

Rotary News

India

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Important Announcement Revision in Subscription Rates

Dear subscribers,

Thanks to the government of India's decision to withdraw postal concession for magazines, our postal rates are being hiked from ₹0.70 paise per copy to ₹16 a copy. Hence we have no other option but to increase our annual subscription accordingly.

The new annual subscription rates are:

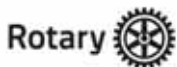
● Print edition: **₹600** ● e-version: **₹360**

The revised rates will be effective from **July 1, 2026**. Your invoice will be sent accordingly.

We encourage Rotarians to choose the e-version.

It is environment friendly and ensures timely delivery without postal delays.

Editor



A publication of Rotary
Global Media Network

A wonderful June issue

The June issue's editorial is highly relevant given the unrest among Gen Z which is highly disturbed by the recent exam scams, job crisis, and other life challenges.

Rotary's role in focusing on these issues cannot be overstated. Our global network, resources, and over 1.2 million professional members, makes our organisation well-positioned to guide young people toward leadership and positive change. By connecting different generations, we can build a foundation of peace, service and professional growth. Sandhya Rao's Wordsworld column titled *Manga Magic* has the Buddha's advice to Devadutta that strikes a chord with the 4-Way Test of Rotary.

The extensive coverage of the visit of RI President-elect Olayinka Babalola, to the RNT office and Rotary clubs in Chennai, and his interview in the May issue, are timely. The articles enable every Rotarian to know the mind of a man who is going to head the organisation this coming year.



It is an interesting coincidence (or a deliberate strategy) that both the RI President-elect (who is the first Rotaractor to become RI President) and his V-P were former Rotaractors.

*N Anthri Vedi, RC Hyderabad
Mega City — D 3150*

The June edition is truly beautiful. We are delighted that our projects have also been featured on two pages. The presentation of all other articles is excellent, and the issue has come out wonderfully.

Hats off to the Rotary News team for their hard work, patience, and outstanding news reporting and editing. The quality and professionalism of the publication are highly

appreciated. Thank you for bringing out such a remarkable edition.

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

The June editorial sounds a real alarm: it is time to centre the voice of youth in shaping our world. We have fresh evidence of their influence. In the recent Tamil Nadu elections, voters aged 18 to 39 played a decisive role in actor-turned-CM Joseph Vijay's victory. On the global stage, 16-year-old Greta Thunberg stood fearlessly at the UN Climate Summit in New York, demanding accountability.

The message is clear. Youth power is not a future promise; it is a present force. But that power needs direction, constructive involvement, and when guided properly, we can avoid the disasters that inaction invites. The 'Rotary Action' initiative is now empowering Rotaractors by giving them space in Zonal Institute panel discussions. Their voice is being heard, not just acknowledged.

RI director KP Nagesh put it well: membership growth and

After reading the article *Visually challenged on road to self-reliance*, I felt proud being a Rotarian since 1981 and privileged to serve to serve the people.

RC Cochin Global has started *Project Surya* to train visually-challenged people and bring them into mainstream of society. Thanks to trainers who are helping them to learn computer and also provide jobs for them.

Such training to visually challenged have got them jobs in ISRO, IBM etc. Kudos to the project team for their excellent service to society.

T D Bhatia, RC Delhi Mayur Vihar — D 3012

The May editorial titled *The quota conundrum* and the cover page photo of RI President Olayinka Babalola

and RID M Muruganandam, both looking like brothers, were magnificent.

RID Muruganandam's, *Youth first, Rotary forever*, highlights the role of youth in Rotary. Let us continue to say 'Yes' to youth service, for Rotary's future begins there.

Daniel Chittilappilly, RC Kaloore — D 3205

With reference to your May editorial on women's reservation, women have proved their mettle in different walks of life with their commitment and dedication. Apart from breaking the glass ceiling, they are outshining men in every field.

Women's Reservation Bill 2023 guarantees at least 33 per cent quota in Lok Sabha and state assemblies.

sustainability do not come from strategy documents alone. Members require personal involvement in club activities, a sense of being valued, and genuine fellowship. Those are the things that create connections and the resolve to face challenges jointly as a team.

The interview with DRR Janice Philip, who is both a Rotaractor and Rotarian, is a strong guidepost. It shows Rotaractors a path forward and makes a thoughtful case for dual membership in Rotary. And we cannot overlook RYLA which is vital for personality development, friendship and self-confidence. Every district should prioritise organising RYLA as it shapes tomorrow's leaders. Youth are already leading. Our job is to listen, involve and equip them. Rotary's move toward real inclusion is a model worth replicating.

*Prakash Chand Sanghi
RC Jaipur Babu
Nagar — D 3056*

When this is done, there will be a steep rise in the number of women legislatures in Parliament and state assemblies. But the Bill will take some time to take effect as census and delimitation exercises need to be completed first.

But women's participation in policy framing and law making would definitely help in making our political and social systems more gender-friendly as women policymakers will give priority to issues such as gender safety,

healthcare, education, elderly care, children's welfare and cleanliness etc. This aligns with RI President Yinka Babalola's view of creating a conducive atmosphere for women in Rotary.

It will be prudent if RI authorities fix a minimum number of women members in Rotary clubs across the world.

*Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roop Nagar — D 3080*

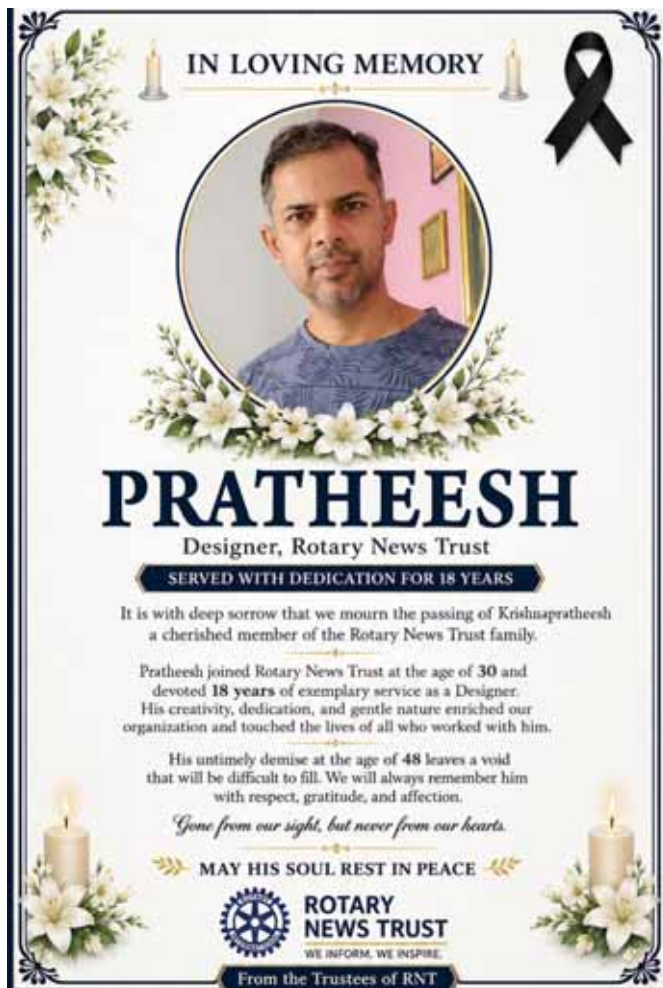
In the May issue, the article that impressed me the most is *Babalola lays down ambitious goal for Rotary*.

His suggestion that if Rotary has to grow, all Rotarians need to tell

their stories is commendable. As a Rotarian for three years, I always highlight my experiences at speaker's meets in my club. I also built a house for my fellow Rotary civil engineer friend, invited another Rotarian engineer to be the chief guest on Engineer's Day at the college I work.

I invited an entrepreneur, also a Rotarian from another club, to be the special guest on Entrepreneurship Day. Rotary brings new acquaintances, friendships and career opportunities. Our programmes greatly increase the circle of friends.

*Sivaperumal Subramani
RC Walajapet — D 3231*



Better than your best

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Photo: Monika Lozinska

Rotary has a way of surprising you. It surprises you when a stranger across the table becomes a lifelong friend. It surprises you when a small project in one neighbourhood ripples outward in ways you never imagined. And it may surprise you when you realise that the person Rotary has changed most... is you.

That is why this year, we are called to harness the change within ourselves, to look to the future, and to *Create Lasting Impact*.

Now, I want to be clear about what those words mean. Change is only the beginning. Impact is what endures. We must think of the long-term impact of every project. How can a new water system contribute to the long-term health of a community? Can residents help other communities build their own? How can a new classroom be part of a wider strategy to improve education in the area? That is the sort of thinking we need.

As we prioritise impact, we must also consider how our actions can contribute to peacebuilding. Peace does not happen by accident. It must be built deliberately and strategically. As you plan your next project, ask yourself: "How does this create the conditions for peace?" Consult the Pillars of Positive Peace to learn how we can bring the world one step closer to peace in everything we do.

The more you change your community and the world, the more you will change. Don't just tell people about the projects you have run or the funds you have raised. Tell them how Rotary has shaped who you are. Those personal stories open doors, inspire new members, and remind all of us why we are here.

Storytelling is also an excellent way to recruit new members and raise funds. We need more people standing with us and more resources if we are to end polio, spread peace, and have a lasting impact on the world. We have set a goal of increasing membership to 1.25 million Rotarians and more than 125,000 Rotaractors by 2030, just in time for Rotary's 125th anniversary.

Sit down with your club and look back over your accomplishments in the last few years. Find your best year. Maybe it was a record year for new members. Maybe you reached a fundraising milestone. Maybe you completed a project that the whole community is still talking about. Once you find that year, I challenge you to do better than your best.

In these ways and more, we will *Create Lasting Impact* across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

Thank you, my dear friends. Now let's get to work.

Olayinka Babalola
President, Rotary International



A whiff of change in the air...

It should be a matter of pride to Rotarians in India that the newly minted Tamil Nadu Assembly has as many as 23 MLAs in a House of 234, which is nearly 10 per cent of the legislative body. What is more; of these 5 have been inducted into the cabinet, and includes S Keerthana, only 29, who has been given the heavyweight portfolio of Industries and Investment Promotion. An MSc in Statistics from the Puducherry University, she was closely involved in Tamil Nadu CM C Joseph Vijay's campaign planning, grassroots outreach and youth mobilisation. Small wonder she has a following of more than 451,000 on Instagram. She has won from Sivakasi, which is famous for its firecrackers industry. During campaigning for her own seat, Keerthana had stressed the need for fireworks factories to concentrate on workers' safety, healthcare and other welfare measures for their families.

Way back in 1775, Samuel Johnson had said "Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel"; of course he meant pseudo-patriotism. This was later changed to "Politics is the last resort for scoundrels" and attributed sometimes to Oscar Wilde (he certainly didn't say this) and to George Bernard Shaw too. Apparently, there is no rock-solid evidence that Shaw said this either. But with the general disenchantment with politics across the world, especially in India, and with 'nationalism' (patriotism) becoming the new buzzword in India, both the expressions are widely used.

However, if Rotarians, who are true to Rotary's core and idealistic credos of truth, fairness and equity, enter politics, and stick to these values,

there is hope for change. If corruption levels can be arrested or reduced, and the funds thus saved in the exchequer are ploughed back into welfare schemes for the people, in areas such as water and sanitation, healthcare, enhancing livelihoods, adult literacy and children's education, all areas familiar to this organisation, imagine what a mammoth difference can be made by those sitting at the helm in various government positions. We live in a cynical world; advancing years only harden cynicism because they often bring the ability to see through deceit, dishonesty and false claims. And you can easily slip into a pessimistic view on the world around you.

But youth thrive on optimism, positivity and idealism. The young are also getting aggressively articulate on voicing their concerns on environmental degradation and climate change, for the simple reason that they will live on this deteriorating planet for much longer. Luckily, the entire world is seeing a relatively younger crop of political leaders. If they can look at the world with a dash of hope, cheer and positivity, and use their energy and vitality to usher in positive change, we can still look forward to a better tomorrow... for all, and not only the privileged!

Just pull out and watch Keerthana's video clips on the internet, and note the optimism she displays... makes you want to believe in these young agents of change...

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

Rasheeda Bhagat



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Director speak



Aim high

Warm greetings and best wishes to my Rotary family as we step into the new Rotary year 2026–27.

RI President Olayinka Babalola has given us the inspiring message, *Create lasting impact*, reminding us that the true measure of our service lies in the impact that continues long after a project is completed.

Every new Rotary year brings new leadership, new energy, new goals and new opportunities to serve. Rotary is a leadership academy, creating nearly 400,000 leaders collectively across the world — from clubs, districts, zones and Rotary International.

Dear leaders, this one year of leadership in Rotary is a golden opportunity. Your attitude will determine the altitude you reach. There is a beautiful phrase in Tamil literature: *Ulluvathellaam uyavullal*, which means ‘Always aim high.’ When your attitude is high, your actions become powerful, and the results become phenomenal. Ultimately, results and numbers speak for themselves. Pass on the leadership baton with stronger clubs, increased membership and positive numbers.

As a membership organisation, recruiting and retaining members must always remain our highest priorities. I encourage every club to apply the Red-Amber-Green (RAG) analysis to understand where it stands. If your club has fewer than 25 members, move it from the Red zone to Amber by increasing membership to between 25 and 50. Form new clubs and keep them vibrant, because vibrant clubs create engaged and inspired members.

While we focus on growing our current membership, we must also think about Rotary’s long-term

sustainability. Therefore, I urge every Rotary leader to engage 2 Rotaractors and 3 Interactors for every Rotarian, following the strategic ratio of 1 Rotarian: 2 Rotaractors: 3 Interactors. This simple formula will help us build a stronger and more sustainable future for Rotary while creating a powerful leadership pipeline for generations to come.

I am proud that our Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7 continue to perform exceptionally well in the global Rotary arena. Let us aim high, remain focused and united, and work together to retain and further strengthen this position in the years ahead.

And as always, let us remember our commitment to the End Polio initiative. Rotary’s greatest legacy to future generations will be a polio-free world. Let us intensify our efforts and continue our work until the poliovirus is completely eradicated from the face of the earth.

As we march towards Rotary’s 125th anniversary in 2030, our **Vision 2030** is clear — **1.25 million Rotarians and 125,000 Rotaractors**. To achieve this vision we must all think bigger, act bolder, and aim high.

My dear Rotary family, once again, I warmly welcome each one of you to a beautiful and purposeful Rotary year. Let us work together with dedication, passion and unity. Let us say ‘Yes’ to Rotary. Let’s create lasting impact. And let’s continue to aim high. With warm regards,

M Muruganandam

RI Vice President, 2026-27

RI Director, 2025-27

Message from
TRF Trustee
Chair



Leading with gratitude

I love the idea of a gratitude journal. The practice is simple: Write down three things each day that you are grateful for, and watch how it shifts your mindset, your energy, and even the way you move through the world.

To me, gratitude is more than a feeling; it is a force.

And in Rotary, gratitude is a reflection of who we are. When we thank our donors, we are acknowledging their contribution and honouring their belief in a better world.

I write in my gratitude journal often — not every day but enough to keep me grounded.

I want to share with you an entry from January, written during the International Assembly. The assembly is more than our annual learning event for district governors-elect; it's a gathering filled with inspiration and moments that stay with you long after the lights dim.

My first entry was in gratitude to Debbie and Russell Doby.

In 2022, Debbie, then a district governor-elect, missed out on that inspiring assembly experience because of the pandemic. Then, a year later, just a few days before the district conference she was excited to host, Debbie and her husband were in a head-on collision. The other driver was killed; Debbie and Russell survived, miraculously.

Out of tragedy, they found grace. They created an endowment fund for their district at the Arch Klumph Society level, choosing to transform pain into purpose.

My second entry reflected on Ravishankar and Paola Dakoju from the Rotary Club of Bangalore, India. At the assembly, the couple pledged \$50 million to The Rotary Foundation, an extraordinary gift representing 85 per cent of their wealth. Ravishankar said, "When you give more than you think you can, life returns to you more than you can ever imagine." That single sentence captures the heart of Rotary.

My final entry was in gratitude to Moh Eid and Chuck and Carol Stocking. After Moh's brother, Ibrahim, a humanitarian aid worker, was killed while helping victims of war, Chuck was moved to create the Ibrahim Eid Fund to support Rotary Peace Fellows. Their leverage gift was \$100,000 toward a million-dollar goal. That is what it looks like when grief becomes hope.

And today, my gratitude entry is for you. For longtime members and brand new faces, for those who give year after year and those preparing to make their first gift. Thank you.

Let gratitude be our compass this year.

Jennifer Jones
TRF Trustee Chair

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Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee



Our New Year resolution

A new Rotary year begins. This is the time of the year when every newly installed president resolves to do their best. The leadership team at every level changes. However, one thing that remains unchanged is our collective dream to make the world a better place for all. The Rotary Foundation has made tremendous strides particularly in our region. Our members have demonstrated once again in the past year that they will not rest until all our dreams are fulfilled. The impact of the projects carried out by clubs and districts in our region are both inspiring and transformational. While much has been done, much more is yet to be done.

We need to leverage our success thus far for planning even larger and impactful projects. This is possible if more people join, both for giving and for doing. I want to challenge every member to participate in some activity or the other. Rotary must be experienced, and that can happen if we intentionally volunteer to be a part of it. Let us resolve to be players and not spectators. A new year is a good time to resolve to do so.

Next, let our dreams be not limited to what we think are our resources today. If the project is worthwhile and can ignite people's passion, one will be surprised at the resources that will flow into it and the doors that will open to make it happen. There are several stories to validate this. I want every club to add their stories to this.

Third, let our focus be not only on projects that can be initiated and completed within one year. This again will limit our ability to see far. Rotary's strength is its continuity and let us do all we can to reinforce that.

Let us together *create lasting impact* through The Rotary Foundation.

AS Venkatesh
TRF Trustee

Answering **the call**

Diana Schoberg

Shaped by his native land, RI President Yinka carries the dynamic spirit of Nigeria with him to Rotary leadership.



“I was born into Rotary,” says Aminat Babalola, daughter of RI President Olayinka Babalola. “I knew the Four-Way Test before I was 10.”

Olayinka H
Babalola
makes his way
to the front row.

This is it. It’s showtime, the moment that Yinka, as he’s called — the 2026–27 Rotary International President, the second from Nigeria, the second from all of Africa for that matter — will make his debut to the Rotary world.

It’s the first morning of Rotary’s International Assembly, a training event for incoming district governors held every winter in Orlando, Florida. Babalola’s already miked up for the speech he’ll give, the session’s main event. But first, he prepares to participate in the opening flag ceremony, a tradition at Rotary events.

He joins 2025–26 RI President Francesco Arezzo of Italy and Larry Lunsford of the United States, who will serve after Babalola. The three walk onstage, hoisting their countries’ flags. Asinger belts out the US national anthem. Then, the Italian district governors-elect join Arezzo onstage to sing “Il Canto degli Italiani.”

Finally, it’s Babalola’s turn. He steps forward and stands taller, his glittery green-and-white striped hat matching his country’s flag. Peace Udoka Anyira, a Nigerian Canadian Rotarian, steps onstage and sings:

Nigeria, we hail thee,
Our own dear native land,
Though tribes and tongues may
differ,
In brotherhood we stand
Nigerians all, are proud to serve
Our sovereign Motherland.

Babalola sings along too, and as he does, a tear rolls down his cheek.

“You hear a lot of bad stories about Nigeria, but today, the story is not a



bad story,” he says afterward, choking up with emotion. He takes off his glasses and wipes his eyes. “The flag of this country is being raised amongst people of goodwill — good people from more than 100 countries, for a good cause.”

As of July 1, Babalola will lead them.

Babalola’s leadership journey began early. The eldest of six children, he was born in Ibadan, one of the largest cities in Nigeria. His mother was a teacher and his father an accountant. “From my part of the world, when you’re the first child, that has some leadership responsibilities,” he says.

He went to college at what was then called the Federal University of Technology in Bauchi, an ethnically diverse city in the north where Nigeria’s savanna woodlands begin to give way to the semi-arid Sahel on the edge of the Sahara. The college’s public image director, a member of the Rotary Club of Bauchi, asked him during his second year if he’d help organize a Rotaract club. Babalola became the club’s charter president.

After earning his degree in electronics engineering, Babalola completed a year in the National Youth Service Corps. Aiming to bridge ethnic and religious divides, members of the corps serve in states other than their own. Babalola was posted to Port Harcourt in Rivers state, where the French tyre manufacturer Michelin had requested electronics engineering graduates to help retool its equipment.

Before arriving in Port Harcourt, Babalola joined other newly mobilised corps members at an orientation camp. He figured since they were all fresh out of university, there must be Rotaractors among them. He posted a notice

and gathered everybody together. “We started a mini Rotaract fellowship while in camp,” he recalls.

Then in Port Harcourt, Babalola joined the Rotaract Club of Trans Amadi, an industrial area of the city where Michelin was located. With other Rotaract club members, he volunteered at a facility for children with disabilities that was supported by the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt.

When his mandatory service was over, Babalola landed a job with the Nigerian branch of the Shell oil company. Only in his mid-20s, he was beginning to outgrow his Rotaract club; his job gave him the privilege of a better income than others his age. The next logical step, he thought, was to join Rotary, where he could find inspiration from successful older members. “I wanted to be in a place where I could aspire to do other things,” he says.

But when he went to a meeting of the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi and said he wanted to join, club members were stunned. One Rotarian erupted: “What’s wrong with this young man? You think this is how you join Rotary?” But another Rotarian volunteered to be his sponsor, later becoming a mentor. “If that man hadn’t spoken up for me, maybe I wouldn’t be here,” Babalola reflects. “I may have left the place and never considered joining Rotary, and that would have been the end of it.”

In Rotary, Babalola found career mentors, including the chief operating officer of Shell Nigeria. “There are some people who when you see their signature on a letter addressed to you, it means only two things: You’ve been promoted or you’ve been sacked,” he says. “That’s the kind of person he was.” Another executive in the Nigerian oil industry also took Babalola under his wing when his father died.

But most of all, he found a place to grow up. “At 27, you have some

Babalola with members of his Rotary club, Trans Amadi.



Above

Babalola and RI Director K P Nagesh dancing with governors-elect.

Right

With Nigerian Rotaractors (Babalola is the first RI President to start his Rotary journey through Rotaract).

(right) Andrew Esiebo



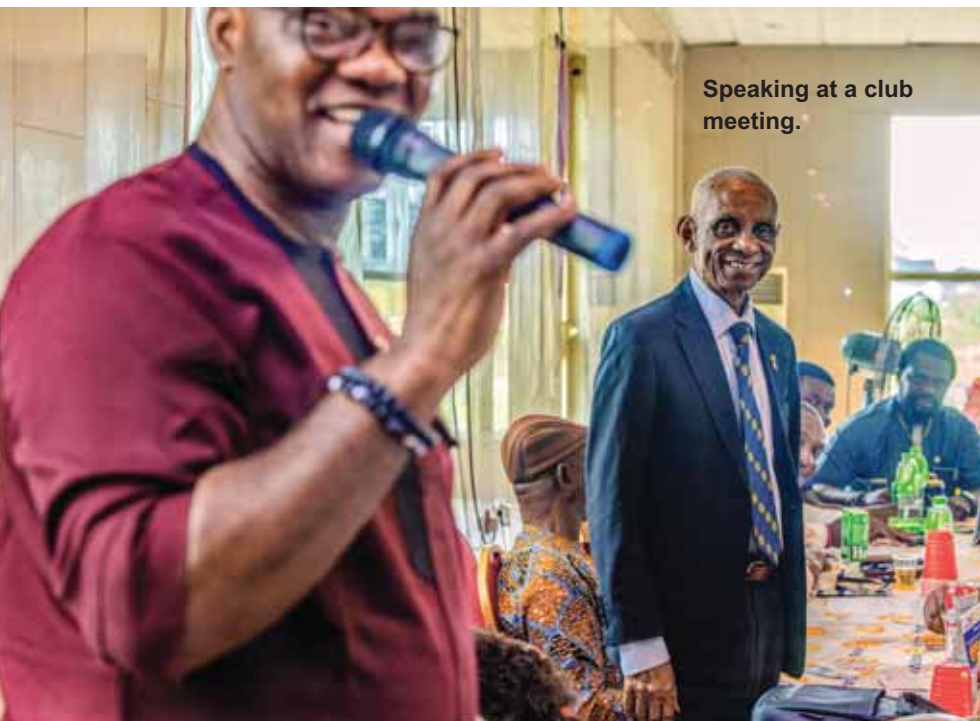
With his wife, Precy Babalola (centre), at the International Assembly's culture night.



“

The flag of this country is being raised amongst people of goodwill — good people from more than 100 countries, for a good cause.





Speaking at a club meeting.



“ He would always say, ‘Better your best.’ I don’t want you to compete with other clubs. I want you to compete with yourself.

Ndukwe Chukwu
Rotary Club of Owerri Central, Nigeria



Babalola, along with IPPC Chair Micheal McGovern, rallying district governors-elect to end polio.





With son Malik.



Visiting a polio project in Nigeria.

Andrew Esiebo

money in your pocket, you're single, you're a boy, you can imagine the kind of things that will be on your mind," he says. "But because I was in Rotary, that didn't happen for me. People are talking about taxation; they're talking about the budget. They're talking about real estate, about investment opportunities, and suddenly somebody is telling you what you need to do with your money."

Through Rotary, Babalola also met his wife, Precy, the first female president of her university's Rotaract club in Port Harcourt. She pulled back from Rotary when their children were young, rejoining in 2018. Today she is a lawyer and a member of the Rotary Club of Port Harcourt Passport.

"Our stories as members may be different, but Rotary impacts us in many ways — our careers, our businesses, our family lives," Babalola says. "I think if you talk to any Rotarian, you will find they have a story, something that made them stay."

It's midday and a dozen or so district governors-elect ring a conference table. The Florida sunshine streams in as they exchange business cards and wait for Babalola. These governors-elect are from the last remaining districts battling polio, places like Pakistan, where, along with neighbouring Afghanistan, wild poliovirus is still endemic, along with some districts in Africa, including Babalola's Nigeria, that are still suppressing outbreaks.

Babalola enters and walks around the table, shaking hands with everybody. This is his hype meeting, where he wants to rally these governors-elect and show them just how serious he is about polio eradication.

As the meeting starts, he speaks in such hushed tones that one must lean

in to hear him. Once he has everyone's full attention, his voice grows stronger, more animated. He taps his fingers on the table, asking for a demonstration of their commitment.

"Imagine," Babalola tells them, "being at the Rotary Convention and they're announcing that we've reached zero cases of polio — that this district governor class was the one to get us there."

The room bubbles with enthusiasm afterward. "We're excited for him being our president," says Shahzad Sabir, governor-elect of District 3271 (Pakistan). "He knows what's a problem on the ground. He knows what commitment means. He knows what we need."

International PolioPlus Committee chair Michael K McGovern, who sat in the meeting, echoes Sabir's sentiments. "We have never had a president who has come into the role who has more background on the day-to-day work of eradicating polio in a country, working closely with Rotarians, working with the governments, and working with others," he says. "We couldn't have a better leader."

In 2012, wild poliovirus was still endemic in Nigeria. Cases were surging, particularly in the northeast of the country, home to the militant group Boko Haram. Babalola, a 2011–12 district governor, was summoned to a meeting to discuss the country's polio eradication efforts. Rotary leaders wanted the past and current district governors gathered to each adopt one of Nigeria's 36 states and work with local governments and partners there to ensure immunisation ran smoothly. "People's hands started going up," Babalola recalls, "and nobody agreed to go to the northeast."

But Babalola had gone to college in the region. It's where he had gotten his start in Rotary. It was a place he knew. He raised his hand. "People

turned and looked at me, thinking this guy must be crazy,” he remembers.

Salma Ibrahim Anas, the commissioner of health in the northeastern state of Borno in 2011–15, recalls the time when Babalola met her in her office in the state capital, Maiduguri. She told him she’d be travelling to a remote community several hundred kilometres away to launch an immunisation campaign. There was a security lockdown; civil society partners were not travelling because of the risks. But, says Anas, now the special adviser on health to the Nigerian president, she couldn’t believe it when the next day she saw Babalola in that same remote community delivering vaccines. “I was speechless,” she recalls. “This was the highest level of dedication, commitment and trust. He sacrificed whatever he had for these children in remote communities despite the security challenges of Boko Haram.”

ON A TUESDAY IN FEBRUARY,

the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi is holding its regular weekly meeting in the bustling commercial hub of Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The audience is listening politely to their guest speaker as a late-arriving member suddenly enters. It’s Olayinka Babalola. Heads turn. And in a sudden, joyful swell, some 70 members rise to their feet, breaking into song and applause.

It’s what friends and admirers call the “Yinka effect,” and it’s propelling membership, Rotary Foundation contributions, and more.

“When Yinka walks into a room, he’s like a magnet,” says Ibim Semenitari, who has known him since 1999. “I’ve seen Rotary clubs in Africa and beyond gravitate toward him. He is a leader whose charisma cuts across boundaries.”



Joshua Hassan (right), chair of Rotary's Nigeria PolioPlus Committee, shows Babalola around the facility.

THE **YINKA** EFFECT



Babalola visits a clinic where children receive polio vaccines.

**Rotary's new president is galvanising members across Africa.
We visited to see their enthusiasm in action.**

Pictures by *Andrew Esiebo*



With his mother Rianat Babalola.



Returning to his former high school, which he and other alums generously support.

Within the decade, in 2020, the World Health Organisation certified Nigeria — and with it the entire African region — free of wild poliovirus, largely thanks to the efforts of Rotary members.

From his time as a district governor, Babalola quickly rose through the Rotary ranks. “I could see then that he was an up-and-comer — he had that talent,” says Bryn Styles, who met Babalola when he was a governor and Styles was an RI director-elect. He is now serving as Babalola’s presidential aide. “I was so impressed with him that I wrote a note to the sitting RI President and president-elect saying this is someone that we have to move along.”

In 2017, Babalola was preparing to serve as an RI director himself. His term

“

I've seen Yinka literally change the game as district governor. Every position Yinka has held, he moves one notch higher.

Gabriel Toby

Past District Governor
from Port Harcourt



With his mentor PDG Gabriel Toby.

was to coincide with the year that Sam F Owori of Uganda was to serve as Rotary president. But the unthinkable happened: Owori died of complications from surgery before he could take office.

Refusing to believe it, Babalola tried to call Owori, whose wife answered and confirmed the news. He called past RI President Jonathan Majiyagbe and past director Sam Okudzeto, among the only living senior leaders from Africa at the time, to ask them what to do. Both deferred to Babalola as the leader now. As he pondered that, he got a call from Ugandan Rotarians asking him what's next. "Suddenly it dawned on me," he says. "I said to myself, 'Yinka, your role has changed. This whole continent is looking in your direction, and you need to step up.'"

Babalola and Owori had already discussed plans for their time together on the RI board. Now, it fell to Babalola to execute them. "It was not an easy time," he says, "but it was a serious moment of growth."

One of those plans involved membership growth in the continent,

an area that Babalola had excelled at during his time as club president and district governor. When Owori died, Africa was home to 29,000 Rotarians. Today, there are 48,000.

"There's something about Yinka and membership," says Virginia Major, a past district governor from Port Harcourt and one of many whom Babalola has mentored. "Oh, my goodness. He almost drives you crazy because of membership. He gives you figures. 'This is where we need to be.' 'We need to do this, and we can.' I call him the father of membership in Africa."

After the flag ceremony, Babalola hustles backstage to wait while Styles, his aide, introduces him. Babalola swaps his green-and-white hat for one in the same fabric as the presidential ties and scarves the district governors-elect will receive after the morning session. Someone fortuitously tracks down a pocket

square in the same fabric and Babalola tucks it in just as Styles is announcing his name. With that, he strides onstage.

The audience applauds as Babalola tells the story of how he was finally able to join Rotary. He talks about the impact of Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria, a massive maternal and child health programme funded by The Rotary Foundation. And he dramatically announces this year's presidential message, *Create Lasting Impact*, while spreading his arms wide and soaking in the enthusiasm of the crowd, which is standing and taking photos.

Babalola may be only the second president from Nigeria, the second from Africa. But true to Rotary's values, he will build peace as he travels, promoting understanding of the people of a country, beyond the headlines. He himself will be creating lasting impact, on Rotary, on the world.

Pictures by Monika Lozinska
Designed by N Krishnamurthy

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Skilling village girls

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rotary Club of Akola, RI District 3030, has launched a project to help young village girls learn tailoring skills which will get them a livelihood. Focused on girls passing out from Class 10 and 12, who would otherwise sit at home, getting absorbed in household chores or hurried through early marriage, the club has started a tailoring course for the girls.

According to past president of the club Radheshyam Modi, who is in charge of this project which has been implemented in Gaigaon village, more than 40 girls from this village have enrolled in this class. "Sewing machines, including some electric machines, are provided by the club and under qualified trainers, these girls are

learning stitching and garment making. Soon, armed with tailoring and dress-making skills, these girls will be self-employed and earning an income to support themselves and their families," he says.

The cost of this project is around ₹1.1 lakh; from this money 10 sewing machines have been set up in the tailoring classroom. The money for the machines and staff salary was raised through contributions from the club members.

The 40 girls who are enthusiastically turning up for tailoring classes every day belong to Gaigaon and surrounding villages. On how and why the village Gaigaon was chosen, Modi says one factor was proximity. Located just 15km from Akola and on a good motorable road, it makes it easy for

A girl learns tailoring at a training centre set up by RC Akola at Gaigaon village.





club members to visit this centre. “And we are known in this village where Rotary is instantly recognised because we have done so much for the local school; set up a computerised lab and donated computers so that the schoolchildren can learn how to work on computers. We’ve also put up a library there.”

Club president Naryosang Tarporewala says the Rotarians will pay the salary of the two tailoring instructors, who will get ₹8,000 and ₹5,000 each month. The main objective of starting this initiative to promote self-employment was that once young girls in rural areas complete their Class 10 or 12, they have hardly any activity they can look forward to. They are entrusted housework, taking care of younger siblings and can’t even think of getting the most basic jobs. They’re neither unavailable in the village nor do the girls have any special skills which make them employable. “So we thought if we give them tailoring skills, they can stitch clothes, and



Women learning the art of cutting with the help of newspaper stencils.



Trainees at the tailoring centre.

Rotary is instantly recognised in this village; we have done so much for the local school — set up a library and computerised lab, so that the schoolchildren can learn to work on computers.

Radheshyam Modi
past president, RC Akola

sell them. Of course we have plans to help market the garments they make.”

Interestingly, the Rotarians did not have to search too hard or too far to find a suitable place to set up this tailoring class. Modi explains that the brother of one of their tailoring instructors had built a clutch of shops in a prominent place in Gaigaon and a few of these were vacant. “Given Rotary and our club’s reputation in the village, where we have already done so much for the children’s education, she offered this place to us to start the tailoring classes. The villagers know very well that if this project is successful, girls from their village will benefit.”

Earlier, the learning was limited to two hours a day for each of the two batches of 20 girls. But seeing the need and the enthusiasm of the students, the class hours have been extended from 11am to 4pm. After they learnt the basics of stitching, the first batch of girl students stitched 400 cotton cloth bags under the club’s project of using cloth bags and saying ‘No’



A girl models a dress she designed at the centre.



to polythene bags. All the 400 bags were ordered and purchased by the club members, paying ₹10 as stitching charges per bag.

This was followed by an Akola bank placing an order for 1,000 bags, and with another order coming in for 300 more bags, the girls got an income of ₹13,000. Another order followed and “they have stitched 2,000 bags in 30 days, earning ₹20,000. This work was done outside their class hours; this is only the beginning; I know that their future is bright,” smiles Modi.

The tailoring course is totally free of cost; initially the Rotarians provided fabrics for the girls to learn the essentials of tailoring. “But we soon found the girls bringing used sarees from home and converting them into smart and pretty dresses. Now they have prepared quite a collection of garments. In the next month or two, we are planning to hold an exhibition in Akola, to ensure that the girls will be able to sell their dresses, and get more orders. Unless we are able to ensure them an income, this project will have no value. Giving them a marketing link is very essential,” says Modi.

He adds that the club members had firmly decided that it was no use just giving “school bags to girls or sewing machines to women. We have to ensure them a livelihood. I am happy to share that seeing the success of this tailoring course, now women from the village also want to undergo this tailoring course, and we will expand its scope.”

Initially, the Rotarians provided fabrics for the girls to learn the essentials of tailoring. But soon the girls brought used sarees from home and converted them into smart and pretty dresses.

The club president says that “ultimately the younger generation will have to become self-employed, because there aren’t too many jobs available for youngsters with just basic schooling. Next, we will be providing driving lessons to young men, so that they can be employed as drivers in Akola.” Akola has a population of 10 lakh, and a floating population of around two lakh so drivers are always required.



Club president Naryosang Tarporewala (second from R) with trainees displaying their creations.

On the literacy front, the Rotarians are planning to offer about 20 students coaching in MS-CIT (Maharashtra State Certificate in Information Technology) which is a foundational digital literacy and computer education programme. This course will give them practical skills like MS Office, internet browsing and AI tools. The course costs roughly ₹4,000 to ₹5,000, and certificates are given by the government to those who complete the course. “Once they learn how to operate computers they can get jobs.”

The club is also distributing 40 more bicycles to school girls to ensure they have a safe transport to school

and don’t have to drop out for safety reasons.

Modi explains, “Rotary is changing the village scenario through this project, particularly for rural women who are the biggest victims of poverty and unemployment. It shall be a great day when many girls from these villages will be self-employed making garments and even designing them on their own. Once this happens, opening boutique shops and making designer clothes will surely follow, giving women a sense of self-reliance that comes from economic freedom. This will be Rotary’s gift for women’s empowerment in rural India.”

Here are some of the testimonials the club has got from the girls from the tailoring class.

“Rotary has provided us with a great opportunity to learn and develop our skills in garment making,” said one girl.

Another one added: “I was so scared about what I would be doing after my Class 12 examinations. Learning stitching and being a part of garment making has given me the power to stand on my own feet. My mother is so proud of me, because she knows that now I will be able to stand on my own feet. Thank you, Rotary.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai wows Rotarians at Taipei Convention

Gundula Miethke

Pakistani education activist
Malala Yousafzai.



Malala Yousafzai, the youngest-ever Nobel Peace Prize laureate and an advocate for girls' education, in her keynote address and a following interview on stage at the Taipei Convention, spoke about her personal connections to Rotary as the daughter of a Rotarian and about the importance of empowering girls.

While there has been progress in girls' education, she reminded the Rotarians that "120 million girls around the world remain out of school," and advocated for greater trust and investment in girls as leaders. "Girls understand the problems the best... and the solutions the best," she said, highlighting transformative, girl-led movements from Tanzania to Pakistan.

Reflecting on her own journey from an 11-year-old speaking out for education to the present day, Malala emphasised the power of collective action: "Even small acts... are making a huge and significant change." She urged the Rotarians to join her cause, saying "We need your bold and ambitious vision to build a better future for girls."

RI general secretary John Hewko addressed the growing global challenge of loneliness. Drawing on a Harvard study that identifies relationships as the strongest predictor of happiness, he framed Rotary as a powerful antidote. "The heart of Rotary is belonging through purpose, ...and the world is hungry for this kind of belonging," he said, encouraging members to share their experiences and invite others to the organisation. He reminded the audience that it is necessary for clubs to adapt to modern lifestyles, create flexible ways to engage, and make it easier for more people to belong.

Rotary Peace Fellowship alum Natalie Emery shared her life story and illustrated how small acts of kindness can grow into systemic impact. From

Taipei Convention draws 37,000 Rotarians

More than 37,000 Rotarians from over 140 countries gathered at the Taipei Nangang Exhibition Center and the Taipei Dome from June 13–17, 2026 for RI’s annual convention, which has returned to Taipei after 32 years.

“Rotary conventions are powerful moments of unity, where people from every corner of the world come together to connect, celebrate service, and exchange ideas for a healthier, more peaceful future,” said RI President Francesco Arezzo. Describing the experience of meeting Rotary members throughout his term, he said, “Everywhere I went, I found the same spirit. Different languages, different food, different ways of welcoming a guest — but always the same Rotary heart.”

Reiterating that polio eradication is Rotary’s top priority, he said, “This year was difficult. Funding became harder. Governments faced



RI President Francesco Arezzo and his wife Anna Maria being cheered by past RI presidents. Arezzo’s presidential aide John de Georgio is also present.

new pressures. But our efforts on polio do not disappear because the world grows tired of hearing about it. We have to keep our promise to the world’s children.” He described visiting Pakistan to observe Rotary’s immunisation efforts and seeing a child about three years old who had been paralysed by polio. She used her hands to pull herself to join a group of children. “That little girl is why we cannot stop. We must

finish because the next child is still waiting,” he said.

Taiwan President Lai Ching-te thanked the country’s Rotarians for bringing the world to Taiwan.

More than 100 humanitarian projects were on display at the exhibition centre, giving a first-hand look at innovative, long-term solutions to the world’s most persistent challenges.

early volunteer activities in India to leading humanitarian logistics efforts with the World Food Programme, Emery’s journey highlighted the importance of taking action.

“You don’t need to be extraordinary to make a difference,” she said. Reflecting on her work in crisis regions such as South Sudan, she explained that ensuring access to food, water and medicine is not just humanitarian work — it is peace-building. “Peace is built long before a formal treaty is signed,” she added.

Stories from this year’s Rotary ‘People of Action’ honourees

showcased grassroots initiatives tackling literacy, mental health, inclusion and conflict resolution.

The global reach and impact of Rotary’s work were highlighted by trustee chair Holger Knaack, who emphasised that Rotary’s projects are built on data, accountability and partnerships, spanning areas such as health, education, water and environmental protection.

Haiti gets sixth Program of Scale

“We do not run on hope. We run on evidence and measurement,” Knaack said,

announcing the sixth Program of Scale the ‘Collaboration for Sustainable Water and Sanitation Systems in Haiti’. The initiative reflects Rotary’s focus on scaling proven solutions to create sustainable change, in this case in partnership with Haitian organisations and the national water agency. Its goal is to cut waterborne disease by 25 per cent — by training local committees and water operators, and the mayors who will sustain the work long after the grant ends.

The fight against polio is still Rotary’s top priority. Valerie Wafer,

We need Rotary's bold and
ambitious vision to
build a better future for girls.

Malala Yousafzai

RI PolioPlus Committee member, and Mike McGovern, chair of the International PolioPlus Committee, highlighted both progress and challenges in reaching vulnerable populations. Afghanistan and Pakistan remain the only countries with ongoing wild poliovirus transmission. The main issues are access barriers, insecurity and mistrust, while Nigeria



Delegates at the Rotary Convention in Taipei.

faces variant outbreaks. With annual funding of \$50 million from TRF and \$100 million from the Bill Gates Foundation, frontline workers, integrated health campaigns and global advocacy

are driving declining case numbers and renewed confidence.

*The writer is regional content
and magazines lead at RI Global
Communications*

A dream finds a way

Team Rotary News

For Shubham Pandit, becoming a computer engineer was a dream built on hard work and determination. But financial constraints threatened to end his journey before it began.

Shubham's father, Vishnu Pandit, works as an office assistant and also takes up cloth alteration work to support the family. Though he worked tirelessly, funding his son's professional education was beyond his means.

When the family faced this challenge, Nandita Sisodia, wife of Pradeep Sisodia, vice-president of the Rotary Club of Chandigarh Midtown, RID 3080, stepped in. Impressed by



Nandita Sisodia with Shubham Pandit.

Shubham's academic potential and determination, she reached out to various organisations and corporate contacts to find support for his education.

Her persistent efforts resulted in a CSR-sponsored scholarship. On June 5, 2026, she coordinated his admission to the Computer Science Engineering

programme at Chitkara University, Baddi. The sponsorship, worth about ₹8.2 lakh, covers tuition fees, transportation, and other educational expenses.

For Shubham and his family, the support meant more than financial assistance; it turned a distant dream into reality. ■



ESG-READY SINCE 1961

Our founder Abheraj Baldota's core operating principle was 'I am not the owner of wealth, but a privileged trustee to serve the community with it'. Thus it is no surprise that ESG practices are ingrained in our corporate ethos, business strategy and operations since our birth in 1961.

We were the first Indian unlisted company to publish a GRI-compliant sustainability report way back in 2006. We are a large producer of renewable power in India. We were also the first mining company in India to get certified for OHSAS 18001:1999 and ISO 14001:2004. Across the years, we have invested more than Rs. 1235.08 Crore in ESG. From building blood banks to adopting villages and combating climate change, we have been practicing ESG long before it became a buzzword. With 875 acres of forest cover created through the plantation of 21.5 lakh trees, we continue to drive environmental stewardship, reflected in the sustained reduction of specific emissions from our mining operations.



Indore Rotarians celebrate womanhood

Rasheeda Bhagat

This year the celebration of International Women's Day (March 8) in Indore, organised by the Rotary Club of Indore

Royals, RID 3040, in collaboration with the World of Women (WoW) community, a vibrant, leading women's organisation in the city, meant to be a memorable public image initiative for Rotary, got an added zing



PDG Ritu Grover (centre), Suruchi Malhotra (L), founder of World of Women; and RC Indore Royals president Yatti Arora (R) with participants at the women's conclave, Aarohi.

thanks to the meticulous planning and execution of the event.

The initiative was conceived by Yatti Arora, president of RC Indore Royals, a club with 35 members. She says that its thumping success was made possible by the efforts and hard work of many Rotarians coming together as a team.

To begin with WoW itself is a very vibrant organisation of women from all age groups and various

backgrounds, and it has a huge social media presence. Yatti is a board member of that community and is well aware of its far-reaching work for the local community. “In WoW we’ve undertaken various social drives such as coming together to do welfare work like distributing sweaters, books and organising entertainment galas for hearing challenged and other disadvantaged people during festivals such as Holi, Diwali etc.”

The conclave aimed to celebrate womanhood, encourage leadership and women’s business ventures, promote wellness, and create a strong network of empowered women across communities.

One important initiative that WoW encourages and promotes is its members helping each other in supporting and upscaling the business initiatives of fellow women in the local community.

This joint collaboration between Rotary and WoW to celebrate Women’s Day resulted in the organisation of a large-scale women’s conclave titled *Aarohi 2026* in Indore “to celebrate womanhood, encourage leadership and women’s business ventures, promote wellness, and create a strong network of empowered women across communities,” says Yatti.

The conclave saw enthusiastic participation from over 300 attendees, including Rotarians from various clubs in Indore, Dewas, Bhopal, Sonkatch, Nagda and Ujjain, non-Rotarians, women leaders, entrepreneurs and professionals, making it a vibrant platform for learning, sharing and fellowship.

Yatti explains that the idea was to celebrate various facets that contribute to the success, happiness and wellbeing of women, including their economic enterprises. To encourage women’s entrepreneurship, the event



also featured business and lifestyle stalls where women entrepreneurs showcased and sold their products. This initiative provided a valuable platform for visibility, networking, and economic empowerment. “There was a fellowship and networking session, where participants connected informally while exploring women-led entrepreneurial stalls showcasing products and services.” This segment encouraged community bonding and provided women entrepreneurs with visibility and business opportunities.

Asked about the kind of business ventures run by the women who participated in this conclave, the club president says these stalls were manned by women running various ventures in health and wellness, jewellery, handicrafts, and so on. “We had focused on giving stalls mainly to women who have less exposure to

We had focused on giving stalls mainly to women who have less exposure to the market so that they get a higher visibility and a diverse audience.

Yatti Arora
president, RC Indore Royals

the market as they don't have their own shops, and sell their products only from home through some promotions on the social media. So we gave them an opportunity to display their wares at a big event like this conclave so that they get a higher visibility and a diverse audience.”

On the kind of response or marketing opportunities such women got, Yatti says that “more than the financial outcome or what they sold, they were very happy with the kind of attention and interest their products got. They were so enthused that their work was appreciated, and they got a huge morale booster.”

Different sessions at the conclave were made interactive to encourage discussions focusing on personal development, emotional intelligence, physical wellness, and leadership skills. In a panel discussion titled *Junoon Aur Jazbe Ki Jeet* (voices of experience, stories of strength) noted women leaders such as Monika Punjabi, Ishani Maheshwari and Komal Chaturvedi



DG Sushil Malhotra (standing, fourth from L) and his wife Ruby; PDG Ritu; club president Yatti and event chair Suruchi with the club's office-bearers and members.



Beauty educator Unnati Singh giving grooming tips as PDG Ritu looks on. Club president Yatti is on the left.

shared their leadership journeys, described how they overcame challenges, and urged the women in the audience to pursue their aspirations with confidence and embark on their journey with determination and resilience, which were bound to bring them success. The session was moderated by Rtn Rakesh Jain.

In his address, relationship coach Vikas Choudhary shared practical

insight on building meaningful relationships and effective communication. An interesting personality development and grooming session was conducted by Unnati Singh (a global beauty educator), focusing on personal presentation and styling tips.

A session on *Pranic healing and meditation* was conducted by healthcare expert Bhairavi Thakkar from Mumbai. It focused on mental

wellness, emotional balance, and helped the participants to understand energy healing and emotional balance. A powerful storytelling session by Bhavna Pujara titled *The Women's Story* highlighted the strength, resilience, and influence of women in shaping families and communities.

Where women are present, a culinary experience is a must; and the conclave did not disappoint!

Talented chefs from Hotel Sayaji, Indore, hosted an interactive chef workshop, where participants learned creative recipes and took home some useful cooking tips.

Women achievers from diverse fields of education, business, and social service — both Rotarians and non-Rotarians — were honoured for their remarkable contributions to society, leadership, entrepreneurship and community service with awards. “This recognition served as a powerful reminder of Rotary’s commitment to celebrating and promoting women’s achievements,” says Yatti.

Inaugurating the conclave, DG Sushil Malhotra urged women to pursue leadership, service and personal excellence with focus and seriousness. He said such a mega event bringing together Rotarians and non-Rotarians on one platform was bound to boost Rotary’s public image. His wife Ruby, assistant governor Kiran Ghuman and event chairperson Suruchi Malhotra participated.

This initiative significantly strengthened Rotary’s public image and community engagement. The club’s efforts to get more women members into Rotary will get a boost from this event that got wide coverage in the local media.



A culinary workshop at the conclave.

Elated at the success of the event, Yatti said this was her dream project and from the time she became club president she wanted to celebrate an event that would highlight women’s empowerment, even while boosting Rotary’s public image. “When I shared the idea to organise such a celebration on International Women’s Day to PDG Ritu Grover, a member of our club, she encouraged me a lot and said if we do it properly, it will be a blast.”

Yatti is grateful to her for not only giving her encouragement and support “but also energy and confidence. I am a junior Rotarian having been in Rotary just for five years, but this was a very big project and total support from our PDG Ritu meant so much to me. She was so supportive that for 15 days prior to the event, we were all working in her office, sometimes even till 11pm.”

Apart from key conveners including Abha Anand, Rajendra Jain, Sunaina Khanna, Vineeta Shirdhonkar and Rakesh Jain, all Rotarians, the president thanked sponsors and supporters including

Hotel Sayaji Indore, Equitas Small Finance Bank, Srijan Legal Solutions and TVS Garud.

The organisers were happy that throughout the event, the audience remained actively engaged through fun games, lucky draws, and interactive segments, creating a lively and inclusive atmosphere. But it was not all fun and levity; “through meaningful dialogue, recognition and celebration, the conclave exemplified Rotary’s mission of creating opportunities, building connections, and inspiring positive change in society and bringing together Rotarians and non-Rotarian community groups. This initiative significantly strengthened Rotary’s public image and community engagement and is an example of how collaborative leadership and service-driven vision can create meaningful social impact and inspire communities to grow together,” adds Yatti.

Above all she is happy that her club’s efforts to get more women members into Rotary will get a boost from this very visible event that got wide coverage in the local media. ■

Where walls inspire young minds

Team Rotary News

When the school reopened this June after a two-month summer break, the students of Venkateswara Middle School, on the suburbs of Chennai, were in for a delightful surprise. Their familiar campus had been transformed into a bright, colourful and cheerful space. “It was a far cry from what they were used to two months ago,” said R Venkatraman, president of the Rotary Club of Chennai Celebrities, RID 3233.

Through its *Namma School* project, the club set out to create a vibrant, inspiring and child-friendly learning environment where students would look forward to coming to school every day.

During the summer vacation, S Agastin Raj, the project chair, brought together volunteers, artists and Rotarians to give the school campus a complete makeover. Over two days in May, the dull, plain walls were transformed with colourful educational murals, creative artwork and cheerful designs that brought energy and imagination into the school.

The new artwork turned the campus into a lively space where children could learn, explore, and feel inspired. “Bright visuals and engaging themes added a sense of excitement, making classrooms attractive,” said Raj.

District Special Projects chairman Ramkumar, club president Venkatraman and president-elect Peter joined the volunteers in bringing this transformation to life. ■



District Special Projects chairman Ramkumar painting a mural at the school.



Incoming RI directors felicitated in Chennai

Jaishree

Rotary leaders from Zones 5 and 6 felicitated RI director nominees Basu Dev Golyan from RID 3292, Nepal, and Gurjeet Singh Sekhon, RID 3070, Punjab, at an event in Chennai. These two leaders will serve the RI Board during 2027–29. Golyan, who will represent Zones 5 and 6, is a member of RC Biratnagar, and was DG during 2011–12. Sekhon will be the RI director for

Zones 4 and 7; and is a member of RC Amritsar Civil Lines.

Accepting the honour, RIDN Golyan described the felicitation as “not merely a personal honour, but a tribute to the spirit of Rotary.” Looking around the hall, he said, “I do not see different districts, languages or countries; I see only family—a family connected by compassion and united by values. Rotary has given us something far more precious than titles. It has given us friendship beyond borders; respect

beyond positions and the opportunity to touch lives beyond imagination.”

Reflecting on his Rotary journey, he recalled beginning with small acts of service and learning from senior leaders. Over years he witnessed Rotary’s transformative impact through clean water projects, life-changing surgeries, healthcare initiatives and literacy programmes. He also remembered the support extended by Rotarians worldwide during Nepal’s devastating floods in 2008 and earthquake in 2015.

From L: PDG JB Kamdar, RI Director KP Nagesh, PRID PT Prabhakar, RIDN Gurjeet Singh Sekhon, RI Director M Muruganandam, PRID C Basker, RIDN Basu Dev Golyan, TRF Trustee AS Venkatesh and PDG R Srinivasan at the felicitation event in Chennai.



“Positions come and go, but the tears of gratitude in the eyes of beneficiaries remain forever,” he said.

Emphasising leadership development, he noted that Rotary leaders are measured not by the number of followers they have, but by “how many leaders they create.” He called upon Rotarians to strengthen clubs, nurture youth, expand membership and support TRF, which he described as “the heartbeat of Rotary service.” Concluding, he said, “Rotary is not just an organisation; Rotary is an emotion, Rotary is relationship, Rotary is a way of life.”

RIDN Sekhon expressed gratitude for the recognition and acknowledged the Rotary leaders who shaped his journey. He credited PRID PT Prabhakar for mentoring him as district governor, PRID C Basker for giving him his first major assignment

as assistant Rotary coordinator, and trustee AS Venkatesh for igniting his passion for training. Thanking RI directors M Muruganandam and KP Nagesh for their continued guidance, Sekhon said he looked forward to working with other Rotary leaders to make the organisation “stronger, more agile and a force to reckon with in the Rotary world.”

In his address, Director Muruganandam highlighted Rotary’s enduring strength despite wars, pandemics and global challenges. “Rotary is a leadership factory,” he said, explaining how thousands of leadership opportunities are created annually across clubs and districts. Stressing membership growth as a key priority, he called on Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7 to contribute significantly towards Rotary’s goal of reaching the 1.25 million-mark by 2030.

RI director Nagesh congratulated the director nominees and described their appointments as “a significant milestone for Rotary in India and the region.” Praising Golyan’s humility, passion and dedication to service, he said that leading Zones 5 and 6 would be both an honour and a challenge, given the high standards and vibrant Rotary culture of the zones. He expressed confidence that Golyan would represent India, Nepal and Sri Lanka with distinction. Speaking about Sekhon, Nagesh lauded his commitment and leadership qualities, noting that he was well placed to guide Zones 4 and 7. Reiterating Rotary’s goal of reaching 1.25 million members by 2030, he said India was poised

Rotary leaders are measured not by the number of followers they have, but by how many leaders they create.

DGN Basu Dev Golyan

to become Rotary’s largest country and credited successive leaders for strengthening Rotary’s growth and influence.

Offering felicitations also on behalf of PRIDs Basker and Venkatesh, PRID PT Prabhakar shared warm personal memories of both the nominees. Describing Golyan as “a wonderful and fine human being,” he recalled his invaluable support during Rotary events and international travel. On Sekhon, he said, “He was one of the best district governors of 2014–15,” adding that his rise to the position of director nominee came as no surprise.

Programme convener PDG JB Kamdar congratulated both the nominees, and urged DGEs and DGNs present at the event to focus on “deeper impact, meaningful engagement and credibility. True Rotary leadership is about “being present, being heard and empowering others to serve. Let us create districts where collaboration matters more than competition, where inclusion is intentional and every project carries dignity for the people who care.” PDG R Srinivasan delivered the vote of thanks.

Hosted jointly by RI districts 3233 and 3234, the event brought together past, present and incoming governors from Zones 5 and 6. ■



10% of Tamil Nadu MLAs are Rotarians

Team Rotary News

The 2026 Tamil Nadu Legislative Assembly has witnessed a historic milestone — 23 of the 234 elected Members of Legislative Assembly (MLAs) are Rotarians, making up nearly 10 per cent of the House. Among them, five have been inducted into the state cabinet.

The Rotarian legislators were recently felicitated at a special event in Tiruchirappalli by RI director M Muruganandam. Congratulating the ministers and MLAs, he said, “When your thoughts, words and actions travel in the same straight line, you can achieve wonders. If all of us, irrespective of who

we are, follow Rotary’s Four-Way Test, our action will ultimately lead to positive outcome.”

Reflecting on the importance of leadership, he added, “At some point in our lives, all of us would have wished for a good leader at the top — a good MLA, chief minister or prime minister. That word ‘good’ should

remain at the core of anyone who takes up a leadership role, especially as a representative of the people.”

RID 3206 DG Chella Raghavendran said that though Rotarian leaders belonged to different political parties, they shared a common purpose — to do good for the nation.

RI Director M Muruganandam honours Pollachi MLA K Nithyanandhan. Also seen are PDGs S Shanmugasundaram (RID 3203) and P Saravanan (RID 2982), and MLA Leema Rose, an AKS member.





RI Director Muruganandam and RID 3206 DG Chella Raghavendran honour MLA S Kanimozhi. Also seen are RID 3000 DG J Leone (left) and Pollachi MLA Nithyanandhan.

State Industries minister and Sivakasi MLA S Keerthana said, “We will make Rotary proud through our action. We will follow what Rotary has taught us and prove through our work that we are Rotarians.”

Environment minister Dr VK Rajeev, who is a past president of the Rotaract Club of Annamalai University, recalled his Rotaract journey. “Whatever transformation we were working towards during our Rotaract days, I want to continue that on a larger scale for the good of society. I request you all to support and join hands with me to make our state better,” he said.

Pollachi MLA K Nithyanandhan urged Rotarians to focus on contribution rather than expectation. “We must think about what we can do for our organisation, rather than what the organisation can do for us. We are all Rotarians, and our hands should always be hands that serve and give generously,” he said.

S Kanimozhi, representing the Kavundampalayam constituency, Coimbatore, echoed the sentiment, saying she was proud to be a Rotarian first and that her Rotary journey had played an important role in her success.

VK Ramkumar, MLA from Anna Nagar, Chennai, said, “The Rotary motto ‘Service

Above Self’ is what has kept me on the right path with dedication until this moment.”

Madurai East MLA S Karthikeyan highlighted the lifelong bond with Rotary, when he said: “We may be MLAs for a minimum of five years, but we are Rotarians for life.”

MM Gopison, representing Madurai South, said Rotary had taught him to remain focused on service. “Rotary showed me that one can contribute to the transformation of society while pursuing a career or business,” he said.

Senior Rotary leaders from Tamil Nadu districts participated in the event. ■

We will follow what Rotary has taught us and prove through our work that we are Rotarians.

S Keerthana

TN State Industries Minister

Project coordinator Pankaj Patel (kneeling, right) with club members at one of the schools where e-learning facility was provided.



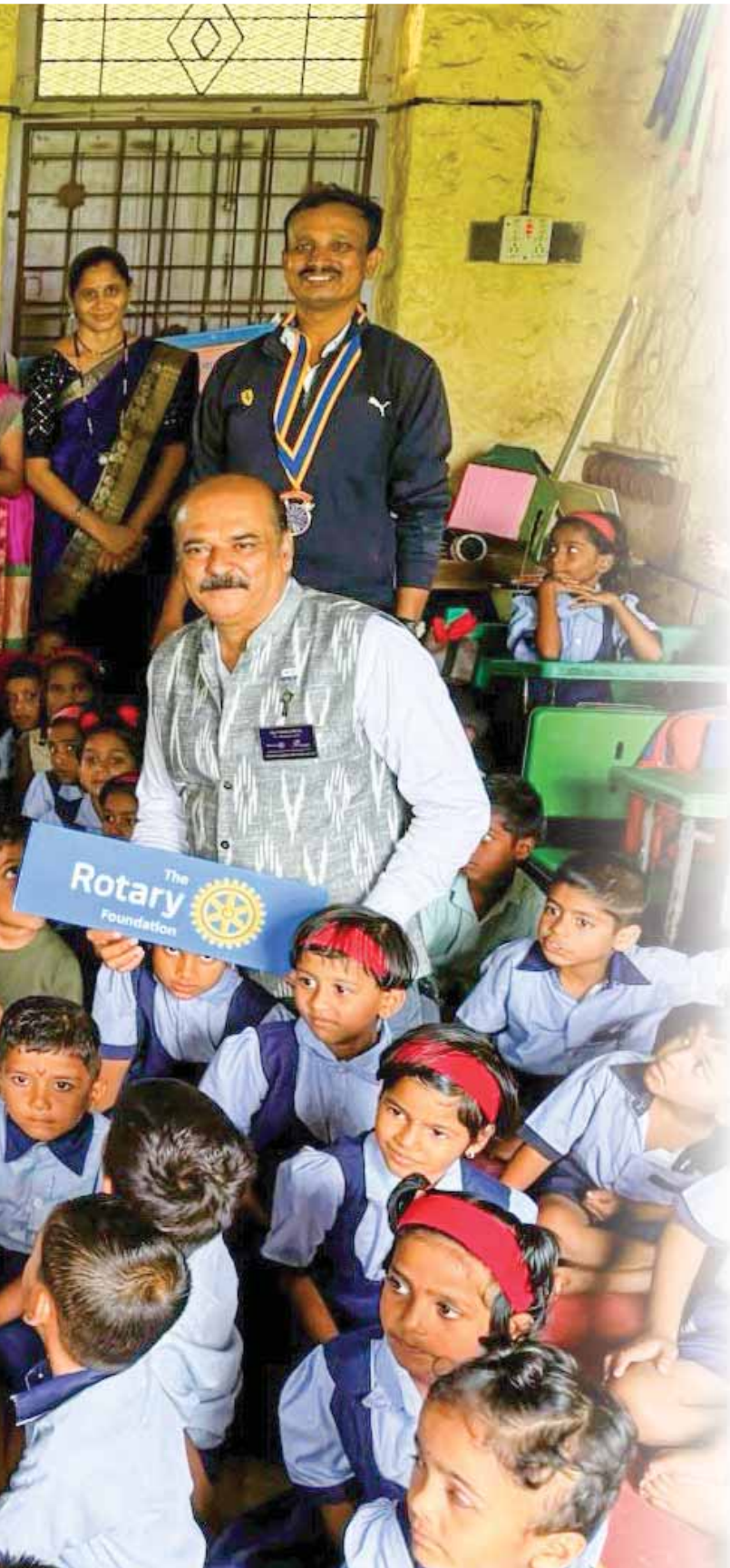
Transforming rural education through digital learning

Rasheeda Bhagat

Leveraging the power of partnerships, a Rotary education initiative spearheaded by the Rotary Club of Pune Far East, RID 3131, titled *Saksham*, has emerged as a highly successful CSR-driven educational initiative which has taken e-learning to nearly 1,000 schools. It has positively impacted the way over 2.4 lakh students across Maharashtra and schools as far flung as Aizawl in Mizoram in the northeast India learn in underserved schools attended by students from poor families.

Tracing the genesis of the project, past club president and project coordinator Pankaj Patel says the club's Rotarians got the idea to give schools in remote and rural areas e-learning digital systems during Covid times, as schools had closed down and students were whiling away their time. "From the onset we made it a TRF-CSR project and found two major CSR partners in Suttatti Enterprises and Sahyadri Industries."

The project continued after Covid too and under the project, schools were equipped with e-learning facilities, with each system costing around ₹50,000. "Our objective was to integrate technology with classroom teaching, thus creating bright educational opportunities for underprivileged children while strengthening the overall quality of education in rural communities," he says.



Towards this end, and with the objective to make this a “total Foundation-CSR project, we started contacting and including smaller clubs in remote/rural areas such as Indupur, Alibagh, Kolapur etc, which cannot carry out such projects on their own.” These club members were educated that when individual members donate small sums to the club for birthdays, anniversaries etc, even if a sum of ₹15,000 is collected, by becoming partners in this project, they could give any school of their choice a digital learning kit costing around ₹50,000, thanks to help from our Foundation’s CSR grants programme.”

Soon this flagship project, involving provision of digital e-learning classrooms equipped with curriculum-mapped audio-visual content, interactive learning tools, teacher training, and





Above: Digital e-learning kit provided to a school in Mizoram.

Left: Patel with students and staff at a school after providing a smart TV there.



The digital classrooms help students learn complex concepts in mathematics, science, English, and other subjects through animations, simulations, videos and interactive activities.

ongoing technical support to create an engaging and effective learning environment, gained traction.

Over the years, “the project has successfully reached thousands of students across Maharashtra and other regions, helping bridge the digital divide and ensuring access to quality education. Through the installation of digital classrooms, students are able to learn complex concepts in mathematics, science, English, and other subjects through animations, simulations, videos and interactive activities, making learning more enjoyable and impactful,” says Patel.

One of the main corporate partners in this project is Sahyadri Industries, which has supported, in the last five years (2020–25), 627 digital e-learning installations in 513 schools, benefiting 1.3 lakh students every year.

In this massive endeavour, 160 Rotary clubs have been involved.

Another CSR partner, Suttatti Enterprises, first gave CSR grants of \$100,000 and then \$26,000, twice. Patel says the core team of the project wanted to reach areas in India which are not yet covered extensively by Rotary. “We had Kashmir in mind, but then our CSR partner Suttatti Enterprises said that as the schools in northeastern parts of India also remain



neglected and they would love to see us do something in that region. Hence, we chose schools in the Aizawl region to give digital classrooms.”

Thus e-learning systems were installed in some tribal areas in Mizoram, and at the inauguration of the project in Aizawl, Mizoram’s School Education minister Vanlalhlana

said he was delighted to be part of the event where Rotary was giving schools in his state smart TVs which could change the lives of students. “We find that many times the difference between an average student and an extraordinary student is not intelligence. It is exposure, access, and whether the child gets the right learning environment at the right time. In a fast-moving world, we cannot be left behind in technology. A student studying in a small school in Mizoram

deserves the same quality of learning as a student studying in New Delhi, Bangalore, Pune, or even New York.”

Technology can help reduce such a gap. That is why this initiative was very important. He disclosed that he was the first president of the Rotaract Club of Aizawl, and had set it up after returning from a Rotary Youth Exchange programme on the request of the Rotarians who had selected him for the RYE programme. He wasn’t even 18 then, but he started the club which organised a



Students ready to welcome the Rotarians with a dance performance at one of the schools.

music concert. The year was 1996, and within three months the club had raised ₹1.5 lakh. Unfortunately, he changed his college and left the club, but was still invited for its meetings. Today, many members of that Rotaract club have become successful officers and businessmen, he disclosed.

Thanking RC Pune Far East and Suttatti Enterprises for sponsoring e-classes at 10 schools in the region, the minister said the government alone cannot transform education.

The community, organisations and corporates should work together to improve the future of the students. Today's world was very different from the world they all had grown up in. "Those days, we didn't have TVs in classrooms. The classroom is no longer limited to four walls; information is everywhere and competition is global. The future will belong not to those who memorise facts, but those who can think, adapt, communicate and create, and look beyond textbooks."

The way technology was being used was very different in present times. Vanlalhlana said he himself was on Instagram, monitored it regularly and downloaded interesting videos which he often showed to youngsters at meetings he addressed. The challenge before teachers today was to make adequate use of technology to keep their students engaged. Today, teachers have an additional power, that of technology, which they'll have to learn to use it to their advantage.



He assured teachers that technology would never replace them, but they should get mileage from it, making optimum use of AI.

Patel said the club members were very happy to install e-learning sets in schools in the northeast on the wishes of their CSR partner. “It was a sheer joy to see the happiness these e-learning kits had brought to the tribal children. We were really happy to see a little girl, whose leg has been

amputated, dancing merrily after experiencing learning on the TV set.”

Now their donor company has agreed to give us more CSR funds; Stuttatti Enterprises has already supported in the last five years 650 digital installations in 484 schools, benefiting over 1.11 lakh students. Here too 164 Rotary clubs were involved in implementing this project.

The combined impact of *Saksham* has been the installation of 1,277

digital learning systems in 997 schools, reaching e-learning to over 2.41 lakh students, added Patel.

This education programme, he added, has enhanced student understanding through animated and interactive content, improved attendance, participation and learning outcomes, and helped teachers to adopt technology with ready-to-use digital teaching resources in rural and government schools. “Though this initiative, we hope to gradually reduce educational disparities between urban and rural students and create a sustainable digital learning ecosystem.”

Giving the last word to the minister from Mizoram, who while thanking Rotary for its initiative in Mizoram said: “Years from now, one 15-year-old child from this programme may become a scientist, an entrepreneur, a teacher, an artist or a leader. You may never fully realise how many lives you are touching through this initiative. The learning, the experience and the help that you have given them will determine where they go.”



Students welcome Rotarians with a song at a school.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Kolkata hospital gets dialysis centre

Team Rotary News



PDGs Angsuman Bandyopadhyay (L) and Sudip Mukherjee (third from L) at the inauguration of the dialysis centre.

A dialysis centre with five machines has been set up by RC Aarohee Calcutta, RID 3291, at the IDBG Hospital, Beliaghata, through a global grant with a DDF contribution of \$15,000 from its global partner, Rotary Club of Wake Forest, RID 7710, US.

The then DG Hiralal Yadav (2023–24) sanctioned a district fund of \$7,000 for the project, and the balance was made good through member contributions.

Subir Mukherjee, chair, Foundation Committee, from the US club coordinated with the Rotarians from RC Aarohee Calcutta. The club partnered with the West Bengal government under the PPP model to identify the beneficiary hospital, after selecting the Sterling Hospital as the service provider.

The machines were installed in partnership with Sterling Hospital, and a trial operation was done in May 2025. DRFC Sudip Mukherjee, who chartered the club in 2020–21, inaugurated the new dialysis centre on the hospital premises. Following the installation, the centre began with 700–800 dialysis sessions a month, operating 24x7, and the machines are expected to serve around 3,000 kidney patients. ■

2027 Convention

¡Hola, Barcelona!

The Rotary International Convention is coming to Barcelona in June 2027, and members who've visited the city along the sea or who live there can hardly contain their excitement.

They want other Rotary members (yes, you!) to experience the energy, culture, and renowned landmarks of the city they love. Speaking of landmarks, the timing of the 26–30 June convention is perfect for visiting Barcelona's signature attraction, the Sagrada Família basilica. Under construction for more than 140 years, the Antoni Gaudí masterpiece reached a milestone after workers finished its final, tallest tower earlier this year.

Some members are saying they're excited to make this their first convention — or to return for another. The gathering has been compared to the United Nations because it often attracts members from 150 countries or more.

Other members are excited to revisit the city after attending the last convention there in 2002, and European members are sure to show up in force for the first convention on their continent since 2019. Rotarians and Rotaractors in Spain can't wait to welcome you to the city known for its warm spirit, breathtaking architecture, food that you'll remember years later, and stunning Mediterranean beaches.



Stroll the Plaça d'Espanya where prominent corridors converge at a sprawling plaza of museums, public art, restaurants, a bullfighting ring, and the Magic Fountain light show. And get tickets in advance for Park Güell with its gardens, play spaces, and more of Gaudí's ornamental architecture.

What speakers, performers, excursions, learning topics, and inspiration are convention organizers lining up? They're hard at work on a programme that is sure to impress (Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai spoke at the convention last month). They'll combine Rotary traditions, world-class experiences, and the chance for stress-free travel.

Registration opens in September. Learn more at convention.rotary.org.

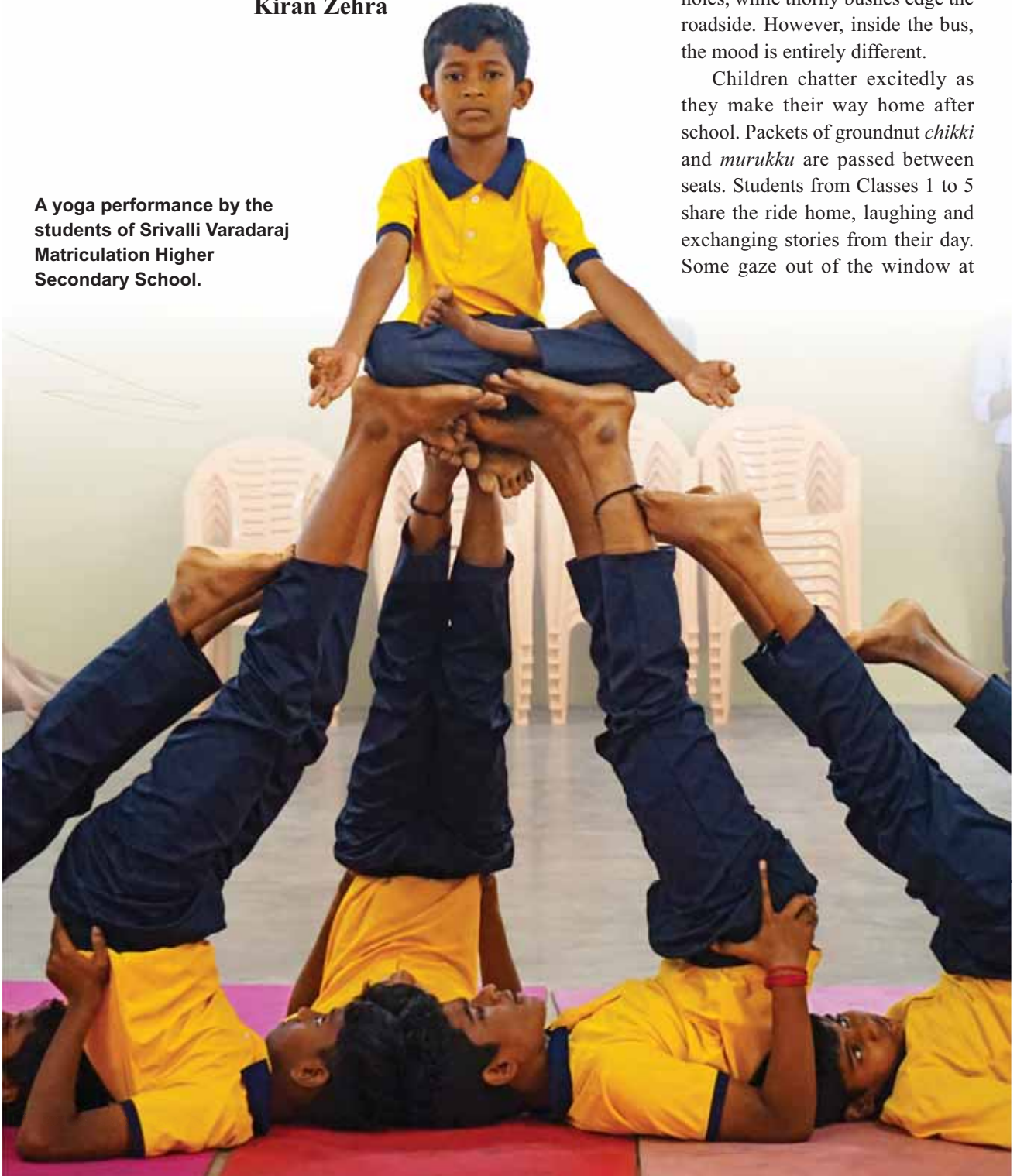
Rotary's partnership with a rural school is changing lives

Kiran Zehra

A yoga performance by the students of Srivalli Varadaraj Matriculation Higher Secondary School.

The school bus sways gently as it navigates narrow, uneven roads cutting through the countryside of Theni in Tamil Nadu. Outside, green paddy fields stretch towards the horizon. Recent rains have left stretches of mud and pot-holes, while thorny bushes edge the roadside. However, inside the bus, the mood is entirely different.

Children chatter excitedly as they make their way home after school. Packets of groundnut *chikki* and *murukku* are passed between seats. Students from Classes 1 to 5 share the ride home, laughing and exchanging stories from their day. Some gaze out of the window at



the passing fields, while a little boy, exhausted after a long day at school, sleeps peacefully on his teacher's lap.

Just a few years ago, many of these children would have walked five kilometres to school. Some would have traversed through 8–10km on the same difficult roads that the bus now navigates with ease.

The new buses are taking the students of Srivalli Varadaraj Matriculation Higher Secondary School, near Andipatti in Theni, back home. While the yellow vehicles may seem like a simple addition to the school campus, they represent something much larger. "Access to education; for children growing up in rural communities, opportunities are often limited by distance and circumstance. These buses help bridge that gap," says the school principal V Rajendra Prasad.

Built on a spot surrounded by sugarcane farms and coconut groves, away from noise and pollution, is the Srivalli Varadaraj Matriculation School in a village close to the Vaigai Dam in Tamil Nadu. The township, Varadaraj Nagar, is named after the Coimbatore-based industrialist, educationist and PDG of then RID 3201 G Varadaraj, from the PSG family. GV, as he was affectionately known, was also a Rajya Sabha MP.

The school draws students from neighbouring villages, where most parents work in the fields, weaving units and small-scale industries.



Elementary class students heading home after school.

The genesis

When GV requested former TN chief minister MG Ramachandran, a close friend, to approve the setting up of a medical college in Coimbatore, MGR suggested that he build a sugar factory near his constituency, Andipatti, a sugarcane belt. Thus was born Rajshree Sugars and Chemicals in what was otherwise a barren land with little employment opportunities. Today the factory is a source of income for several thousand villagers and sugarcane farmers. Rajshree Pathy, GV's daughter, is its managing director, and charter president of RC Coimbatore Texcity, RID 3206.

Having ushered in substantial economic development around the area, GV wanted to construct a school for the children in the region, but passed away before this could be done. Rajshree turned her father's dream into a reality in 2007 by setting up the school on an 18-acre plot near the factory.

The present

The school draws students from neighbouring villages, where most parents

work in the fields, weaving units and small-scale industries. "Among our parents, the most financially secure is a bus conductor," smiles Prasad.

Most of the students are first generation learners. "The parents are keen to give them the school experience with the hope of building a better future for them. We want to give them a good education, help them believe in themselves and make sure that no child misses out on learning because his family cannot afford the fees."

The Rotary connection

Rajshree chose PDG S Krishnaswami, a member of RC Madras, RID 3234, who was a trusted friend of her father, as mentor and advisor to the institution. He continues to play with dedication. Over the years, he has mobilised support from fellow Rotarians and friends. He rarely speaks about the children's hardships. Instead, he talks about their talent, potential and determination to succeed. "When I meet friends and fellow Rotarians, I tell them about our students and how bright they are.

I invite them to visit the school and see for themselves,” says Krishnaswami, Many do just this.

“What begins as a casual visit often turns into a lasting connection. Visitors meet our confident young students, dedicated teachers and families who place immense value on education despite limited means. They leave inspired not by a sense of pity, but by a belief that these children deserve the same opportunity as anyone else,” says Prasad. Over time, those visits have grown into a network of Rotary partnerships that have helped the school improve transportation, infrastructure, technology, teacher training and access to opportunities for these students.

Under a global grant of \$59,388, RC Coimbatore, RID 3206, along with RC Wynnum and Manly, RID 9260, Australia, has provided two school buses and classroom furniture.

A second GG valued at \$71,500, brought together RCs Madras Coromandel, RID 3234, and

Students in the chemistry lab.



The school kitchen garden harvest.



PDG S Krishnaswami interacting with students.



Students enjoying a game in the volleyball court.



potential. They want to help them continue their education,” he says.

Inside the classroom

Most students converse confidently in English. “This is a remarkable achievement considering many are the first in their families to receive formal education,” points out Prasad. They regularly take part in debates, elocution contests and other inter-school events. In the STEM lab, students proudly walk visitors through their projects, explaining concepts and experiments with surprising ease.

Well-equipped laboratories and well-maintained toilet blocks and wash stations for boys and girls complete the picture. Three medical examinations — skin, eye and dental — and education on menstrual hygiene for the adolescent girl students and career guidance seminars are conducted every year.

“Students from neighbouring schools regularly visit our lab facilities for practical classes,” says Prasad.

The school boasts of a kitchen garden maintained by the students, two volleyball courts and a large playground, a play area for the kindergarten section and a library.

But unpaid fees have accumulated over the years, amounting to nearly ₹2 crore. “Even so, the school continues to keep its doors open to children whose families are struggling financially, choosing kindness over exclusion,” Krishnaswami says with pride. He also gives scholarships for achievers in the name of his family members.

Despite the financial challenges faced by the school, the students continue to shine. For the past several years, the school has been achieving 100 per cent results in Class 10 and Class 12 board examinations. This year 33 students scored above 400 marks in the Class 12 boards.

Cataraqui-Kingston, RID 7040, Canada, to provide two more buses and support for teacher training.

Over the years, Rotary clubs, individual Rotarians and well-wishers helped the school secure computers worth around ₹20 lakh, RO drinking water systems worth about ₹3 lakh; build compound walls and establish scholarships. Recently an HPV vaccination drive was organised by RCs Theni Stars and Dindigul Queency, RID 3000, with sponsorship from RC Madras, RID 3234. Nearly 70 students received the vaccine.

Krishnaswami recalls a recent visit by a group of Freemasons who, impressed by the school and its students, volunteered to pay the fees of three students. “When visitors come here, they don’t see a problem to be solved. They see children with

Pictures by Kiran Zehra

Rajpura Rotarians help 7 couples tie the knot

Rasheeda Bhagat

Every year the Rotary Club Greater Rajpura, RID 3090, organises a mass marriage (*samuhik vivah*) for couples from underprivileged families, where all the expenses related to the religious ceremonies, bridal wear, food, and even a basic set of household essential items for the new couple, are taken care of by the project.

This year too, come April and seven young men and women were married in a grand celebration held in traditional Indian style. Complete ceremonial arrangements, from

organisation of religious rituals to the feast (*Bhandara*) for the guests were made by the Rotarians. Past president of the club and its present secretary Manoj Modi said the club decided to organise a “grand mass marriage ceremony for seven men and women belonging to needy families, with all the dignity, grace, joy and celebrations carried out in most Indian weddings.”

Around ₹10 lakh was spent on the entire event and each couple was gifted household items such as a bed and mattress, suitcase, bridal wear complete with make-up kits

for the brides, and sherwanis for the bridegrooms, seven sets of clothes for the brides, and three sets for the grooms, a modest dining table with 4 chairs, kitchen utensils and some items which individual club members donated according to their choice. Women who knew tailoring were given sewing machines, so that they could start earning a livelihood.

“Over 500 guests from both the brides’ and bridegrooms’ families attended the ceremony. All guests were served



Newly-wed couples celebrate their wedding day by cutting a cake.

delicious food with utmost respect, care and dignity, truly reflecting the spirit of Rotary service, compassion and humanity,” said Naveen Garg, district secretary.

Modi said till now the club has helped over 150 couples and their families to conduct their weddings. On how the matches are made he said the Rotarians don't play any role in matchmaking. “On the other hand, people in this region are well aware that our Rotary club helps to conduct marriage celebrations of couples who can't afford to do this. We've also advertised this project through social media, posters and flyers, and since we've been doing this for so many years, many people know about this project. So we get applications from the families, who have already chosen partners for their sons or daughters.”

Once the applications are received, with the groom and bride's Aadhar cards to ensure they meet the legal marriage age requirements, the verification committee checks these, and other criteria such as the economic status of the family This

is certified by the sarpanch of the village who knows the families at close quarters. Only those who cannot afford wedding expenses are considered for this project. The club has celebrated the marriage of couples from all faiths... for Hindus the *pheras* are performed by the purohit; for Muslims Nikah is performed by the Maulvi/Qazi, for Christians and Sikhs, churches and Gurudwaras are identified for the marriage rituals.

Modi added that their district's DG Bhupesh Mehta had really taken to this project and had himself presided over the mass marriage conducted by the club. He participated in the celebrations and blessed the couples. “He has endorsed this idea saying that as today marriages are becoming increasingly difficult to conduct by economically disadvantaged classes because of the rising costs, and if the family is not able to organise a decent



celebration along with a good meal, others will gossip and the marriage begins on a shaky foundation. Hence, he said, what we are doing is a real service to the community.”

So what about dowry? “There's absolutely no question about it,” he says, adding that the entire event “thanks to its excellent organisation, disciplined management and humanitarian approach, was noted and appreciated not only in Rajpura but also in the surrounding areas, boosting Rotary's public image.”

While all the club's Rotarians led by its president Dr Surinder Kumar worked for the project, much of the funding was given by two NRIs Deepak Sood (US) and Vineesh Chugh (Canada). “This project truly reflected the Rotary ideals of Service Above Self and social responsibility towards the weaker sections of society,” said Dr Kumar, club president.

He added that those interested in couples who qualify for help under this project can be referred to the club on the Rotary Club Rajpura Greater Facebook Group. ■



Wedding rituals being performed in the presence of club members.

Rotarians create an urban forest in Chennai

V Muthukumaran

Despite the mid-summer blaze and sweltering heat on a humid June morning, hundreds of Rotarians and Rotaractors from RID 3234 armed with shovels and saplings displayed a jubilant mood as they planted 15,000 trees to mark World Environment Day, June 5. A series of small dugouts was prepared in advance for the planting drive on a 48-acre plot at

the University of Madras' Taramani campus. But unperturbed by the cruel heat, dirt and sweat, the group of Rotarians and Rotaractors continued planting in a spirit of cheer and togetherness.

Project Amrit Vanam is a grand mission to develop an urban forest at this famed 'IT corridor of Chennai'. In a two-hour drive, they planted fruit-bearing trees, creepers, shrubs, tropical and wild species, in

a mood of conviviality and bonding celebrating Rotary bonhomie. "All the 86 clubs of RID 3234 are being led by their presidents to create a wonderful urban forest which will act as the lungs of the city. They are also joined by Rotaractors to transform this barren land into a beautiful ecosystem," said DG Vinod Saraogi. He thanked DGND Ravi Sundaresan, district environment chair, for "working tirelessly and coordinating with the sponsor clubs to make the greening drive a mega success."

He was happy to take part in this Rotary tree planting drive, the first of many programmes and events scheduled to mark the special day, said Tamil Nadu's minister for environment and climate change VK Rajeev, a doctor Rotarian from RC East Coast Ramnad, RID 3212. Recalling his days as a Rotaract president at Dr Rajah Muthiah Medical College, Chidambaram, he said, "While it is noteworthy





Above: RID 3234 DG Vinod Saraogi plants a sapling, aided by Rotarians.

Below: RID 3234 Rotaractors at the mega tree planting drive.



that Rotary is creating a dense urban forest, we also have to create awareness on the need to avoid single-use plastic in our daily life.” Pointing to the vinyl flex board behind the podium, he said, “in future instead of such harmful banners, use cloth boards and eco-friendly hoardings.”

A pollution-free TN is one of the objectives of the new government, said Rajeev, and told

Rotarians to take up awareness campaigns on the proper segregation of bio and non-bio waste for recycling, “which will go a long way in ensuring a healthier society.” He assured DG Saraogi and the clubs that the state government “will support all the environment-friendly initiatives of Rotary to make Tamil Nadu a frontrunner in sustainable progress.” As many as 13 ruling party MLAs are Rotarians, of them five were inducted as ministers.

We are transforming a barren land into a green ecosystem that will improve air quality, enhance biodiversity, and reduce carbon emissions for a lasting environmental legacy.

DGND Ravi Sundaresan
project chair

A gift for GenNext

Event chair DGND Sundaresan said, “the urban forest is being created using a scientific planting method for long-term ecological impact. We are transforming a barren land into a green ecosystem that will improve air quality, enhance biodiversity, reduce carbon emissions and create a lasting environmental legacy.” A private-public-partnership model



DG Saraogi (centre) with DGND Ravi Sundaresan (on his right), CommuniTree founder Hafiz Khan (extreme left) and Rotarians from RID 3234 at *Project Amrit Vanam*.

is followed with the involvement of Rotary, Madras University and the Green Tamil Nadu Mission in the creation of this forest on the varsity campus; and “the model project can be adopted for replication across the state and by other RI districts.”

Apart from supporting climate action, the new forest “will create a long-term green legacy for future generations as it will also help in reducing carbon footprints, improve air quality through oxygen generation, and conserve biodiversity.”

CommuniTree founder Hafiz Khan, an expert in urban forestry, guided around 600 Rotarians and Rotaractors in planting the saplings. “To begin with, we are creating a 400-metre tree tunnel, which will be extended to 2km once the forest is fully developed,” said Khan. After completion, the “tree tunnel will be one of the largest such urban covers in the country,” he said with pride. His NGO team has planted 1.8 million trees across states, designed oxygen detox zones for high-rise residential societies, and is known for its pioneering work in turtle conservation.

After the creation of the urban forest, the tree tunnel will be one of the largest such urban covers in the country.

Hafiz Khan
founder, CommuniTree

DRR Sathish Kumar said, “we are creating a new ecosystem which will give a sense of belonging to over 300 Rotaractors from 72 Rotaract clubs taking part in the mega planting drive.” As most of them are college goers, “very soon many of them will be employed in the IT corridor running along this route. And they can take justifiable pride in creating this urban forest while commuting on this stretch of the IT highway after they get employed in any one of these tech companies,” he said.

Prof S Armstrong, member, Vice Chancellor Convener Committee, Madras University, said

that climate, nature and future are the “three watch words for the younger generation, and the Madras University is one of the few higher institutions in the country that has such a vast campus for advanced research in basic medical sciences. We are happy to collaborate with Rotary and the government.”

CommuniTree will nurture the saplings for the next three years, during which a geo-tagged quarterly report will be sent to RID 3234 clubs, and shared with the Rotary Foundation India. “In July-August, another 50,000 saplings will be planted on the same 48-acre campus, and a strong compound fence will be raised to protect and nurture the trees,” said Sundaresan.

Project Amrit Vanam, costing ₹42 lakh, is sponsored by RCs Madras, Madras Central, Chennai Carnatic and Chennai Renaissance, and is supported by 12 sister clubs of RID 3234. Rotarians and Rotaractors took a World Environment Day pledge, with Hafiz Khan reading out the oath citation.

Pictures by Muthukumar

A mega health camp

Over 1,000 people benefitted from a mega health check-up and treatment camp organised by RC Beed Midtown, RID 3132, across 11 villages in Beed taluk, Maharashtra. The initiative was implemented in association with the Chief Minister’s Relief Fund Cell and Charity Hospital Assistance Cell Beed, St Anne’s Social Centre, Bahirwadi, and the health department of Beed zilla parishad. Free medical consultations, medicines, and specialist care were provided, with support from a team of doctors and healthcare volunteers.



A beneficiary collecting prescribed medicines at the camp.

Pink autos donated

RC Kolhapur Heritage, RID 3170, in association with the RCKOP Heritage Foundation, handed over autorickshaws to three women under an initiative to promote their economic independence. The project, supported by CSR donors, was inaugurated by Kolhapur mayor Ruparani Nikam in the presence of DG Arun Bhandare and club members.



DG Arun Bhandare (third from L) handing over the vehicle keys to beneficiaries.

Breast cancer screening camps

RID 3211 screened over 5,000 women across Kerala for early breast cancer through an AI-powered thermal imaging device under the district’s women-centric initiative, *Oppol*. Implemented with 165 Rotary clubs and four hospitals, the project promoted accessible, painless and radiation-free breast cancer screening to support early detection and preventive healthcare.



DG Tina Antony and members of RC Kottayam East at a breast cancer screening camp.

Cool relief for jail inmates

RC Sambalpur, RID 3261, donated six air coolers to the main jail and two to the women’s jail in Sambalpur to help inmates cope with the intense summer heat. The initiative was undertaken in response to a request from the jail superintendent.



Club members with jail authorities after donating the air coolers.

Apply yourself

Illustration by Kenzo Hamazaki



As part of the family of Rotary, members are invited to lend their professional expertise on committees that support Rotary and The Rotary Foundation. Each year, these committees focus on putting Rotary’s strategic priorities into action, challenging clubs to increase their impact, expand their reach, enhance participant engagement, and increase Rotary’s ability to adapt.

Would you like to contribute to Rotary’s success?

RI and the Foundation are searching for qualified Rotarians and Rotaractors to serve on committees in the 2027–28 Rotary year. These positions offer an opportunity for you to apply your leadership skills, share your vocational experience, and help ensure diverse perspectives within each committee.

Rotarians and Rotaractors with expertise in the areas detailed in the chart are encouraged to apply. The number of openings is limited. If you’re not selected this year, you are welcome to apply again next year. All committees correspond through email and on virtual platforms, typically with one mandatory in-person meeting a year. Rotaractors are encouraged to apply to any area based on their background, skills and experience. Dual members of Rotary and Rotaract are especially welcome to apply.

To be considered for committee membership or to recommend a Rotarian or Rotaractor for an appointment, visit on.rotary.org/application2026. Applicants must be registered on My Rotary at my.rotary.org and should make sure their My Rotary profile includes current contact information. Applications are due **August 15**. ■

Area of Expertise	Function	Prerequisites	Openings
Audit	Advises leadership on audited financial reports, internal and external audits, and internal control systems	Independence, appropriate business experience, and demonstrated financial literacy in accounting, auditing, banking, insurance, investment, risk management, executive management or audit governance	One position with a four-year term
Communications	Advises leadership on Rotary’s overall public image, branding, communications, content strategy	Professional background and experience in internal and external communications, marketing, public image, brand, public relations, media and content strategy	Two positions with three-year terms

Enhancing participant engagement	Advises leadership on enhancing participant engagement and fostering a welcoming and accessible club culture rooted in respect that values different perspectives and voices	Professional or educational experience related to shaping a culture of respect and positive engagement, facilitating difficult conversations, and uniting individuals to solve problems	Two positions with three-year terms
Finance	Advises the RI Board on Rotary's finances, including budgets and sustainability measures	Professional background in a finance-related field; nonprofit experience preferred. Candidates should have experience in financial matters at the club and district levels	Two positions with three-year terms
Fund development	Advises The Rotary Foundation trustees on all aspects of fundraising	Significant experience in nonprofit fundraising. Committee members actively fundraise and support the Foundation	Two positions with three-year terms
Investment	Oversees the management of Rotary's investments and the implementation of investment policies by the office of investment. Makes investment policy recommendations to the respective boards of governance	Institutional investment experience or equivalent	One position with a four-year term
Learning	Advises leadership on creating effective learning opportunities for Rotary leaders and members	Adult learning expertise within or outside Rotary. Experience in the professional learning field (including e-learning) or with planning and implementing learning events at the member, club, district, zone and international levels	Two positions with three-year terms
Operations review	Advises leadership on the effectiveness of operations, administrative procedures, and standards of conduct. Serves as the advisory compensation committee to the Executive Committee of the RI Board	Experience in management, leadership development or financial management, and thorough knowledge of Rotary's operations. Appointments are limited to past RI directors and past Foundation trustees	One position with a four-year term
Strategic planning	Advises leadership on matters regarding the strategic plan	Significant experience in long-term planning, financial management, and RI and Foundation programme activities	Two positions with four-year terms
Technology	Advises leadership on enhancing technology practices, products, and strategy to improve the member and participant experience	Expertise in technology development, security and data privacy, product management and user/participant experience. Non-Rotarian technology experts may be appointed	Two positions with three-year terms



RID 2981

RC Kumbakonam

An eye check-up camp was held jointly with the Mahatma Rotary Orange Hybrid Eye Vision Centre. Apart from consultation and treatment, a team of doctors identified those in need of surgery which was coordinated by the club.



Club matters



RID 3053

RC Alwar Aravali

Thirty women were trained at the Subhash Chand Gupta Memorial Sewing Centre. Now with the third batch being trained, the project empowers women with sustainable livelihood.

RID 3060

RC Porbandar

Sleeping cots were distributed to 100 sanitation workers and families living in slum areas at Khijdi Plot Garden at a project cost of ₹1 lakh. This will provide comfort and care to the underprivileged.





RID 3080

RC Paonta Sahib

A total of 400 anti-rabies vaccine doses were donated to the Sub-Divisional Veterinary Hospital under Rotary Against Rabies Exposure (RARE) programme. Under this project, over 250 strays were vaccinated with the help of local residents.

RID 3011

RC Faridabad Aravalli

An X-ray unit, blood testing machine, microscope, two ambulances, a tractor, two cow-lifting machines and surgical devices (CSR grant: \$63,000) were donated to Shri Vraj Kamad Surbhi Van and Research Institute, a veterinary hospital in Pahalwara. It was supported by PJS Overseas.



RID 3100

RC Haldaur

Over 100 patients were screened at a heart check-up camp held jointly with the Metro Hospital, Noida. Blood sugar, BP, BMI and ECG tests were done, and Dr Arya called for avoiding fried, fatty foods, excess sugar and refined flour.



RID 3110

RC Agra Royal

DG Rajen Vidyarthi inaugurated an RO water plant with two coolers at the Pandit Deendayal Government Inter College, Midhakur in Bichpuri block. The project was coordinated by Rekha Agarwal.



Mahua workshop opens livelihood opportunities for tribal women

Jaishree

The Rotary Club of Jalgaon, RID 3030, is helping tribal women turn a traditional forest resource into a source of sustainable income.

The club recently organised a two-day workshop in a village located 70–75km from Jalgaon in the Satpura mountain range, where 38 tribal women were trained to prepare a variety of value-added products using mahua flowers.

The workshop was led by Dr Sathish Gogulwar from Gadchiroli, an expert in the field, who taught participants to make *chivda*, laddoo, cakes, gulab jamun, jam and barfi from mahua flowers.

He also guided the women on packaging, marketing and selling these products, enabling them to earn a livelihood from a resource abundantly available in their region.

“The mahua trees are aplenty in this area and villagers traditionally ferment the flowers to make Mahua wine and other alcoholic beverages. Through this workshop, we wanted women to discover alternative and more profitable uses of these flowers,” says club president Girish Kulkarni.

The mahua tree occupies a special place in the lives of tribal communities across central and western India. Its sweet, nutrient-rich flowers are edi-

ble and highly versatile. Traditionally, sun-dried flowers are used as a natural sweetener in dishes such as *kheer*, halwa and puddings. They are also valued for their medicinal properties and are often consumed with curd or in syrup form.

Rich in vitamins, calcium, iron, proteins and enzymes, mahua flowers are known in Ayurveda for supporting immunity, improving digestion and combating weakness. They are also believed to possess analgesic and cooling properties, and are used in traditional remedies for respiratory ailments and lactation support.

By introducing the women to the nutritional, medicinal and commercial

Tribal women learning to prepare dishes from mahua flowers.





Above: Laddoos being made with mahua flowers.

Below: Tribal women learn to make *chivda* with mahua flowers.



Rich in vitamins, calcium, iron, proteins and enzymes, mahua flowers are known in Ayurveda for supporting immunity, improving digestion and combating weakness.

value of mahua flowers, Dr Gogulwar encouraged them to make productive use of a resource that is readily available in their surroundings.

The Gandhi Research Foundation, an NGO that works with tribal population, coordinated with the villages for the workshop.

Beyond its community service projects, RC Jalgaon also nurtures fellowship and learning through an innovative initiative called *Rotary Vachan Katta*, a book-reading session held on alternate weekends. Unlike conventional fellowship meetings, members bring books they would like to recommend, read selected passages and discuss ideas that have inspired them.

As part of this Rotary Reading Circle series, the club recently organised a special 'Couples Edition' titled *You are my companion*. Eighteen couples took part in the programme, with each participant reading a self-written two-minute tribute to his/her spouse.

The event provided a platform for members to express gratitude, recount shared journeys, acknowledge sacrifices and celebrate the partnerships that support their Rotary service. "The programme revealed the human stories behind Rotarians and strengthened bonds within the Rotary family. Participants described the experience as inspiring, emotional and memorable," says Kulkarni. ■

A Rotary Blood Stem Cell Registry

A past Rotaractor, Nilesh Shah was the charter secretary of his club, formed in 2004 with 20 members, mostly former Rotaract leaders. He treasures his memories with PRIP Kalyan Banerjee of RC Vapi, whom he calls his role model. "Kalyan *da* has always inspired me, and his guidance continues to shape Rotarians in Vapi and beyond," says Shah.

Today, the district has 104 clubs and over 5,000 Rotarians. He wants to charter seven new clubs and achieve 10 per cent growth in net membership. His district has partnered with DATRI, an NGO, to create the Rotary Blood Stem Cell Registry. Through *Project Jeevan Setu*, awareness campaigns and donation drives will be held across Gujarat and Maharashtra. This registry will bring new hope to patients battling thalassaemia and blood cancer.

Project Gram Kalyan, in partnership with the Indian Medical Association (IMA), will improve the healthcare and livelihoods of 60,000 villagers to ensure rural progress. Through district managed GGs (over ₹3 crore) 45 dialysis machines will be installed in government and charitable hospitals. "We used to do at least 13–15 GG projects every year across Rotary's focus areas," he says. Some of the upcoming GG projects include upgrading 4–5 government primary and higher secondary schools (over ₹50 lakh) with sanitation facilities, new classroom furniture and computer labs; and equipping 10–12 government hospitals with modern medical facilities (₹2.5–3 crore).

His target for TRF-giving is \$2 million. "We are guiding the clubs on the application process for global grants for a smooth rollover of service projects in the coming months," he smiles.



Nilesh Shah
Graphic designer
RC Vapi Riverside
RID 3060

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran



Rajesh Patil
Paediatrician
RC Jalgaon West
RID 3030

Creating knowledgeable Rotarians

With RID 3030 having 122 clubs with over 6,000 Rotarians, Dr Rajesh Patil is confident of forming 15–20 new clubs during his tenure, "including 10 hobby-based and satellite Rotary groups to attract like-minded professionals".

He will be holding six CROP (continuous Rotary orientation programmes) sessions across the six regions of his district each month with the "aim to increase the number of Rotarians enriched with Rotary knowledge in each club" so that they can share their expertise in multifarious projects. On the medical front, 30 dialysis centres (CSR+GG: ₹1.5 crore) will come up either as standalone or attached to government and charity hospitals; and a paediatric cardiac surgery unit will be set up (GG+CSR with private donors: ₹2 crore) at a charity hospital in Jalgaon.

At least 30 zilla parishad schools will be converted into Rotary schools with funding from CSR India grant (₹2 crore), after upgrading them with sanitation facilities, RO units, play equipment, open gyms, smart classes and furniture, says Dr Patil. "We are in the process of identifying the schools now, after which the work will be taken up in a phased manner." Robotic labs will be installed at 26 government schools in rural areas with CSR India grant (₹3 crore) for teaching students AI and machine learning.

His target for TRF-giving is \$1 million. Dr Patil joined Rotary in 2000.

RYLAs to empower youth

He adores all things related to Rotary and Rotarians as “the organisation honed my leadership skills, conduct, boosted my self-confidence and expanded my friends’ network.” Opening the account with 115 clubs and 6,000 members, he wants to form 6–7 new clubs with a target of 10 per cent growth in net membership.

Following directions from RI director Muruganandam, he is focused on lifting 28 clubs with less than 30 members – from Red to Amber – to strengthen their ‘roots and foundation’. One of his thrust areas is environmental protection under which 3–4 waste management plants (CSR grant: ₹6 crore) will be set up at the panchayat and municipal offices. “We will hold awareness camps on solid waste management and waste water recycling in schools and colleges,” says Boopathi.

Gender-segregated toilet blocks with handwash stations and sanitary pad vending machines will be built (GG: \$300,000) at 30 government schools.

Around 300 RYLAs will be conducted at schools with the tagline ‘Empower the youth, enrich the nation’ reaching out to over 5,000 students who will be exposed to the Rotary-Rotaract world, apart from experts mentoring them on leadership traits. Each club will be doing at least three RYLAs, while RID 3203 will be hosting a multidistrict RYLA attracting youth in large numbers. Boopathi is confident of surpassing the TRF-target of \$1 million given to his district.

Having joined Rotary in 1989, he is inspired by Krishnaraj Vanavarayar, an educationist and a large-hearted donor from Pollachi.



K Boopathi

*Textiles
RC Avanashi
RID 3203*



Payal Gaur

*Printing
RC Bulandshahr
RID 3100*

Solar power for govt schools

On her bucket list, this Engineering and MBA graduate envisions a “happy society with community members helping each other to eliminate social evils and inequality.” With around 120 clubs and 2,200 members as on July 1, she is confident of forming at least five new clubs and inducting 500 new Rotarians.

Around 5,000 school, college girls (12–25 years) will benefit from the cervical cancer awareness and vaccination drive (CSR+GG: ₹30 lakh) in the first six months. “Based on the feedback, we will resume our work for the next six months, after doubling our vaccination target,” says Payal. In healthcare, three diagnostic centres will come up in Meerut, Muzaffarnagar and Moradabad, and five dialysis centres, either standalone or attached to government hospitals. Both the projects are funded by a mix of GG and CSR grant of ₹3 crore.

One of her pet projects is ‘green schools’ with rooftop solar panels for in-house power generation. “In the first phase, 10 government schools, both primary and higher secondary, in western UP will have solar panels (GG+CSR: ₹25 lakh) as part of this eco-

friendly initiative. After studying the results, we will expand our greening mission,” explains Payal. She aims to collect \$500,000 for TRF.

Having joined Rotary in 2014, this technocrat, says, “as the youngest woman governor ever, I look forward to more women Rotarians taking up leadership roles in our zones in the coming years.” ■

To begin with, 10 government schools in western UP will have solar panels as part of this eco-friendly initiative. After studying the results, we will expand our greening mission.

DG Payal Gaur

RID 3100

Making a difference

River restoration in Nashik

With the support of panchayat president and local farmers, RC Nasik, RID 3030, has rejuvenated the Nandini River, a tributary of Godavri River, by desilting an 8km stretch. This river restoration project would save 480 million litres of monsoon water from running off downstream.

JK Maini Precision Technology funded the project through a CSR grant of ₹5 lakh. The entire river bed was cluttered with assorted dumps and silting over many years. Following its tradition of restoring many check dams in the past, the club has desilted a large stretch of the tributary that passes through Nashik. Club president Gaurav Samnerkar inaugurated the desilting work. ■



RC Nasik president Gaurav Samnerkar (front row, left) with club members at the inauguration of desilting work at Nandini River.



Patients being transported to the hospital for cataract surgery.



Cataract surgery camps in RID 3120

Eye-screening camps are held in partnership with RJ Shankara Eye Hospital in villages and semi-urban areas by Rotary clubs of RID 3120. A three-year MoU was signed with the hospital with a target of 15,000 free cataract surgeries every year. The agreement was inked under the guidance of the then DG Ashutosh Agrawal.

Till February, over 16,000 patients were screened at the OPD and more than 1,600 surgeries were done in places like Varanasi, Mirzapur, Prayagraj, Sultanpur, Mau and Lucknow. Patients diagnosed with cataract are transported to the hospital, where they receive free accommodation, nutritious meals, medicines, surgery, and post-operative care.

Doctors visit the camp sites after a month for a post-operative check-up and guide the beneficiaries. ■

Ambulance on Pune-Nashik highway

The emergency medical services (EMS) at the Accord Multispecialty Hospital, Moshi, have got a boost with RC Pune Heritage, RID 3131, donating an ALS ambulance fitted with an ICU ventilator and defibrillator. The project cost ₹21 lakh, and Skye Batteries was the CSR partner.

Located centrally on the Pune-Nashik highway, the hospital caters to victims of road accidents and industrial mishaps, and rising instances of cardiac and stroke emergencies in this region. The ambulance will cover a radius of 20–25km. ■



RID 3131 DG Santosh Marathe and PDG Shailesh Palekar (to his right) with members of RC Pune Heritage at the launch of the ambulance. Club president Subhro Sen is on the extreme right.

Mobile cancer screening in RID 3250

PDG Bipin Chachan handed over a cancer screening van, a GG project (\$89,207) of RC Jamshedpur West, RID 3250, and RC Suwong-Nosong, RID 3750, Korea, to the Meherbai Tata Memorial Hospital (MTMH). The project was a joint initiative of MTMH, Rotary, Tata Steel Foundation and RSB Foundation which contributed a CSR fund of \$22,000.

DG Namrata flagged off the van at the district conference in Ranchi in December. Club members have contributed \$29,000 for the project. In the first three months, the mobile clinic covered 29 places in Jharkhand and Odisha through 54 camps. Over 1,000 people were screened for oral cancer; 181 women had PAP smear test done to rule out cervical cancer; and 147 women underwent mammogram test, all free of charge. ■



RID 3250 PDG Bipin Chachan (centre) handing over the cancer screening van to members of RC Jamshedpur West and Meherbai Tata Memorial Hospital.



Foster a culture of conservation

Preeti Mehra

To protect the human species, we need to protect our entire ecosystem, including every plant and animal.

Wildlife conservation doesn't resonate with most people. We are increasingly aware of global warming and the need to preserve our forests, but saving our wildlife doesn't receive the same level of attention. While we appreciate the fierce beauty of the tiger, the majesty of the lion, and the strength


of the elephant, we often overlook the importance of conserving the diverse range of creatures that share our planet, including insects, birds, and butterflies.

Many of us may not fully understand the purpose of wildlife preservation. Some may feel protecting other living beings and species seems to have little connection to human life,

other than existing alongside us. The reasons for conservation often remain unexplained, leaving many in the dark. And that is what I want to focus on this month — the significance of wildlife conservation and how each of us can contribute to this vital cause.

Wildlife conservation means protecting all natural ecosystems, which are made up of plants and animals in a





specific area along with their environment. Ecosystems are complex systems where each and every species plays a crucial role that is not replicated by another. Losing even one species can lead to serious issues of survival of the planet and us, the human species. What can happen? Food chains can get severely disrupted, nutrient cycles can change, upsetting entire ecosystems.

By conserving wildlife, we are helping to keep these ecosystems healthy and strong, which support nature's delicate balance of resilience and biodiversity — the variety of plant and animal species essential to a thriving environment.

We understand the importance of protecting our forests, as trees and plants replenish the atmosphere's oxygen through photosynthesis. But what role do animals and birds that live within this green canopy play? Animals and birds play a critical role in helping plants and trees thrive and multiply. They assist in pollination and the dispersal of seeds, which allows new plants to sprout and develop into

trees. For instance, elephants contribute by trampling the ground to thin out the tree canopy, creating more space for young plants to grow. Additionally, their faeces enrich the soil and spread seeds, thanks to their herbivorous diet.

In contrast, take a predator like the lion. What is its role? It prevents ecosystem degradation and overgrazing by controlling herbivore populations like the deer and zebra. While bees, butterflies and bats have a sustaining role to play. They pollinate 75 per cent of all flowering plants and 35 per cent of food crops, according to one estimate. They also help in pest and disease control.

You can explore further examples of how important a particular animal is in the food chain and in conserving nature by reading books and papers on the subject.

But how can you as an individual play a role in conserving animals and conserving nature?

Direct actions like regularly supporting conservation groups and NGOs working to save endangered species would be a great help as funds are constantly needed to sustain serious activity the year round. But if that is not possible, there are other ways of raising awareness, beginning with educating oneself and the immediate family and community we live in.

Ethical personal actions also go a long way in contributing to the cause. First and foremost, simply never buy products made from endangered animals such as ivory or snake skins. Also, avoid buying exotic birds and other pets that are on the banned/illegal list. As a person dedicated to environment conservation make it your duty to inform the authorities if you come across poaching or any illegal wildlife trade taking place. I saw an excellent television series based on a true story from Kerala titled, 'Poacher' on Amazon Prime. It has English subtitles and is a must watch.

If you are a person who loves to visit wildlife sanctuaries, national parks or biosphere reserves, be sure to follow all guidelines that have been set for the safety of the animals and for visitors. It is important to remember that you are in another species' space and their right to their habitat comes first. As a visitor you need to respect the animals and leave no human intrusions behind. I know of people who think visiting a wildlife sanctuary is akin to going on a light-hearted picnic. Without a thought, they throw plastic bottles, bags, and other waste out of the vehicle they are travelling in, with scant regard to the fact that this territory does not belong to them.

But then there is hope as we also have groups of young environmentalists who are dedicating their energies to clean up forest areas. Take for instance the Target Zero Plastic group from Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, who rappel down cliffs and slopes in Valparai, in the biodiverse Western Ghats to collect plastic waste and discarded liquor bottles. According to a recent report in 'The Better India' they have managed to remove 560 tonnes of waste and are continuing their effort.

Today, we also have multiple cases of human-animal conflict as animal corridors are shrinking due to human beings wanting to grab all the land they possibly can. Here, taking a stand is important in support and on behalf of the natural ecosystem consisting of animals, plants, and tribal communities that live within this ecosystem.

One last thing, and perhaps the most important. If you are in a position or a situation to enforce the right legislation and policy, please be sure to enforce and strengthen wildlife protection laws. If you don't do it, who will?

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



RID 3120

RC Prayagraj Sangam

DGE Poonam Gulati inaugurated three traffic police booths in March at different places in the city. These booths will help in providing shelter to the traffic personnel regulating the traffic flow and also boost the public image of Rotary.



Club matters



RID 3141

RC Bombay Airport

A Rotary Competitive Exam Training Centre (₹70 lakh) was inaugurated at the Sonopant Dandekar College, Palghar, in a joint initiative with RC Palghar. It has a Wi-Fi classroom, an interactive board, a computer lab, library and study room.

RID 3170

RC Curchorem-Sanvordem

A weekly Aadhaar card update camp is being held on Sundays across different wards of Curchorem to help local residents seeking alterations or new enrolments. In the first three camps, over 70 people had benefitted.





RID 3231

RC Gudiyatham

A mobile breast screening camp was organised jointly with Athi Hospital and Nenjirkinia Nanbargal Group, an NGO. Club president K Chandran presided over the medical camp which focused on preventive steps.

RID 3131

RC Pune Kothrud

With sponsorship from Elkay Chemicals, the club donated Near-Infrared Spectroscopy (NIRS) to the NICU of Deenanath Mangeshkar Hospital. The device monitors oxygen levels at vital organs of the newborn.



RID 3233

RC Chennai Verve

Senior citizens at a destitute home were given an image makeover with pedicures, manicures and haircuts by beauticians. Heartful stories were shared, songs were sung and some danced as the joy radiated all over the special home.



RID 3234

RC Madras Metro

RPF inspector Chandana Sinha, Lucknow; animal welfare activist Jagriti Mishra, Delhi; social activist Naveen Kumar, Erode; and Dr Suneelakumar Hebba, Bengaluru who excelled in serving the underprivileged were honoured with the Spirit of India Awards.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

Control your cholesterol

Gita Mathai

Most people regard cholesterol as a harmful fat that clogs blood vessels. It frequently makes headlines, and changing medical guidelines can be confusing. Should cholesterol be lowered? If so, to what level? The reality is that all of us have cholesterol in our blood. Cholesterol is an essential component of cell membranes and is required for the production of hormones and vitamin D.

After a meal, excess energy is stored as fat. Between meals, this stored fat is gradually released to provide fuel for the body's organs, particularly the liver and muscles. Problems arise when excessive amounts of fat circulate in the bloodstream.

Blood is primarily water-based, and fats do not dissolve easily in water.

When cholesterol levels become too high, it is deposited along the inner walls of blood vessels, forming yellowish accumulation called plaques. Over time, these plaques narrow and harden the arteries, restricting blood flow.

As the arteries narrow, the heart must pump harder to deliver blood to vital organs. Blood pressure rises, and the blood vessels become less elastic. The heart may eventually weaken and fail. Reduced blood flow to the kidneys can impair their function, leading to the accumulation of waste products in the body.

Peripheral arteries supplying the arms and legs can also become narrowed. As a result, the limbs may feel cold, and minor injuries may heal slowly. In severe cases, blood flow becomes so poor that tissues die, leading to gangrene.

The coronary arteries that supply oxygen-rich blood to the heart muscle are particularly vulnerable. If these vessels become blocked, parts of the heart muscle may be deprived of oxygen and die, resulting in coronary artery disease or a heart attack. A major heart attack can lead to sudden death.

Similarly, narrowing of the arteries supplying blood to the brain can cause strokes. Depending on the area affected, a stroke may result in memory loss, confusion, speech difficulties, paralysis, or permanent disability. Vascular dementia may also develop as blood flow to the brain declines.

Despite widespread awareness campaigns, many people never have their cholesterol levels checked. High cholesterol is often called a "silent killer" because it causes no symptoms for years. Many individuals discover their elevated cholesterol levels only after a heart attack, stroke or during a routine health check-up. Occasionally, fatty deposits around the eyes, known as xanthelasma, may provide a clue to the diagnosis.

The only way to diagnose and evaluate "high lipids" is to do a blood test called a lipid profile.

It evaluates cholesterol and fat levels. Ideally, the sample should be taken after a 9–12-hour fast, during which only water is consumed.

Food, milk, fever, infection, inflammation and pregnancy can alter the results.



The current guidelines for screening are

- Once between 9 and 11 years of age
- Again between 17 and 21 years
- Every 4–6 years thereafter

People with diabetes, hypertension, obesity, kidney disease, or a strong family history of heart disease require more frequent testing.

Desirable lipid levels

Test desirable

Total cholesterol < 200 mg/dL

Triglycerides < 150 mg/dL

HDL cholesterol > 60 mg/dL

LDL cholesterol < 100 mg/dL

Cholesterol/HDL ratio < 4.0

Cholesterol travels through the bloodstream attached to proteins called lipoproteins.

- LDL (Low-Density Lipoprotein) is known as the ‘bad’ cholesterol because it deposits cholesterol on artery walls.
- HDL (High-Density Lipoprotein) is the ‘good’ cholesterol. It acts as a scavenger, removing excess cholesterol from the bloodstream and transporting it back to the liver for disposal.

Several medical conditions can also raise cholesterol levels, including:

- Diabetes
- Hypothyroidism
- Chronic kidney disease
- Chronic liver disease
- HIV/AIDS

These conditions should be treated alongside cholesterol management.

High cholesterol may be inherited. Certain genetic conditions impair the body’s ability to remove LDL cholesterol from the blood.

More commonly, however, high cholesterol may appear to be genetic and run in families, but it is the result of unhealthy lifestyle habits shared and propagated by entire families.

If cholesterol levels are high:

- Eat a diet rich in fruits, vegetables, whole grains, legumes and lean proteins.
- Reduce sugar, refined carbohydrates and excess salt.
- Limit saturated fats and avoid trans fats.
- Choose healthy fats from fish, nuts, olive oil and canola oil.
- Restrict cooking oil consumption to about 500ml per person per month.
- Maintain a healthy body weight.
- Exercise for at least 30 minutes on most days of the week.
- Stop smoking.
- Limit alcohol intake to no more than one drink a day for women and two drinks daily for men.

Medication

Lifestyle modification remains the foundation of treatment, but if this fails and lipids are persistently elevated, medication may be required especially if cardiovascular or a stroke risk is significant.

- Statins are the most commonly prescribed drugs and are highly

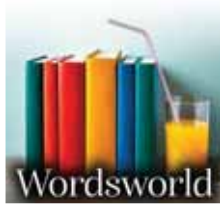
effective in lowering LDL cholesterol.

- Fibrates such as fenofibrate and gemfibrozil are useful for lowering triglycerides.
- Omega-3 fatty acids help reduce triglyceride levels.
- Niacin may lower LDL cholesterol, although it is now used less frequently.
- Recent advances in gene-editing technology have shown promise in correcting some of these inherited defects by targeting genes such as PCSK9.

High cholesterol becomes increasingly common after the age of 40, but it can affect younger people as well. Because it produces no symptoms until serious complications occur, regular screening and timely treatment are essential. Detecting and controlling abnormal lipid levels can prevent heart attacks, stroke, kidney disease and premature death.

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





When the Hills are Alive...

...with the sound of gunfire, the Inter-Continental Kabul is one place that offers a chance of survival...

“... there was an Arab guest who occasionally showed up. He never came through the front door, always entering from the back, through an emergency exit used only by him and those around him. ... It was as if he had his own hotel within the hotel.” No prizes for guessing the name of this guest: Osama Bin Laden. He, too, conducted business at *The Finest Hotel in Kabul*, undeterred, undisturbed. The Inter-Continental Kabul, situated atop a gently rising hill, opened in 1969 with prime minister Noor Ahmad Etemadi cutting the ribbon. “Massachusetts Avenue in the Hindu Kush” wrote one American travel editor who had come all the way just for the opening of the biggest hotel in Kabul. It was 48th in the Inter-Continental chain of hotels, the jewel in its crown, an epitome of fine dining and hospitality, a hub of multiculturalism both in clients, and customer service.

The tagline of the book, *A People's History of Afghanistan*, tells the real story. Lyse Doucet, head of BBC's international correspondents, takes us up close to the lives of ordinary people, people like Hazrat and Abida and Qudus and Amanullah and Sadeq, among several others, who worked at the Inter-Con over extended periods of time. Thus, they were privy to the ever-changing and violent political upheavals that beset their country



Sandhya Rao

and, as a consequence, that affected their lives even as they strove to serve in the best traditions of global five-star hospitality. As one reviewer wrote, the book is “a love letter to Afghanistan and its people”.

Lyse Doucet came to Kabul in 1988 “to report on the Red Army's pull-out, following a disastrous decade-long occupation. As I departed from neighbouring Pakistan, where

I had spent the past few months, one *mujahideen* commander cheerily told me he would soon see me in Kabul, since their victory was now in sight. Another warned that I would certainly be killed there”. It's not clear whether she met that same commander during her stay at the Inter-Con, but she certainly wasn't killed. Instead, through close interactions with the people who worked there, including busboys and managers, waiters and cooks, security guards and housekeepers, and observing how the hotel's beautifully appointed but gradually disintegrating halls hosted meetings of political leaders of different hues: tribal leaders, communists, the mujahideen, the Taliban, presidents and collaborators. It spans some 50 years during which time Afghanistan saw monarchy, coups, communist occupation, US invasion, the rise and fall and return of the Taliban. Told with humaneness and objectivity, it's no wonder that this blend of personal histories with the history of an iconic hotel and the history of a people and their nation, has just been selected for the women's nonfiction prize. The prize for fiction has gone to *The Correspondent* by Virginia Evans.

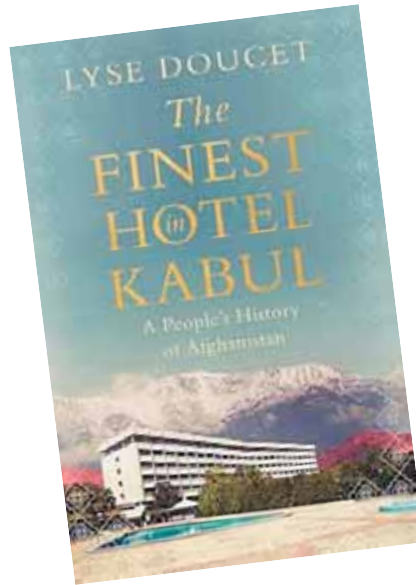
Lyse Doucet takes us way beyond eyeball-grabbing headlines. History,



she writes, “always moves in a multitude of singular stories that carry far bigger truths. Afghanistan’s story tells us that war is more than the blast of bombs, the whistle of bullets. It’s a mother’s anxious eyes, the song of a soldier, a soul-soothing camaraderie, the pause before going out the door.” ... The book opens with a wedding in 2021, everyone dressed up and ready to celebrate with music and dancing and food. This, despite an underlying sense of dread. Suddenly, someone sights a pickup on the hill flying a familiar white flag. DJ Nabila begs for a long loose cloth to cover up herself even as women pull out shawls from their bags. The groom grabs the bride’s hand and they, along with their guests, rush out of the Kandahar Ballroom, the just-served lunch sitting piping hot on tables. The Taliban is back.

Lyse Doucet was on the ground, right there, when hundreds and hundreds of people thronged the airport desperate to get away. Who doesn’t remember those horrifying images shown over and over again on television? Unbelievable scenes but true. It seems fitting, therefore, that her story of Afghanistan told through the eyes, lives and voices of ordinary, hardworking men and women, should end with the Taliban’s second coming.

In its early years, the Inter-Con was the place “for the fortunate or for those with a fortune”. Its style was exclusive, its hospitality inclusive. The Bamiyan Brasserie, for instance, had a wall with “a frieze depicting the stunning limestone cliffs of the Bamiyan valley in the central highlands, including a miniature replica of one of two sixth-century giant standing buddhas”. These “crown jewels” of Afghanistan were also featured on the hotel’s publicity brochure. The rich and famous all came there to stay and enjoy its perks. Then when the troubles began, it became the haven of



journalists. Hazrat, one of the longest-serving employees of the Inter-Con, features prominently in these pages. Through his memories and the stories of others we see how women worked freely in various capacities, except at waiting. That came later, with Malalai. They dressed freely, too, even in short skirts. The staff represented practically all the ethnic and tribal groups in the country.

Then, in 1973, things began to change under a new prime minister. The king was in London, apparently attending to an eye problem, while here, soldiers gradually took control of the radio station, the airport. In a swift coup, the king’s cousin, Sardar Daoud, installed himself as President. While the hotel continued to function, anyone with royal blood was hounded out. Meanwhile, Hazrat was deployed for military service, guarding a mountain, Koh-e-Asamai, named for the Hindu goddess of hope, Asha Mai. When the Soviets rolled in, Daoud and his entire family were wiped out. The Inter-Con was overrun by soldiers demanding to see and proceeding to destroy anything and everything that presented the old Afghanistan, be it the king, the president, connections

with America, fashion shows, Rotary Club charity balls. Books were thrown out, so too clothes, and people with “connections”. Journalists were not spared. But the staff often went to dangerous lengths to help them communicate their stories to the world.

With the “Red Years” we are introduced to Amanullah who dreamt of studying engineering at the Soviet-built Polytechnic University at the bottom of the hill. Not far from Kabul, armed, long-bearded mujahideen were waiting to pounce. Both Kabul Radio and Radio Moskva had denounced the “bandits” backed by “American imperialists and their Pakistani and Iranian puppets”. We follow Amanullah’s career path from military service to working at the hotel to getting an engineering degree and being addressed as Engineer Amanullah. When the Taliban take over, he grows a long beard and wears a turban, before eventually settling to a teaching job. There’s a vivid description of what Lyse Doucet (as she was always addressed) describes as the “Soviet sound-and-light show”: helicopter gunships thumping through the sky, “tracer fire flashing trails of green light”, warplanes “swooping over the serrated edges of the Hindu Kush, bombs whistling through suspected insurgent hideouts”...

As the people’s history winds through the years, the narrative compels readers to think upon our own times, in our own political milieu. It’s not so different. Afghanistan could happen anywhere. However, “the iconic letter K still danced on the glass of the revolving front door, and on the roof in a most beautiful blue,” writes the author, in a tribute to resilience in its present avatar as Intercontinental For Everyone.

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist

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book post; so postal tracking is not possible. You may not receive your copy if your club has not passed on your subscription to us. So please check with your president or RNT for your enrolment in the subscribers' list.

19. There may be delivery issues in some areas. In such a situation clubs can opt and receive copies in bulk. Additional charges will be applicable.



Non-compliant clubs face termination by RI

Beginning July 1, 2022, the RI Board has included in its *Rotary Code of Policies* the termination of Rotary clubs that do not subscribe to a Rotary magazine. A quarterly report on non-compliant clubs is being sent to RI by our office, after notifying the

respective club leaders and the DGs. These clubs are given a **90-day grace period** after which the defaulting club is placed under suspension by RI.

For clubs that stay suspended and are non-compliant for 180 days, RNT, after notifying RI, sends a reminder letter stating

“the Board at its discretion can terminate this club.”

Club presidents, please urge your members to subscribe to *Rotary News*, and get a full picture of Rotary activities in India. **RI recommends inclusion of information about mandatory subscription in your PELS/GELS curriculums.**



The many flavours of fusion



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

Recently I came across a highly popular TV show in which some people were competing to cook something. The competition was about making a dish with two separate flavours in one dish. In India we call it fusion and in Gurgaon where I live, there is a restaurant that specialises in such dishes. Some of these fused dishes are very good. Most are quite bad, certainly not worth the cost of the dish. But the experience of eating them is fun.

So I asked my wife, who is a retired professor of Korean Studies, how it would be to blend *sambhar* with noodle soup. You know, put *sambhar* powder instead of the one they supply. She gave me one of those looks which wives give their husbands. Scathing. Contemptuous. Searing. “Go and write for Rotary or something,” she hissed. But even though she dismissed me and my suggestion as completely asinine, I did try it out one day when she wasn’t at home. It tasted no worse than the original. In fact, I do wonder why we can’t mix, say, haka noodles with *sambhar*, instead of mixing it with rice or idlis or vadas. And when you think about it, the same can be done with all cuisines. *Kulchay* with the Ethiopian *injera*, dosas with the Mexican *mole pablano*, baked beans with biryani and so on. You get the point. Nothing ventured, nothing gained.

And why stop with food? We also have fusion music. After all, there are only seven major notes and, in different musical systems, these are combined in different ways. But there is no unique way. The combination works or doesn’t work. To make fusion music popular, a global and pervasive soft drink brand promotes itself via fusion music. Mostly the result isn’t great but every once in a while, as with food, the musicians do pull off a very

pleasing effect. It’s exactly like in food where the proportions of the ingredients determine its overall effect. Likewise in music, too, the proportions of rhythms and tunes determine whether it’s going to be a good or indifferent effort. Those in their seventies may recall that the first attempt at fusion music was by the sitar genius Ravi Shankar and the pop legends The Beatles. For some reason the song was called ‘Norwegian Wood’ and it featured the sitar prominently. It was a global hit and is still recognisable as a masterpiece of fusion music. Since then there have been scores of such songs. My favourites, however, are where opera singing and Indian classical *raga* singing are performed together. Separate but joined. Not everyone’s cup of tea, yes, but if you are a musician you will not care as long as the integrity of each stream is maintained. Two Tamil musicians do it wonderfully.

Fusion is also possible in writing, as Salman Rushdie showed in his very first bestseller, *Midnight’s Children*. It was simply a question of writing Hindi or Urdu sentences in fully integrated unitalicised script. The words were Hindi. The script was English. The thoughts and idioms were a combination of eastern and western. The effect was mesmerising. Other writers have tried it but Rushdie remains the maestro of fusion writing. He does it most naturally unlike the others whose efforts seem contrived.

Language, of course, has been fused together for aeons. I grew up in North India speaking a mixture of Hindi, English, Tamil, Punjabi and later on, even Bengali. My grandchildren live in a part of Europe where French is the main language. At home their parents have been teaching them Hindi and English and every now and then the kids speak in all three languages simultaneously. The effect is perplexing, annoying and comic in turns. ■

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