highlights of the RI Convention each year is its wide range of breakout sessions. These sessions provide opportunities to explore topics that interest you and to gather inspiration from your fellow Rotary members. At the 2022 convention in Houston, June 4–8, you can choose from dozens of breakout sessions that will help you sharpen your leadership skills and get new ideas on how to strengthen your club’s membership, implement sustainable projects, and more.

Some of the sessions cover membership topics, such as helping your club grow (Building your club-specific membership growth plan), putting diversity, equity, and inclusion into practice (Eliminating roadblocks to diversifying your club), and adapting to flexible meeting models (What’s the hype about hybrid meetings?).

Sessions focusing on service include those that provide tips for developing successful projects (Designing results-oriented service projects), offer guidance for coordinating specific activities (Organise a local addiction prevention activity), and promote strategies for expanding your capabilities (Enhance your club’s impact and reach through Rotary Community Corps).

You can also learn how to engage young leaders (Building Rotary’s future through youth programmes), hear best practices for sharing your Rotary story (Demystifying resources for promoting Rotary), and get an overview of where the organisation is headed (Rotary’s Action Plan for the future).

Breakout sessions will be held June 6–8. Registration is not required; seating is available on a first-come, first-served basis.

Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org.

Annets on a water conservation drive

Jaishree

The members of Rotary Clubs of Madras Midcity and Chennai Metrozone, RID 3232, with the support of Ajith Nair, chairman, District Water Mission, have installed tap aerators in households and offices to help save water as part of the club's environment support projects.

An aerator is a small attachment fitted to the tap, which mixes water with air and controls the flow of water from a tap without affecting the water pressure.

“We involved the children in promoting these devices among friends and families and they were excited to do so. It has been their baby, and they have designed and executed this project,” says Senith Mathews, member of RC Madras Midcity. Metrozone, the apartment complex where he resides, was chosen as the pilot venue to promote the water-saving device.

“We were thrilled when Appa asked us if we would like to take part in saving water for our area and the

world. Of course we said yes,” says his 13-year-old daughter Joanna. She and her 25 friends residing in the apartment complex got together and shot a demo video to explain how to fit the tap aerators and how much water can be saved. “My friend Hanna acted in it and the video was edited by another friend, Arjun. We set the timer for five seconds and Hanna collected water from a faucet without the aerator and again after fitting one. The earlier one dispensed 1.1-litre water, and the second one just 0.3 litre water,” she says. Even if only 60 apartments in her complex fixed just one aerator each “we will save a whopping 12.34 crore litres of water, that is equivalent to 5,143 water tankers, in a year!”

The children designed posters to convey the message. “We had multiple ideas — some crazy, some not so crazy — which we brainstormed over zoom sessions and in person.” The video, uploaded

The young water conservationists of the Metrozone apartment complex.





Hanna giving a demo.

on YouTube, was shared with the residents and the posters were put up across the vast complex.

Once the promotions were done, it was time to seek orders for the aerators. The tech-savvy children designed order forms on Google Form and circulated them to the neighbours. They received 500 orders initially and

dug into their pocket money to fix the devices in the clubhouse and other common areas. “We sold the aerators in combo packs to fit the kitchen and washbasin faucets at ₹150–200.”

The children personally delivered the devices to the residents. On the last day of distribution, they learnt that few residents had Covid, and

appropriate precautions were taken to reach these orders and collect the money through electronic transfer.

After a brief pause during the Omicron wave, the project is in full swing, and larger apartment complexes will be approached.

The children are also proactive in other environment-related activities such as cleaning and promoting recycling and waste segregation, says Mathews. “The lessons they learn along the way will make them vital agents of change both now and into the future when they grow up as adults,” he adds.

The district water mission, with help from technical experts, has devised various water management solutions and these are being adopted by the clubs in the district. “We are installing treatment plants to reuse water and recharge wells to capture and harness rainwater in large communities and corporate offices,” says Nair. ■

New building for government school

Team Rotary News

PRID C Basker recently inaugurated the new building for the Nachikurichi Government Aided School constructed by RC Tiruchirapalli Fort, RID 3000. The building cost, ₹30 lakh, was borne by the club members.

The school, celebrating its 80th anniversary this year, has a strength of 75 students studying in Classes 1–5.



PRID C Basker (third from R), DG R Jeyakkan (R), club president SP Annamalai (fourth from R) and secretary A Saravanan at the school.

Complimenting the club president SP Annamalai for facilitating better learning experience for the students, Basker said, “There

are so many schools that are in a dilapidated state. It is our responsibility to make them attractive for children.” ■

Rotary to install 100 dialysis units in Chennai hospitals

V Muthukumaran

Project KIND — Kidney in need of dialysis — got a shot in the arm with RC Madras Industrial City, RID 3232, donating six dialysis machines to the Nephrology department of the Hindu Mission Hospital, Chennai, to strengthen its free and concessional services to underprivileged patients. The GG project worth ₹43 lakh was done in partnership with RC The Hills-Kellyville, RID 9685, Australia. Under similar projects the district's clubs will install over 100 dialysis machines at government and charitable trust hospitals in Chennai.

The new machines will augment the capacity to 16 units. Speaking at the handover event, RI Director A S Venkatesh said, “Rotary’s topmost priority is world peace, which is not absence of war. If people can’t access healthcare, water and education, then we are not creating a community for sustainable peace. Given the amount of work Rotary is doing in Africa, I am sure in the next 7–8 years, those countries will attain healthcare delivery as good as in developed societies.”

Ever since DG J Sridhar took up with Venkatesh, over 18 months ago, the ambitious project of installing 100

dialysis machines in Chennai hospitals, “I was amazed by his commitment to this cause and the way he went about implementing it,” he added. Rotarians are always ready to expend time, resources, efforts and money for noble causes, “but the real work is done by the doctors at charitable hospitals like the Hindu Mission, who are involved and dedicated.”

A tremendous job

Rotary has a long and happy association with this charitable institution. “All the doctors and other staff members are doing a great service



From L: Vinod Saraogi, club president Satheesh Kumar, DG J Sridhar and RI Director A S Venkatesh at a dialysis ward in the hospital.



RID Venkatesh gives the warranty agreement for dialysis machines to Hindu Mission Hospital medical director Dr DK Sriram in the presence of (from L) club president Satheesh Kumar, Vinod Saraogi, DRFC Ambalavanan, DG Sridhar and district secretary R Ravi Shankar.

to society,” said DG Sridhar, adding that while Rotary has only donated the machines, “all the accessories and support services are being provided by the hospital which is critical for the success of healthcare delivery.” Recalling his long-felt wish to do something for the hospital, he said, “every day when I travel to Oragadam (a suburb) to my workplace, I can’t miss seeing this charitable trust that is doing enormous service to poor people who can’t afford medical care. I had decided then to collaborate with this institute.”

Rotarians are always ready to expend time, resources, efforts and money for noble causes, but the real work is done by the doctors at charitable hospitals like the Hindu Mission.

RI Director A S Venkatesh

Recently, the hospital has set up a new organ transplant wing to perform heart, lung, liver, kidney and eye transplant surgeries. “We have been doing cornea transplants for the underprivileged for some time now,” said Dr DK Sriram, medical director, Hindu Mission Hospital. “Patients with end-stage renal disease have to undergo dialysis lifelong, and kidney transplant is the only solution for them, but it comes with a lot of associated problems,” he said. Time and again, Rotary has helped the hospital with its methodical and organised work ethic and “we are looking forward to continue our partnership with them.”

The 39-year-old quaternary care hospital being run by the Kanchi Kamakoti Trust and led by founder-secretary D K Srinivasan, does 50 eye surgeries, including free cornea transplants with the help of its eye bank, and at least seven rural outreach camps a week; provides free food to patients and their caretakers; free audiology and speech therapy to special children; holds artificial limb fitment camps on Saturdays; and provides free thrombolysis within the golden hour to young victims of heart attacks, said Dr Sriram.

Subsidised charges

“At this hospital we charge ₹750–₹1,000 for a dialysis session. For an underprivileged patient it is done entirely free. The GG approval was granted in just 13 days due to the meticulous paper work done by Rtms Gaurav Jain and Rajagopal,” said club president Satheesh Kumar. Six clubs will install 10 dialysis machines at the VHS Hospital in Chennai with RC Chennai Hallmark taking up the lead role in this GG project (\$156,000) and RC Alamo, RID 5840, US is their global partner.

So far, two Covid vaccination camps were done by RC Madras Industrial City inoculating 450 people; and a health check-up camp reached out to 150 people, said Kumar. The club with 49 members marked its charter day, Feb 19, on its silver jubilee year by handing over the dialysis machines to Dr Sriram. RID Venkatesh presented the five-year warranty agreement to the hospital CEO in the presence of DG Sridhar and club office-bearers. Project KIND chair S Subramanian coordinated the work for this project.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

Bhichai

He did it his way

Rajendra Saboo

A person who did it his way to live his life was Bhichai Rattakul. A man with short temper, sometimes, to follow his values, be it in his politics, Rotary or family. I got to know him in December 1973 when he came to Chandigarh as RI President's Representative at our District (then 310) conference, hosted by RC Chandigarh, where I was assigned conference chair by my club and endorsed the district governor JK Sethi. I got close to Bhichai, who had come

alone. Our district was infamous for canvassing during governor's election. Bhichai went to the three parties to know the canvassing. The conference was a great hit as I managed to get Vice-President of India GS Pathak.

Following the conference, as the chief guest, he attended our club meeting. There he nicknamed me 'RK'. He also said that RK would rise in Rotary but not the way he saw, by canvassing. He was representing RI President the same year to D-315. He and his wife

Charoye came to Calcutta (now Kolkata) in a train from Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh. They were in first class but had no beddings and they would spend two nights. I happened to be in Calcutta and arranged their stay at my home. They were going to Guntur, Andhra Pradesh, where the DG was V Umamaheswara Rao. Bhichai would go to any place for serving Rotary.

Bhichai was a very senior Rotarian, having joined RC Dhonburi, Bangkok, in 1958 and became district governor in 1963. He should have been RI director earlier, but was victim of a geographical distribution. Zone 2 then comprised whole Southeast Asia, up to Taiwan. The maximum districts were in South Korea and the Philippines, which had the maximum votes, so the two countries alternated

the RI directorship. Bhichai always lost in the election. In the 1986 Council on Legislation, an additional RI director was included, the RI Board assigned an area, with new enactment, and Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand were given an additional RI director. Consequently, Bhichai became director in the year 1990-92, and was on the RI Board when I became RI President in 1991-92. I had him as the chairman of Executive Committee of the Board, and often said

Bhichai Rattakul had an aura and was so honoured that all doors would open to him, be it the office of the Prime Minister or senior executives or at the airport.





PRIP Rattakul inaugurated the Rotary News Trust office in Chennai in Dec 2002. Also seen from L: PRIP Panduranga Setty, PDG C Srivatsan, PRIP Saboo, PRID P C Thomas, PDG Krishnan V Chari (then editor of *Rotary News*), PRID Ramesh Pai and PDG Tarachand Dugar.

openly I'd be privileged to swap the positions since he was of much higher seniority.

Despite his seniority he gave me utmost respect as RI president whether in board meetings or when he joined me for visits or assigned any Rotary task. I was informed about a canvassing in my district 3080 and requested Bhichai to visit Chandigarh to gauge the reality. PRID YP Das was one of the candidates and Bhichai was known to his father. Bhichai gave the actual situation and his report was put to the board meeting. When the item came up I asked Vice-President

Glenn Estess to chair and I withdrew. The board took the decision based on Bhichai's report that the election was vitiated, and re-election was ordered without disqualifying any candidate since there was no proof. Bhichai was always astute and fair, following Rotary edicts.

When Usha and I visited Bangkok, he arranged our audience with the King of Thailand. We had been flying 6-7 hours from Tokyo to Bangkok. Bhichai arranged for Usha and me to change at the airport VIP lounge as we had to go directly to the palace. When we met the king, I could see how much respect he gave to Bhichai; as if he was part of royalty. Indeed, Bhichai had an aura and was so honoured that all doors would open to him, be it the office of Prime Minister or senior executives or at the airport. In my three days in Bangkok, I realised that in addition to his political

positions and responsibilities he gave full time to Rotary.

Bhichai Rattakul was educated in Bangkok and Hong Kong, and held high degrees. A Member of Parliament for nine terms since 1969 and leader of the Democrat

Party, he had served his country as foreign minister, deputy prime minister, speaker of the House of Representatives and president of the parliament. He had also led many Thai delegations to the United Nations. Bhichai Rattakul was honorary

Left: At the District Conference in Chandigarh in 1973 when PRIP Bhichai Rattakul (L) was RIPP and PRIP Rajendra Saboo was conference chair. The then DG JK Sethi is seen second from right.



vice-president of the Thai Scout Council. He served as chairman of the Anti-Corruption Commission, Anti-Drugs Commission, National Audit Commission and the 13th Asian Games Organising Committee. He was decorated with Special Class Honor from the King of Thailand and honours from the emperor of Japan, presidents of the Philippines, Korea, Austria, and Nicaragua. He was also awarded the highest International Olympic Award and the Asian Olympic Award by the International Olympics Committee.

He was married to Khunying Charoye Rattakul and had two sons and one daughter. Charoye passed away in June 2014. Both Usha and I have been very close to Charoye as we were with Bhichai. Bhichai was truly

a hands-on service man. He mentioned to me that he was a Rotarian just in name when he joined the club and felt an honour to be a member of Rotary. It so happened that the club was taking out a group of fatherless children to the beach. One of the volunteers from the club dropped out and Bhichai was requested if he could fill in. He was annoyed at first but after persuasion reluctantly joined.

Each Rotarian was asked to care for one child. Bhichai had a little boy to care for and play with him. On conclusion of the visit, all other children had gone. It was getting dark and this child continued to sit with Bhichai and said “I wish you were my Dad.” Bhichai told me that the time spent with this child was one of the most valuable times of his life and made him

a real Rotarian, and made him realise the meaning of the words ‘Service Above Self’. Bhichai had many other projects including the Lighthouse Literacy project working together with Australian and Thailand clubs, and this was most significant as the project got implemented in many countries. Bhichai created an official Rotary Centre in Bangkok through Thai Rotarians’ contributions and initiated the Thai language literature. This multiplied the number of members.

Bhichai became RI president in 2002–03. He was president-elect when he addressed the Rotary annual convention in Barcelona, Spain. He was candid and forthright in his comments, be it in board meetings as a president-elect or president and even later in the Council of Past Presidents. He did so

without any fear or favour even if the comment was against any past presidents in our group, if there were violation of Rotary policies or values.

When he was president he asked me to chair the Peace Conference to be organised in Kuala Lumpur. This was to be organised by the RI staff, and I together with two-three secretariat staff members visited the venue to decide the hotel and logistics. I had differences with the staff members and they differed with me and put their recommendation. I sent my resignation to President Bhichai that I could not work with this staff committee and Bhichai immediately gave the order that whatever instructions I gave would be the final word. Such a strong man Bhichai was. The conference became successful far beyond



PRIP Ratakkul with PRIP Saboo and PRIP Glenn Estess (seated, right) at the Zone Institute in Brisbane in 2003.



PRIP Rattakul with PRIP Saboo and Usha at a meeting with the King of Thailand.

expectations and all those who attended were happy about the programme, speeches, fellowship and camaraderie. Bhichai truly proved himself once again a true leader.

He was an orator par excellence and was requested by many incoming RI presidents to speak at the International Assembly. His fame as an orator preceded him, and after he spoke, there was a standing ovation which was not normal. His way of speaking was soft, having the content of humanity with stories, talking about the integrity and values of Rotary. His theme as RI president was very action oriented — ‘Sow the Seeds of Love’ — and this is how, many times during his year as president, and even later, he would define the true meaning of love in the larger sense.

Whenever I visited Bangkok, whether as chair of the Foundation or later on way to medical missions, I was always

He created an official Rotary Centre in Bangkok through Thai Rotarians’ contributions and initiated the Thai language literature. This multiplied the number of members.

invited by Bhichai to a very special restaurant which had Indian food. In the later years, he invited me to his home when Charoye had gone and his hospitality was remarkable. Bhichai has created leaders from Thailand in Rotary like PRID Noraseth Pathmanand and few others. When the convention was planned in Bangkok under the leadership of RI President Kalyan Banerjee he was agitated because Kalyan had appointed Past RI Director OP Vaish on

my recommendation. Bhichai wanted the conference chairman to be from Thailand, and recommended Noraseth. K R Ravindran, who was treated as a son by Bhichai, went to Bangkok to calm him down and persuaded him to actively support the convention. I met him too, indirectly indicating my rationale. Bhichai would always give regard to my suggestion.

Ravindran was close to him. Bhichai came to bless Ravi’s daughter Prashanthi’s wedding in Thailand, and went all the way to attend his felicitation when he became RI president. I was there too. Bhichai spoke profusely about Ravi. Bhichai had tremendous self-respect, sometimes beyond logic. As chair of the Rotary Foundation he asked for credit card for official expenses. He was annoyed because he felt he should automatically get a credit card, and not have

to ask for it. On that point, he resigned from the chair of the Rotary Foundation. He, however, continued to serve Rotary as he initiated and pursued a short course as a Rotary Peace Fellow at the University of Chulalongkorn in Thailand. This was an astounding success and was replicated in Uganda.

I asked Bhichai one day what is the meaning of his name and he explained that much of Indian culture had touched Thailand which was then known as Siam and his name Bhichai meant ‘vijay’ or ‘victory’. Bhichai had intimated to me that Charoye was given a funeral in a royal reserved area and he would also want his place next to Charoye’s memorial. He did it his way, always. He was very fond of Frank Sinatra and used to sing ‘I did it my way’. Truly Bhichai lived and died his way.

The writer is a past RI president

A gift to contemporary literature by Afghan women

Rasheeda Bhagat

The voices of Afghan women, through a collection of stories put together in the book *My pen is the wing of a bird* (Hachette), touch your heart with the two powerful and contrasting emotions they express — violence and yearning... violence is their reality and yearning is their world of make-believe, dreams.

Dreams such as the one Zahra has. Married as a second wife to a man who is prone to extreme violence, she feels constantly ridiculed and undermined by the first wife, who wears a shining ruby ring on her finger. Zahra is convinced that her power and importance comes from that ring, and is slowly and stealthily saving up a big bunch of soft almonds, to be traded with the local goldsmith for a ring.

But her reality is in stark contrast to her dream world. In that, she is tortured and beaten by her husband, cruelly taunted and ridiculed by his son and first wife. It is inevitable that her secret will be exposed, and the punishment?

Find out about it in the story titled 'Falling from the summit

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of dream', originally written in Dari by Parand.

All the stories in this collection are written by Afghan women in Afghanistan's two dominant languages Dari and Pashto and translated into English for this book; the initiative of Untold and the British Council. The title comes from the writer Batool Haidari, who said on International Women's Day 2021: "My pen is the wing of a bird; it will tell you those thoughts we are not allowed to think, those dreams we are not allowed to dream."

This gut-wrenching statement sums up the plight of millions of helpless women across the world; oh yes, they can be found in every country, however "developed" it might be considered, but most prominently in Taliban's Afghanistan.

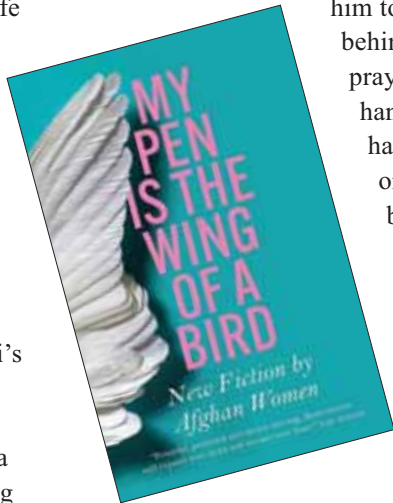
When the Taliban reclaimed Afghanistan last year, the collective groan from the entire world was: "Oh god, what new ways will the Taliban find to torture Afghanistan's women."

The stories penned by these women give us a glimpse into what has been happening, and continues, to happen, to the majority of Afghan women. Slogging through the day in a life filled with misery, want, poverty and violence, these women face the heat in the kitchen as they prepare fresh meals for the family, even as their thoughts wander into a world and life which can never be theirs.

Let's peep in to Freshta Ghani's story titled *Daughter Number Eight*, where the eight-month pregnant protagonist is fasting, but has to prepare a huge meal for a houseful of guests, including her husband's mother and sister, who don't move an inch to help her. In the "messy" kitchen, as she cooks the meat, chopping the spinach and other vegetables... "sometimes it is easy to take out all my anger on the vegetables, chopping vigorously... my legs are weak, my hands are

shaking.” Though eight months pregnant, she hasn’t been for a single check-up and hopes that Allah will accept her fast and make at least this eighth child a boy. While cooking the rice, she thinks: “My life is like the boiling water in this pot, happiness evaporating from it like the steam.” Disaster is only waiting to happen...

Batool Haidari’s *I don’t have the flying wings* is the poignant story of a gay teenager trying to find his identity in a country where homosexuality is considered a sin, except, ironically, in the mosque. Thrashed brutally by his father whenever he is caught wearing his mother’s red velvet beret over his head or trying out his sister’s floral headband, the son hates being taken by his father to all-male gatherings so he could act like a ‘man’. “I cannot tell him that I don’t want to be like a man, I do not



want to be a man. So I have picked a new style.” This is to wear his best clothes, oil his hair and use perfume when he goes to the mosque. Here the Mullah admirably invites him to stand directly behind him during the prayer, shakes his hand, touches his hair. “That is the only time I feel beautiful,” he adds.

We read about Zarghoona in the *Black Crow of winter*, who is returning home after a day’s hard work on a harsh winter evening and is begging for a lift home from the vehicles passing by, as she has only 5 and not 10 Afghanis, required for a bus/van ticket. “She cannot stand on her legs. They are refusing to walk her home. Deep in her heart she wishes for an explosion to tear her body into pieces and free her from this wretched life forever. Then she remembers her children and husband, curses herself and utters, ‘God you are great’. A kind conductor stops the vehicle and offers her a free ride, and she gratefully decides to use the 5 Afghanis to buy a lollipop that her little son has been craving for long.”

As BBC’s famed war correspondent Lyse Doucet, who has been reporting out of Afghanistan for long years, says in the introduction, for a long time the world has been asking ‘what do Afghan women want?’ Well, some of the answers can be found in this collection,

Deep in her heart she wishes for an explosion to tear her body into pieces and free her from this wretched life forever. Then she remembers her children and husband, curses herself and utters, ‘God you are great’.

An Afghan woman’s voice

brought out by Untold: bringing Afghan writers together through a translation into English so that their voices can reach the rest of the world. For most of these writers, even finding the space and peace of mind to write is a daily struggle. Literature is resilience, a release...

In this storytelling and joy of writing effort, she adds, “We smell onions frying in kitchens. We hear the jingle of an ice cream cart. We hold a purple handbag. We sit on the ‘soft chocolate-covered seat of a luxury car’ belonging to someone else.”

But there are also stories of cruelty and torture which will make you recoil, of dread and hatred and women and child suicide bombers, of love and longing that are so cruelly crushed. Turkish writer Elif Shafak sums it up neatly when she says, “Powerful, profound and deeply moving, these stories will expand your mind and elevate your heart.” ■

My pen is the wing of a bird; it will tell you those thoughts we are not allowed to think, those dreams we are not allowed to dream.

Batool Haidari, writer

A Happy School brings smiles

V Muthukumaran

January 30, 2022 is a red-letter day for the 120 students and teachers of Swa Veer Rajguru Madhyamik Vidyalaya at Sakadbav, a tribal hamlet 35km from Shahapur taluk in the Thane district of Maharashtra. “School headmaster Prakash Kor shed tears of joy and thanked us profusely as we had rebuilt the school at a cost of ₹24 lakh, following Cyclone Tauktae that wrecked the classrooms on June 3, 2021,” says Sunil Soman, president, RC Thane North, RID 3142. IPDG Dr Sandeep Kadam inaugurated the renovated school with upgraded sanitation and classroom facilities in the presence of PDG Dr Mohan Chadavarkar and

members of RCs Thane North and Shahapur.

The cyclone had ripped off the entire roof and damaged the walls so badly that the teachers had to hold classes under the trees for the boys and girls who walked from the tribal hamlets around 5–6km radius to the only secondary school (Class 8–10) in this region. “Located on a hilly area, the school was totally destroyed. One of the teachers, Kavita Padwal, who is helping us in a survey for an upcoming GG project (\$90,000) of desilting Lenad lake at Shahapur, briefed us about the devastation to the school,” he recalls.

Following the teacher’s SOS, a six-member Rotary team led by Soman

visited the school. Headmaster Kor was in extreme desperation and pleaded with the visiting Rotarians to restore the school to normalcy. After returning, the Rotarians formulated a proposal at a board meet to rebuild the school with funds from the club’s North Star Rotary Trust. “Initially we set aside ₹7 lakh from the trust’s corpus, and then leveraged the district grants to expand our Happy School project with a holistic approach.” A rollover district grant of ₹17 lakh was sanctioned in November and tenders for work orders were invited, he explains.

Soon an exclusive toilet block for girls (₹3 lakh) came up; a dilapidated toilet block (₹1 lakh) for boys was

RC Thane North president Sunil Soman (fourth from L) along with Rotarians, teachers and students in front of the dilapidated school building.



renovated; an e-learning kit with hardware, software (₹75,000), lab equipment (₹1.5 lakh), a borewell linked to an overhead tank (₹1.25 lakh), were all put up. A solar panel (₹2 lakh) for captive power, was also added, transforming the school's infrastructure to another level. "We are installing an RWH pit (₹1 lakh) near the borewell and a library will be set up by March-end. Our members sponsored uniforms, 12 fans for classrooms, and ₹1 lakh-worth furniture that includes cupboards, blackboards, faculty tables and 25 chairs for the e-learning centre," he added.

Over the last 20 years, nobody has helped this school and Rotary's intervention has changed memories of a dismal past into an era of new hope for the students and teachers.

The chirpy and smiling Diksha Rajaram Chaudhary (Class 10) says,



The renovated classrooms.

"I thank Rotary from the bottom of my heart for setting up these facilities which will motivate us to study well." Pranali Gaikwad (Class 9) turns emotional while expressing

her "lifelong gratitude to Rotarians for making my school so beautiful and cosy."

Headmaster Kor is even happier than the students. ■

Doing good with TRF help

Mobile cancer detection clinic in Mangaluru

Team Rotary News

Rotary Club of Mangalore, RID 3181, in association with RC Silicon Valley Passport, RID 6540, USA, and TRF, recently dedicated a 'Mobile women's wellness clinic' costing ₹1.25 crore to the Yenepoya Hospital in Mangaluru. TRF trustee-elect Bharat Pandya inaugurated the project in the presence of the city corporation Mayor Premananda Shetty; Vedvyas Kamath, MLA-Mangalore South; host club president Sudhir Kumar



TRF Trustee Elect Dr Bharat Pandya (2nd from R) at the inauguration of the mobile clinic.

Jalan; chancellor of the Yenepoya deemed university Abdullah Kunhi; vice-chancellor Dr Vijay Kumar and Mohammed Kunhi, chairman, Yenepoya group.

The club will organise cancer screening camps regularly in the semi-urban and rural areas around the city with the help of the village sarpanches, ASHA

and anganwadi staff, and women's self-help groups. The mobile clinic is equipped with a mammography machine for breast examination and screening, and a colposcope for cervical screening. Women from BPL families detected with cancer will be provided free treatment at the Yenepoya hospital, said the club president. ■

Bharuch Rotarians rescue kite-hit birds

V Muthukumaran

During the kite festival in the month of January (Makar Sankranti festival), RC Bharuch, RID 3060, joined hands with RC Bharuch Femina, Inner Wheel club, Rotaractors and Interactors to organise a special campaign titled *Dheel De — Be Kind* to save and rehabilitate injured birds which get tangled in the *manja* (glass coated) threads of kites flying high in breezy winds.

The Rotary project in support of Gujarat government's *Karuna Abhiyaan* campaign saw a team of 26 volunteers working along with Dr Abhishek Patel and Dr Parth Nanda for three days (Jan

14–16) to rehabilitate the injured birds hit by the crisscrossing *manja* threads in the sky. “We relied on the volunteers to bring the injured birds struck by the deadly threads. A veterinary training programme was held earlier, along with a workshop on basic handling and first aid to advanced techniques in bird surgery,” said Dr Patel who operated

on injured birds that were brought by volunteers from across the city.

There were also volunteers who helped in the outreach activities to spread awareness on the need to save birds from the soaring *manja* threads powering the kites to fly higher and higher. The outreach team managed to save most birds rescued except the ones that were badly injured. A total





Injured birds being treated by veterinary doctors.

RC Bharuch president Dr Vikram Premkumar (2nd from R, front row) along with Rotarians and members of the Bharuch Running Club.



of 47 rescue calls were attended by the team during the camp. The injured birds included two barn owls, two painted storks (nearly threatened), one common crane (winter migratory), one squirrel, one puppy and 40 pigeons.

“Each year the number of injured birds is increasing. It is of concern that none takes responsibility. But we rescue and rehabilitate birds as much as we can with the resources available,” said Aakash Patel from the Bird Rescuers Bharuch team.

Rescue camp

A three-day bird rescue camp (Jan 14–16) was held at RC Bharuch using scientific guidelines, protocols and with the help of expert avian rescuers, rehabilitators and veterinary surgeons. “Injured birds were treated, surgeries done and the winged creatures were

rehabilitated before they were released to fly back to their habitats,” said Dr Abhishek Patel.

Rotarians ran with the members of the Bharuch Running Club at the dawn of Jan 14 to let people know their bird rescue and rehabilitation campaign in advance, and also to spread awareness on their *Dheel De* programme. RC Bharuch president Dr Vikram Premkumar and secretary Rachana Poddar, along with club members and 25 runners from the Bharuch Running Club, ran at busy junctions to sensitise the public on the dangers to avian beings due to kite flying on Makar Sankranti days. “Seeing the injured birds spread their wings and fly again, after they were rehabilitated by the rescue team, is truly a sight to behold,” said Dr Premkumar. ■

Rotary gives e-bikes for Bengaluru PHC workers

Kiran Zehra

Project *E-Sanjeevani*, an initiative of RC Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas, RID 3190, has improved the efficiency of nearly 50 primary healthcare workers, serving rural communities and slum areas in and around Bengaluru. In this pilot project, e-bikes were given to two ASHA workers from the Sanjay Nagar Urban Public Health Centre (UPHC) by the club which formed the basis for a CSR partnership with iValue Info Solutions, a city-based software company. Under this CSR

grant of the company, 12 e-bikes were donated “and we hope that this project can influence other clubs and Rotarians to donate at least one bike to a PHC near them,” says Shankar Subramaniam, the club president.

Pointing out that the *E-Sanjeevani* project aligns with Rotary’s two important focus areas of disease prevention and preserving the environment, he adds that “the majority of the Indian population from low-income communities depend on PHCs for their day-to-day health needs.

However, public health awareness and easy access to health centres are some of the key challenges in delivering healthcare efficiently. With the help of an e-bike, these challenges can be addressed to some extent.”

The project was first piloted by the club at the Sanjay Nagar UPHC in September 2021 and following its success, it is now being scaled up to eight other PHCs in the east zone. So far 14 e-bikes costing ₹65,000 each have been handed over to the PHCs. DG Fazal Mahmood who was present



DG Fazal Mahmood (centre) and his wife Sabiha (to his left) at an event to distribute the e-bikes to PHC staff. Club president Shankar Subramaniam (2nd from R, back row), his wife Usha (3rd from R), district secretary Keshav Gowda (R) and AG Reshmi Tanksali are also present.

at the launch congratulated the club and acknowledged its efforts in working with the government.

One ASHA worker is assigned for a population of around 2,500, by a PHC, and is responsible for carrying out outreach immunisation, special health check-up sessions and provide related information. They also conduct surveys and collect data to improve the healthcare system. Poornima, an ASHA worker had to walk around 9km to reach her target area. “By the time I reach after such a long walk, I would always be exhausted and could

hardly focus on the job because I kept thinking about the walk back. But with the new e-bike, I can cover the distance in no time and my interaction with the target community has improved.”

E-Sanjeevani is “helping our primary healthcare approach in an effective way to build a solid foundation for a more responsive and resilient health system throughout the city,” says Dr Veda Rajashekhar, the medical officer of the UPHC. The ASHA workers ensure that healthcare is brought closer to those who cannot travel to medical facilities. Not only do people get

their health checked, but the services are easily accessible and the rural and slum population is enlightened about health issues, she adds.

D Usha Rani, who takes care of the fever clinic at the Sanjay Nagar UPHC says, “This is not the first time this Rotary club has helped us. They built a ramp for bringing in the wheelchairs easily and have also helped with repairs and renovation, and bedsheets. They have empowered us to strategically build a stronger healthcare system to ensure that rural and underprivileged communities are not left behind.” ■

Rotary facilitates multi-specialty hospital in Kolkata

Team Rotary News



RI President Shekhar Mehta at the inauguration of the hospital. Also present (from L): DGND Dr Krishnendu Gupta, PDGs Brojo Gopal Kundu, Ajay Agarwal, Sudip Mukherjee, Techno India group founder Satyam Roy Chowdhury, PDG Angsuman Bandyopadhyay, DGE Ajoy Kumar Law, PDG Rajani Mukerji, DG Prabir Chatterjee, PDGs Anirudha Roy Chowdhury and Rajendra Khandelwal.

RI President Shekhar Mehta recently laid the foundation for a 650-bed multi-specialty hospital in Kolkata. The hospital will be a built by the Techno India group on the land owned by the Eastern India Rotary Welfare Trust. Named the Rotary Techno Global Hospital, the proposed 12-storey building will be completed in three years at

an estimated investment of ₹300 crore. The group will also manage the Rotary Narayana Eye Hospital that had been operating on a part of the three-acre plot.

Mehta, relating its history said, “Initially we had tied up with Dr Devi Shetty who brought in Sankara Nethralaya; Rotary Narayana Sankara Nethralaya was formed in 2003 through a tripartite arrangement involving the Asia Heart Foundation,

Rotary International Medical Institute and Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai.” After Sankara parted in 2007 the hospital was functioning as Rotary Narayana Eye Hospital. “Now Techno India has taken over and will build a multi-specialty hospital,” he added.

The new hospital will have nursing and paramedical training facilities as well, said Techno India group founder Satyam Roy Chowdhury. ■

TAKING ACTION FOR CHANGE



IMPACT

We want to put our resources behind programmes that will have the greatest impact and that align with our areas of focus.

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We are at a defining moment in Rotary's history. We're implementing our Action Plan, a strategic roadmap that will help us better connect with each other, grow as an organisation, and more effectively share our stories of how we are making a difference in communities.

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ENGAGE

We're tearing down the walls between "us" and "them" and focusing on participants.

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1. Subscription is for the Rotary year (July to June).
2. It is mandatory for every Rotarian to subscribe to a Rotary magazine.
3. The annual subscription for print version is ₹480 and e-version is ₹420 per member.
4. Subscription for the full year must be sent in July, in the prescribed form.
5. Those joining after July can pay for the remaining Rotary year at ₹40 an issue for print version and ₹35 for e-version.
6. Subscription account of the club with *Rotary News* is a running account and does not cease at the end of June every year.
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8. Language preference (**English, Hindi or Tamil**) should be stated alongside member's name.
9. Update the correct mailing address and contact details of your members **directly** to *Rotary News* every year to receive the magazine regularly. RI does not share member details with us.
10. Members to ensure their names are included in the subscribers' list their club sends us. If you've paid, but your name is not sent to us by your club, you will not get a copy of the magazine.
11. Clubs must **immediately** update us about any modification in membership status to enable us to deliver the magazine to the new members.
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The little, big things that matter

Preeti Mehra

From upholstery to bedsheets and table mats, opt for materials that are green and good for the home and family.

Home is where we spend most of our leisure time and if this sacred place is not healthy, free from all pollution and is eco-friendly, we would lose half the battle in trying to contribute to a green planet.

So to ensure that we are surrounded by a healthy environment we need to choose the most sustainable material for everything that makes up our home. The choice of materials for upholstery, curtains, bedsheets, counterpanes, runners, table mats etc matters a great deal. Apart from defining your carbon footprint it also defines the air that you breathe as some of these materials can give out toxic chemicals — ‘slow-release poison’ as it is often called.

So, let’s start with upholstery. My research into the materials commonly chosen by Indians threw up a wide spectrum — real leather, artificial leather, a mixture of cotton and synthetic, natural organic cotton, a mix of jute and cotton, hemp fabric, khadi, and fabric made of bamboo.

I read up on the environment-friendly advantages and disadvantages of these choices and distilled some information that you may like to keep in mind when you next upholster your home.

Let’s start with the leather options. Though natural leather is flexible, good for cold climates and is biodegradable, its downside is in the processing. Its tanning requires a lot of water and chemicals, and the methane gas produced by the cattle and their manure is a greenhouse gas that contributes to global warming. Biological waste and animal cruelty are also negatives. In fact, today we have something called vegan leather. This is often made of polyurethane and is not biodegradable. There are also synthetic leather alternatives derived from cork, pineapple leaves, apple peels and recycled plastic that would make good choices. However, these are not easy to come by and are said to not last long enough.

Consumers often go in for the mixed choices. A mixture of synthetic and cotton, or jute and cotton, are good options as these are more durable, the fabric





holds out well, without needing too much fussing. Often it is polyester that is mixed with cotton. Contrary to belief, polyester is recyclable, and the byproducts used in its manufacturing are not very harmful. But there is a downside as well. It is a petroleum-based product and with every wash it also contributes to micro plastic pollution.

Organic cotton, hemp fabric and bamboo fabric are of course the best options. When fabric is made from organic cotton it means there has been no use of pesticides or herbicides. It is nice and soft and has hypoallergic qualities. Apart from upholstery, it is ideal for bedsheets, counterpanes, mats, quilt covers — anything you are in close proximity with every day. Many companies also have their organic cotton guaranteed and accredited from credible organisations.

Bamboo fibre is another eco-friendly and aesthetic substitute. In fact, a lot of wallpaper is made from it as it is hypoallergenic, absorbs moisture and is biodegradable. In homes it is often also chosen for towels and baby clothes. As it is a fast-growing plant and easily replaceable, it is a no-guilt choice.

Hemp fabric, derived from what is known as the marijuana plant, has similar qualities as bamboo and enriches the soil it grows in. The material is said to be stronger, more insulating and absorbent than cotton and a great choice as a fabric. However, though it grows abundantly in India and is legal to grow for industrial use such as producing fabric, it is not cultivated and converted into fabric to the extent it could be. But if it is on offer, go for it if you can afford it. The problem with organic cotton, hemp and bamboo derived material is that they can be expensive. But they are better for your home's air quality.

Our very own khadi, a heritage of which we should be very proud, too is a great choice. Not only is it simple, elegant and hardy, it has a low

carbon footprint as no machines or energy is used in its spinning. According to reports, a metre of khadi fabric requires three litres of water, while the same amount of fabric produced in a mill consumes 55 litres of water. Though it may be more expensive on the pocket, it is light on the conscience, generates rural incomes and helps the country's economy.

When it comes to table mats, coasters, trolley covers, tablecloth where the material required is limited and cleaning has to be done regularly, it is best to go in for the very best options. Table mats of jute, wood, khadi or cotton fabric are more in line with the environment, they can be easily cleaned, affordable, easily replaceable and most important, are biodegradable and recyclable as they are made of natural fibres. Those made of polyester, vinyl or silicone may be convenient, but would clutter the landfill for a long time to come after they are discarded.

In fact, I will have to come to an old world obvious. If you remember, most people in the country once upon a time would make all these from scraps of unused cloth or left over from other stitching. Mothers, grandparents and children would embroider flowers, birds, animals onto them, transforming them into the most beautiful mats or centrepieces. I remember my cousin hand painting each table mat with a different motif using fabric paint and the same colours. When upholstering furniture, the scraps of leftover fabric could be turned into mats or a runner for the dining table.

There are ideas galore to be explored — the only thing that needs to be ensured is that they are sustainable and hurt the earth the least.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Food coupons to fight hunger in Jamshedpur

V Muthukumaran

Providing food to the homeless, destitute and indigent families including migrant workers, hit hard by the Covid pandemic, through Project *Rotary Rasoi* has lifted the public image of RC Jamshedpur West, RID 3250, and its president Rajesh Kumar is thinking of expanding the number of push carts (*thelas*) so that “we can serve food to the needy people across the city through Rotary coupons,” he says.

In fact, on Feb 23 to mark the Rotary Day, DG Pratim Banerjee and spouse Suchinda launched the pilot project at two places — Chappan Bhog, Bistupur, and MTMH Cancer Hospital’s canteen. “Even before we flagged off five push carts, we sold out all the 500 coupons (₹30 each) to our

members, their relatives and associates. Till now, 200 beneficiaries had exchanged the free coupons given to them by Rotarians, their friends at the nearby *thelas* to have food. Given the overwhelming response to *Rotary Rasoi*, we have added five more carts taking its number to 10 to serve more people,” explains Kumar.

A senior Rotarian, Dr Amit Mukherjee, circulated a WhatsApp video about a similar food distribution being carried out in a state where poor families were served from a mobile eatery. “Our members were excited seeing this video and at the virtual brainstorming sessions in January, we decided to take it up as a pilot project. To begin with, we tied up with five *thela* vendors, who will encash the

food coupons they had collected from the beneficiaries on every Monday at our club,” he says.

Demand for more carts

A team of 6–8 Rotarians was involved in scouting for the food carts at the right places where there are good numbers of underprivileged families so “that our coupons are readily exchanged for food being sold by mobile vendors.” However, with complaints from Rotarians who had bought the coupons that they could not find the food carts and “beneficiaries are finding it tough to get it exchanged for food due to very limited number of *thelas*, I have added five more Rotary carts. But even the present 10 carts are not sufficient as there are a large number of homeless, roadside families and migrant workers in Jamshedpur.”

Now the club has printed 500 more coupons which are being sold to Rotarians. For the beneficiaries to identify the *Rotary thelas*, the club has put up prominent banners on them matching with the instructions on the coupon. Also, each food cart was chosen for its unique menu. “While one vendor provides South Indian menu including dosa, idli, upma and vada; another caterer delivers roti, subzi and



DG Pratim Banerjee (centre) and club president Rajesh Kumar (4th from R, front row) at the launch of Project *Rotary Rasoi*.

parathas. Also, the canteen at the MTMH Cancer Hospital gives snacks, bread, omelette, chips, tea and other beverages for coupons,” says Kumar. The club is ready to print another lot of 500 coupons, as it will be adding five more *Rasoi* carts to expand its reach across the steel city.

Satyajeet Dey, a non-Rotarian and an enthusiastic promoter of *Rotary Rasoi*, has bought coupons from the club to distribute to labourers and daily wagers. “He sends us regular feedback and pictures of beneficiaries having food at the *thelas*,” he says. A 15-member team of the club oversees the project. Around 50 out of its 93 members have bought the coupons, and “others are waiting to buy it once we print more.”



Satyajeet Dey, a non-Rotarian, gives a food coupon to an elderly at a Rotary Rasoi food cart.

Rajesh Kumar is keen to sustain the momentum of this pilot food project till June, “after which we will declare it as our permanent, long-term initiative as it caters to hungry, marginalised families across Jamshedpur. At present we are sustaining the tempo of our project.”

Hearty thanks

Babita Kumari (45) was given additional fruits by a seller after seeing her getting food at a Rotary *thela*. “We are happy at the quality and quantity of food being served at the carts. My hearty thanks to Rotary,” she says. Another beneficiary, Ram Gupta (60), is “much satisfied with the quantity of parathas with subzi I get from the food

vendor.” Despite being an industrial city, Jamshedpur with a population of around 15 lakh has to contend with rising number of migrant families and casual labourers. “We aim to eliminate hunger by expanding our food coupon system in the coming months,” smiles Kumar. ■

From RI South Asia Office desk

Major Donor recognition

The Rotary Foundation recognises individuals or couples whose combined giving has reached \$10,000, regardless of the gift designation. This recognition level is for personal contributions and not through recognition points. Major Donors may opt to receive a crystal recognition piece and pin(s) commemorating the gift at each new recognition level - Level 1: \$10,000 to \$24,999; Level 2: \$25,000 to \$49,999; Level 3: \$50,000 to \$99,999; and Level 4: \$100,000 to \$249,999.

Spouse contribution may be linked for Major Donor recognition. Please send request to Donor Services team (Ashwini.Sharma@rotary.org) for linking your account to spouse account.

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engraving instructions from donor for processing of Major Donor recognition material.

Crystal engraving instruction

Donors may include their spouse’s name too on Major Donor crystal. Below are common examples of writing one’s Major Donor recognition name: Example 1: John and Jane Smith; Example 2: Jane and John R. Smith; Example 3: John Smith and Jane Green

TRF recognition for Rotary clubs: 100% Rotary’s Promise Club

A designation provided to clubs in which every dues-paying member supports TRF’s Endowment with a minimum commitment of \$1,000 or more in an estate plan or via an outright gift of \$1,000 or more. A certificate honouring the achievement will be provided to the club leader.

Mandatory requirements/guidelines for RF(I) contribution

- Effective April 1, 2020, PAN is mandatory for all contributions made online/offline towards RF(I), irrespective of value or the donor’s intention to claim tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act 1961.
- Contribution credit and related 80G receipt can only be generated in the name of the remitter of funds and is mailed to the donor on his email ID registered with RI.
- For contribution made from self-owned/family-run company/trust account, donors are requested to share the corporate/trust letter made on the corporate/trust letterhead mentioning his/her relationship with the entity and stating that the contribution be treated as his/her personal contribution. ■

Strengthen your legs

Bharat and Shalan Savur

Recently, a friend celebrated her 45th birthday. What troubled her greatly was that she couldn't get on to the 'tall stool' like earlier. She just couldn't climb on to it and then stand up in one smooth movement like she used to. Her legs didn't seem to have the strength anymore. She was pretty disturbed about it. 'It's not a good feeling to be 60 at 45!' she said. 'There are exercises to strengthen your calves which are the 'explosive' muscles that help you get on to the tall stool,' I told her. Meanwhile, to wipe the ceiling fan's blades clean, I suggested she get herself a step ladder. A tip here: If you have bony knees, pad them with a thick cloth because when on the ladder, you need to rest against the top rungs while cleaning the fan.

The call of our calves

It's wise to see certain 'inabilities' that creep up on us as 'wake-up calls'. Time to get fit. And it greatly helps not to see exercise as 'tedious' but go along gamely with Samuel Johnson's 'Exercise is labour without weariness'. And as you get deeper into it, it doesn't even feel like labour, but a lovely preferred activity. Exercise is nourishment too, not just for the body, but also for our confidence, that we've got what it takes. Like we engage gears while driving our car, we engage major muscle groups when we exercise our leg muscles, and drive our body smoothly and powerfully.

We don't realise it but we use our lower body strength to power some upper body movements — like throwing some object forcefully across a good distance or reaching overhead. In addition, strong, exercised legs

support healthy movement patterns in our daily life — they make walking child's play, they make ascending and descending stairs effortless. They do all these wonderful things by simply increasing blood flow to the muscles and nourishing them; they also loosen tight tendons and ligaments which can otherwise get strained and even injured when you play a sport, run up the stairs or hike up a hill.

The beautiful thing is: calf-strengthening exercises are easy to do

and you can do them at home or in your cabin at work, in your gym, in a park at a park bench, while visiting a close friend who genuinely doesn't mind your weird ways! The exercises I recommend are:

Calf-raise 1. Stand facing the wall with feet together, arms stretched out, hands resting on the wall. Lift up on to the balls of the feet and lower. Lift and lower 5 times.

Calf-raise 2. Stand in the same starting position. Lift up on to the balls of the



feet, then shift your weight from left to right foot, then right to left, 5 times.

Calf-raise 3. Stand in the same starting position. Lift up on to the balls of the feet, and raise your right foot off the ground so that the left foot bears your weight. Do it alternately 5 times. First, raise right foot off the ground, return. Then raise left foot off the ground, return.

Calf-raise 4. Place a thick cushion on the floor. Stand on it with your heels hanging out off the cushion. Drop your heels lower to the floor and then rise again. Drop and rise 5 times.

The points to bear in mind while doing these exercises are:

Do them quickly. There's no holding here because we are restoring and improving the 'explosive' moving-upward ability of the calves. These exercises help us stand up on high stools.

Calf-raise 2 and 3 are designed to help us walk, climb stairs, run, where we are constantly shifting our bodyweight from one leg to the other, from one foot to the other.

Calf-raise 4 makes walking, running, hiking uphill much easier where you have to sometimes put one foot up and leverage your entire body on it as you swing the other foot up. You don't teeter or find yourself suddenly frozen, unable to take another step because one leg refuses to rise. Aside: Friend K faced this problem when she had to climb a flight of stairs to get to an important meeting. 'I've never been so embarrassed in my life,' she said. It's not just the embarrassment, it's the shock you get at being suddenly immobile. Nobody deserves to go through such an experience.

Suggestion: If you are already into a workout routine, include two of these four exercises, starting today, for a week. Then include the other two, the next week. In four weeks, when you find your legs have strengthened, you can wear a weighted vest and do these four

calf-raises. A weighted vest is a vest with tiny weights spread evenly all through it with little weighted pockets. If you don't have one or don't wish to go in for a weighted vest, you could hold dumbbells or filled water bottles in your hands or wear wrist weights. More weight on the upper body means the lower body muscles have to strengthen and adapt to higher weight in the upper body. Say, you're hiking with a back-pack on. Or going up the stairs with bags of groceries. This adaptive skill gives the body a beautiful balance when you're on the move. The bonus: it burns more calories if you wish to lose weight.

Hormones that help

Strong legs are a boon against chronic conditions such as arthritis, heart disease, diabetes. Leg workouts stimulate substantial amount of hormones such as cortisol, testosterone and HGH (Human Growth Hormones). Cortisol helps the body respond to stress and increase fat metabolism. Testosterone helps repair damaged muscle proteins and build skeletal muscle. HGH promotes muscle growth, boosts immunity and fat metabolism.

It's great to stand on two powerful pillars. I have a dear relative who has been diagnosed with Parkinson's disease. She is unable to stand too long as she feels she is losing her balance. My heart goes out to her. I always tell her, 'Don't ever lose your confidence'. Thankfully, she continues to exercise daily including walking, stationary cycling and yoga. Having strong legs not only aligns and balances the body and improves physical mobility and stability, it adds to our confidence and quality of living.

Pulses power muscles

Muscles need protein to strengthen them. Pulses are a rich source of protein, vitamins and minerals. However, we must not ignore the fact that they also contain

non-nourishing stuff that can cause gas, bloating and indigestion. Soaking them overnight and then letting them sprout the next one or two days largely negates the action of the non-nourishing stuff and, simultaneously, enhances the effects of their protein and micronutrient content.

Another great idea is to mix pulses with grains. The combination, say nutritionists, prevents premature greying, helps improve bone density, enhances the immunity of the body and accelerates growth of antibodies.

I largely stick to eating baked beans in tomato sauce and pulses such as chick peas, moong, rajma, etc cooked in curries because somehow it is satisfying to get a katori-full of protein into you. But, there are other ways too — pulse-packed papads, pickles, idlis, dhoklas, dosas, laddus, chillas...

Some closing tips for you, dear readers:

***Build confidence:** Stride, don't walk.

***Power your posture:** Square your shoulders, raise your upper back while walking. Carry the head over the spine, not jutting out in front.

***Stay hydrated:** Drink sufficient water.

***Limber up:** Stretch

***Be a dynamo:** Get energy from the sun.

***Feel connected:** To nature overhead, underfoot and all around you.

Each day, feel a little better, more balanced, stronger, fitter, healthier and more stable. Enjoy your body. Let it sway to the music of your strengthening muscles.

Last word: Travel light. Keep your cellphone at home while out on a walk.

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



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As on March 1, 2022

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	134	6,284	8.31	50	52	238
2982	76	3,462	7.16	47	98	73
3000	131	5,397	9.32	96	282	214
3011	117	4,647	26.73	74	118	36
3012	149	4,061	24.99	65	79	61
3020	79	4,949	7.52	33	166	350
3030	96	5,253	15.53	118	255	361
3040	105	2,625	13.87	55	81	196
3053	73	2,989	18.53	35	50	126
3054	171	7,224	20.72	105	182	563
3060	104	5,251	15.41	64	73	149
3070	120	3,353	15.81	47	39	59
3080	102	4,552	14.87	137	160	116
3090	92	2,368	5.95	43	82	123
3100	101	2,308	11.57	13	26	146
3110	139	3,809	12.21	14	18	106
3120	89	3,694	16.78	63	34	55
3131	140	5,584	23.87	115	237	141
3132	87	3,589	10.84	32	125	166
3141	113	6,300	27.14	141	187	102
3142	99	3,744	21.26	81	147	82
3150	110	4,447	13.51	102	143	118
3160	78	2,751	9.74	29	20	82
3170	139	6,490	15.59	90	245	170
3181	86	3,465	8.80	35	196	115
3182	86	3,525	9.59	43	128	104
3190	161	6,844	19.18	175	210	71
3201	155	6,113	9.96	117	99	77
3203	93	4,831	8.13	73	233	37
3204	61	2,120	7.36	21	27	13
3211	151	5,100	8.61	7	24	133
3212	130	4,940	11.82	76	204	153
3231	93	3,568	8.16	29	82	419
3232	165	8,075	18.40	121	216	100
3240	103	3,591	16.15	62	407	218
3250	104	3,915	20.54	63	73	185
3261	91	3,308	18.95	15	24	44
3262	124	4,152	14.38	73	83	128
3291	163	4,256	23.87	133	97	659
India Total	4,410	172,934		2,692	5,002	6,289
3220	72	2,260	16.02	88	135	75
3271	113	2,268	17.86	97	185	25
3272	157	1,853	17.59	70	22	47
3281	304	7,492	17.39	274	151	209
3282	181	3,733	11.04	201	48	47
3292	153	6,004	17.34	173	132	128
S Asia Total	5,390	196,544		3,595	5,675	6,820

Source: RI South Asia Office

District Wise TRF Contributions as on February 2022

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contributions	EREY Donors (in numbers)	EREY %
India							
2981	103,473	1,247	15,000	194,046	313,766	170	3.2
2982	33,610	5,633	1,500	3,449	44,191	152	4.7
3000	5,481	1,688	0	41,276	48,445	15	0.3
3011	13,331	9,744	0	153,680	176,754	27	0.6
3012	21,580	3,837	50,041	446,735	522,193	39	1.1
3020	70,866	10,828	30,596	4,620	116,909	204	4.8
3030	52,176	821	63,185	15,704	131,886	94	2.0
3040	34,258	270	0	22,592	57,120	8	0.3
3053	4,250	1,811	27	100,000	106,088	7	0.3
3054	5,307	2,771	0	205,748	213,826	19	0.3
3060	68,949	4,621	0	149,218	222,787	1039	21.6
3070	26,455	27	0	27,601	54,083	122	3.9
3080	34,192	6,061	5,889	5,982	52,123	167	5.3
3090	27,682	233	29,000	0	56,916	136	6.5
3100	21,838	100	0	2,537	24,475	73	3.3
3110	24,191	355	1,014	500	26,059	95	2.7
3120	61,292	1,000	0	0	62,292	149	4.4
3131	354,714	33,492	27,000	506,758	921,964	1757	37.5
3132	27,033	2,488	5,000	12,029	46,550	49	1.5
3141	306,591	5,100	89,865	812,022	1,213,578	683	11.6
3142	290,641	4,015	9,201	70,379	374,236	700	20.7
3150	69,445	10,477	116,000	88,588	284,509	610	15.5
3160	94,934	4,473	17,264	0	116,671	46	1.9
3170	68,213	14,129	1,714	46,490	130,546	437	7.5
3181	35,846	4,703	203	0	40,752	207	6.3
3182	38,598	8,529	0	15,274	62,401	153	4.9
3190	202,712	24,763	30,411	38,518	296,404	1,126	18.3
3201	88,172	62,484	0	217,096	367,753	398	7.0
3203	40,924	16,438	7,086	231,845	296,292	167	4.1
3204	21,717	6,223	0	1,036	28,976	32	1.7
3211	29,427	657	0	17,958	48,042	54	1.2
3212	37,208	2,353	1,036	4,561	45,158	61	1.2
3231	17,334	9,884	0	2,851	30,070	151	4.4
3232	63,188	70,641	111,009	634,654	879,493	125	1.7
3240	91,801	12,308	0	77,864	181,973	343	10.5
3250	19,154	3,509	1,036	19,432	43,131	298	8.2
3261	6,830	1,703	300	178,629	187,462	18	0.6
3262	6,973	1,954	0	0	8,927	23	0.6
3291	90,211	2,807	21,171	23,161	137,349	254	6.8
India Total	2,610,599	354,177	634,544	4,372,832	7,972,152	10,208	6.5
3220 Sri Lanka	52,334	6,973	2,010	1,000	62,316	127	5.6
3271 Pakistan	6,240	3,431	0	17,755	27,425	9	0.5
3272 Pakistan	16,857	11,158	0	2,117	30,132	14	0.8
3281 Bangladesh	37,761	13,837	26,118	232,126	309,843	111	1.4
3282 Bangladesh	31,675	11,238	1,000	35,940	79,853	86	2.3
3292 Nepal	106,389	11,248	0	104,711	222,348	654	11.2
South Asia Total	2,861,854	412,062	663,672	4,766,481	8,704,069	11,209	6.2

Annual Fund (AF) includes SHARE, Areas of Focus, World Fund and Disaster Response.

Source: RI South Asia Office



Wordsworld

Fifty Years of Bangladesh



Sandhya Rao

At a time when Russian President Vladimir Putin is trying to overwhelm a neighbour with brute force, here are some perspectives on the liberation of India's neighbour.

December 16 of last year was a milestone in the history of Bangladesh. This was the day, 50 years ago, that the people's rallying cry of 'Joy Bangla' metamorphosed into the reality of an independent nation. For a variety of reasons, it seemed a good time to rediscover the history of that country through the written word. With this in mind I asked for suggestions and book clubbers responded enthusiastically. Among the recommended titles were *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent*:

The Bangladesh War and Its Unquiet Legacy by Salil Tripathi and a fictional trilogy by Tahmima Anam: *A Golden Age*, *The Good Muslim* and *The Bones of Grace*. Someone also pointed me to discussions on YouTube, one featuring Mahfuz Anam, Editor of the Bangladeshi newspaper *The Daily Star* — he, incidentally, is Tahmima Anam's father — and another featuring... but we're getting ahead of ourselves.

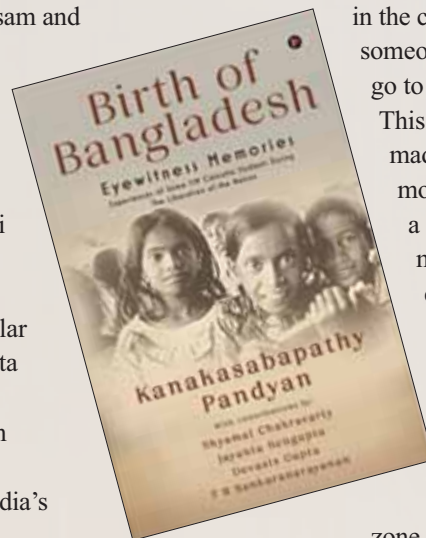
While Mahfuz Anam provided useful insight into India's proactive role then, which contrasts starkly with the insipid relations prevailing today, it was the other discussion that piqued my interest. Who were Kanakasabapathy Pandyan (KP) and Shyamal Chakravarty (SC) featured, along with a couple of others, prominently and who spoke convincingly about the events of 1971? Thereby, as the cliché goes, hangs a tale.

Back in 1971, KP and SC were students of the Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta, having only just joined the prestigious institution. Like everyone else, especially in West Bengal, Assam and Delhi, they too had been following the action in East Pakistan. After all, many Bengali revolutionaries from across the border were regular visitors to Calcutta (Kolkata). When Pakistan's Lt Gen AAK Niazi surrendered to India's Lt Gen JS Arora and Bangladesh's Air Commodore AK Khandker, there was much cheering in the IIM-C common room. Besides, several IIM-C students

were already working at various camps catering to the urgent needs of refugees who had been pouring into India from across the border for months. So, what qualified KP and SC to be on the panel?

It turned out that KP had just published with Notion Press a book called *Birth of Bangladesh: Eyewitness Memories, Experiences of Some IIM Calcutta Students During the Liberation of the Nation*. While he wrote most of the book, there were contributions by SC, Jayanta Sengupta, Devasis Gupta and TR Sankaranarayanan. It was the story of how, one day after Bangladesh was born, KP, SC, and two others, S Clement and Ganesh Aiyar, had set out to discover for themselves how it felt to be in a newly liberated nation! At ₹210, the book is a collector's item. (Clement and Ganesh don't feature among the contributors because, unfortunately, they had passed on by the time the book was published. However, they were integral to the daring exploits.)

KP writes in the book that after the cheering had died down in the common room, '... someone says, "We should go to Bangladesh now." This is just a comment made in the heat of the moment. But it strikes a chord and triggers my question "Who is coming?" There is really no response to the question... Someone playing a game of chess says, "Are you mad, that's a war zone, and not a safe place to go to". Someone else says, "Come on, Indian Army has taken over the country and the news said the entire Pakistani Army has surrendered". ...



I turn around and ask Clement who is sitting there with a newspaper in his hands, “How about it?” Clement takes his time answering. He is looking thoughtful. Suddenly he says, “Let’s do it”. It is so simple...’

But it’s not that simple: they need a Bengali speaker to go along. SC is roped in for this reason; Ganesh joins them, claiming he too speaks Bengali! A quick confabulation and they decide they need to move fast, before visas become necessary. They have no specific plans. They only know they want to get to Dhaka and that they will figure out details along the way. They each carry one change of clothes and fifty rupees in the pocket. They step out of the gates: Now, where to cross the border?!

To discover what the foursome discovered on their spontaneous adventure, read their account. It’s a riveting story.

All three titles in Tahmima Anam’s trilogy have drawn high praise. Khademul Islam of *The Daily Star* calls *A Golden Age* ‘the definitive 1971 novel’. *The Good Muslim* was a *New Yorker* best book of the year. About *The Bones of Grace*, Kamila Shamsie (author of the brilliant *A God in Every Stone*) says, ‘A novel of heart, brain and muscle — the compelling pulls of history and love are evoked here with a rare honesty and great skill.’ Lucid, moving, unhurried ... these aspects are woven subtly into the delicately written narratives, told primarily through the experiences of three generations of a family. Sensitive

and stark, they take on oppression, revolution, war, displacement, euphoria, disappointment, hope, both individual and collective, as the reader journeys through

the complex world of being Bangladeshi.

Award-winning journalist Salil Tripathi’s nonfiction title (published 2014) was just the book I had been looking for, promising as it did to be a fair, rounded, objective picture of the social and political history of

Bangladesh. The cover photograph by Raghu Rai is haunting, recalling the horror of that time for those of us who were old enough to remember. The title, equally haunting, refers to Lt Col Farooq Rahman who, on August 15, 1975, ‘led the Bengal Lancers, the army’s tank unit under his command, to disarm the *Rokkhi Bahini*, a paramilitary force

loyal to Sheikh Mujib’ and then led a team of officers and soldiers on a killing spree to finish off Sheikh Mujib and his family. Only two daughters, one of them the current prime minister Sheikh Hasina, escaped because they were abroad at the time. Tripathi, who interviewed Farooq after he had returned to Bangladesh after years of exile in Libya, writes, ‘Farooq Rahman thought he was a

patriot. He believed he had saved the nation. The governments that followed Mujib reinforced this self-belief and perception rewarding him and the other assassins with respectability by giving them political space, and to some, plum diplomatic assignments.’

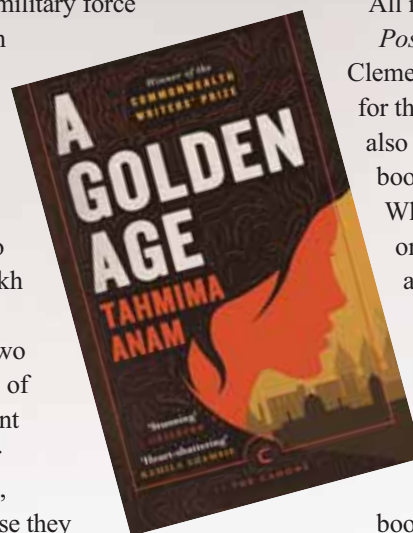
Why the reference to ‘unquiet legacy’ in the title? Tripathi examines this in great detail in the context of the unique socio-cultural milieu of a region where people first identify themselves as Bengali. Its political development has been uneven since liberation, with ‘several coups, and the form of government (switching) from parliamentary to presidential to parliamentary again. ... there have been times when it has been ruled by generals, or by a caretaker government comprising unelected officials.’ Gary J Bass, author of *The Blood Telegram: India’s Secret War in East Pakistan* (it’s on my battered Kindle) says Tripathi’s ‘powerful book is important reading for anyone trying to understand modern South Asia.’

All in all, a rich haul!

Postscript: In Dhaka, Clement buys local newspapers for their historical value. He also picks up a number of books, including *Das Kapital*. When they reach Gede, on the Indian side, they are stopped by two men claiming to be the police. They find Clement’s stash and suspect the four of being Naxalites. They confiscate the newspapers and books. And that is that.

Clement is heartbroken.

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist



RC Kumbakonam Sakthi — RID 2981



Sewing machines were donated to less privileged women by DG S Balaji. This will help them earn a sustainable income to take care of their families.

RC Delhi South Central — RID 3011



DG Anup Mittal inaugurated a physiotherapy centre costing ₹8.5 lakh set up by the club in Jaipur through CSR contributions.

RI District 2982



An MoU was signed with the District Institute of Education and Training, Salem, to upgrade the skills of 5,000 government school teachers in two years.

RC Pilkhuwa City — RID 3012



The club members regularly sponsor food for the 50 physically-challenged, sick and elderly residents of the Apna Ghar Ashram. Sweets are distributed to them on special occasions.

RC Pudukkottai City — RID 3000



Club president G Marimuthu donated a Smart TV to a municipality middle school. The district's chief educational officer Sami Sathyamurthy was present.

RC Kakinada Golden Jubilee — RID 3020



A public toilet was constructed near a 10-acre park at a cost of ₹7 lakh. PDG Dr SVS Rao and corporation commissioner Swapnil Dinakar Pundkar inaugurated the toilet block.

RC Nasik — RID 3030



Over 250 adult literacy kits were distributed to students across corporation schools. They have assured the club that each of them will make at least one adult illiterate into a neo-literate.

RC Patran — RID 3090



DG Parveen Jindal inaugurated the Rotary Bhawan at Patran in the presence of DGN Ghansham Kansal and AG Shiv Jindal. Club president Parshotam Singla and secretary Bhushan Singla mobilised the resources.

RC Surat Round Town — RID 3060



An eight-day art festival was inaugurated by DG Santosh Pradhan in the presence of DGND Tushar Shah to mark the silver jubilee year of the art gallery owned by the club.

RC Pallia Kalan — RID 3120



The club solemnised the marriage of Subhasini hailing from a poor family. New clothes and household essentials were gifted. A cash assistance of ₹8,000 was also given.

RC Phagwara Midtown — RID 3070



Food and refreshments were served at the langar during the farmers' agitation. Club president Manoj Kumar and project director Naridar Saini were present.

RC Pune Royal — RID 3131



Rtn Dr Yogesh Khandalkar conducted a bone density camp in which over 100 people were screened. Project director Rajendra Saraf and president-elect Sanjay Salvi took part.

RC Mumbai Elegant — RID 3141



DG Rajendra Agarwal gifted 100 bicycles to school girls in rural Palghar which will lessen their commuting time to school. Club president Nilima Jhunjhunwala was also present.

RC Nellore — RID 3160

Sarees were distributed to flood-hit families at four different colonies at Indukurupeta Mandal in Nellore district. The beneficiaries thanked Rotarians for the timely gesture.



RC Hiranandani Estate — RID 3142



The club donated 3.5 tonnes of rice and dal to the Anudanit Ashram Shala, Mann village, at Palghar. This will help provide food to 1,000 students.

RC Hubli East — RID 3170

Blankets and clothes were distributed to 100 street dwellers to protect them from cold nights.



RC Nizamabad — RID 3150



Notebooks were distributed to students at the Zilla Parishad High School, Aloor. PP C Hariprasad was the chief guest.

RC Mangalore Central — RID 3181

At the finals of the 16th edition of Rotary Quiz conducted through an app, RC Mysore Vijayanagar won the 1st prize. PDG Joseph Mathew gave the prizes.



RC Shimoga Central — RID 3182



An UV water filter was donated to a government school at a remote village. PDG GN Prakash spoke on the importance of education and asked the village elders to send their children to school.

RC Madras South West — RID 3232



Rtn Dr Manju Kulkarni screened 300 students of MB Jain School at an eye camp. More than 25 per cent were found to have vision problems, thus in need of spectacles.

RC Bangalore Junction — RID 3190



DG Fazal Mahmood inaugurated a human milk bank set up in partnership with the Gunsheela Maternity Hospitals. The facility will offer donor milk free to babies at the government NICUs.

RC Bhubaneswar Meadows — RID 3262



Blankets were distributed to 200 tribal families at a remote village in Kandhamal district to protect them against wintry nights. The beneficiaries thanked the club.

RC Tirunelveli West — RID 3212



The club members provided nutrition packs to TB patients at the Civil Hospital, Panchkula in Haryana, with the support of RC Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080.

RC Kolkata Benevolence — RID 3291



School bags, stationery and food packets were given to 120 children at the Sarada Prathamik Vidyalaya, Baghbazar.

Compiled by V Muthukumar

Need tough laws to curb noise pollution



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

This is an appeal to all the members of this august body. For the last three decades everyone has been talking about all kinds of pollution. Air. Seas. Rivers. Forests. Land. You name it, they have all been a matter of what they call “deep concern”. No one, however, talks about another equally horrible manifestation of pollution: noise pollution. It’s pervasive. It’s dangerous. And it’s annoying. And it’s accepted. You only have to listen to the ads on Indian TV. You are intently listening to the quiet cricket commentary and the over ends. And BANG! the TV explodes into loud noise and you have to scramble for the remote to mute it. And if it’s not easily reachable you have to suffer the yelling and the awful jingles. The problem is worse in the summer when the fans and ACs are whirring away. Then the TV is playing at a higher decibel level anyway. Or, if the windows are open, there is the intolerable street noise of hawkers, horns and hounds. When I asked a TV manufacturer why the ads were so loud he said the base sound-setting in India was very high because of ambient sound like the ones mentioned above. Believe me, *mein herren und dammen*, the only person who I envy is my 95-year-old mother. She is completely deaf.

One of the biggest irritants is the constant construction activity, both

near and far. About 10 years ago the house next to ours was brought down entirely by the new buyer who wanted to build afresh. The housing society where I live refused the new owners permission to use that heavy ball that swings from a crane. That device would have done it in a day. Instead, they used large hammers and it took three weeks of massive hammering. The furniture in our house would jump up from time to time. It was a truly horrible time. Likewise when they were building a 22-storey building just outside our campus they would slide the extra materials and waste down a tin chute — from that great height. I can’t describe the continuous noise. It was horrendous, like living inside a jet engine. This went on for six months. If that wasn’t bad enough there was all the cutting and grinding of marble.

When you go out for a walk you can’t hear yourself think, let alone speak. It’s an unspeakable assault on your ears.

The constant high-pitched sound of stone cutting can drive you crazy. What’s worse there’s no one you can complain to. Work must go on after all, noise pollution be damned.

Recently a new noise has been added. Fortunately it comes once a week but, and this is a big but, it comes on the day when you expect some quietude. Sunday. It’s the sound of motorcycles, hundreds of them from about 6 in the morning till about 11 am. The fellows who don’t have naturally powerful and therefore loud bikes remove a disc — so I am told — on the exhaust pipe. That makes them louder than their more powerful cousins. And believe me it’s horrible to have these men and women racing along the broad roads of our town. When you go out for a walk you can’t hear yourself think, let alone speak. It’s an unspeakable assault on your ears.

I have looked at the laws on sound pollution. There are hardly any. But that’s not the main problem because new laws can always be made. The real problem is measurement and enforcement in case there is a violation. Hence my appeal at the start of this article. The highly accomplished members of Rotary must come together to apply their minds with a view to at least reducing if not eliminating the menace of noise pollution. Other countries have done it. Why not us also? ■

In Brief



Japan's new minister for Loneliness

In an effort to address loneliness and social isolation, Japanese PM Yoshihide Suga has appointed Tetsushi Sakamoto, the current minister of regional revitalisation and increasing Japan's birth rate, to oversee government policies to deal with loneliness and isolation. With rising suicide rates, the minister of loneliness, as the title denotes, with the help of a task force, will oversee efforts to address the issue. Last October, more people reportedly died from suicide than from Covid-19.



Students to develop robotic tech for lunar probe

NASA has awarded nearly \$1.2 million to seven university teams from the US through the 2022 Breakthrough, Innovative and Game-changing Idea Challenge, to develop innovative and cost-effective robotic technologies to meet the agency's Artemis programme goals to explore the lunar surface. The teams will present the results of their testing to a NASA panel in November this year.



Airbnb houses Ukrainian refugees

Airbnb has halted operations in Russia, with its non-profit wing now offering free temporary housing for thousands of refugees fleeing Ukraine. The online home rental company's general manager Kathrin Anselm announced that Airbnb will offer free housing to 100,000 Ukrainian refugees in its neighbouring countries such as Romania, Germany, Poland and Hungary.



All-women's crew special train

The Waltair division of Indian Railways, for the first time, flagged off a special train from Visakhapatnam to Rayagada with an all-women's crew on the occasion of Women's Day. The East Coast Railway Women's Welfare Organisation president Parijata Satpathy was present at the flag off. The train had three women drivers and three ticket checkers.



Endangered giant tortoises into wilderness

The Galapagos National Park, Ecuador, has released 36 endangered giant tortoises, born and raised at the eco-park, into the wild on San Cristobal Island in the Galapagos islands cluster. They were monitored and tested for disease before being released. Each of the tortoises is 6-8-year-old, and weighs between 6-11 pounds. Their life expectancy is around 100-150 years. The endangered species has reduced in number from 24,000 to 6,700.

RI President's global visits



Clockwise from above: RI President Shekhar Mehta under a tree planted by Rotary Founder Paul Harris in Santos, Brazil • Mehta and Rashmi with the Vice-President of Brazil Hamilton Mourao (centre) • Mehta in Italy where the DGs presented him a cheque for \$140,000 for disaster relief for Ukraine • Mehta and Rashmi in Rabat, Morocco, with the Indian Ambassador to Morocco Rajesh Vaishnav • Mehta, Rashmi and TRF Trustee Aziz Memon at a meeting of RC London.

