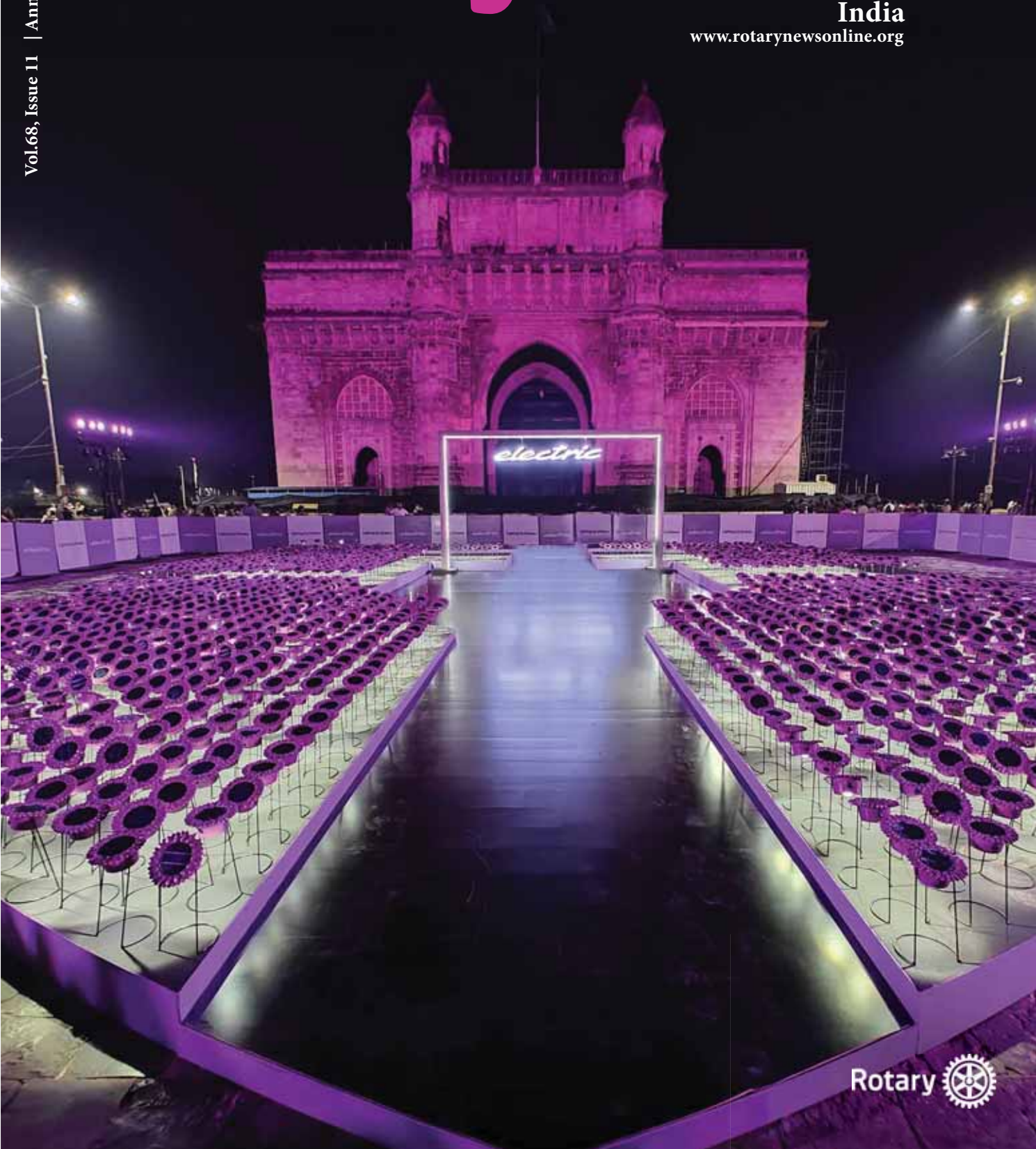


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Making city walls colourful

Rotary 

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## A great story on Jawadhu tribals

I was delighted to see the scenic picture of nature's beauty in the Jawadhu Hills, a tribal hamlet in Tamil Nadu, on the cover page of the April issue. It was interesting to read the ways and means through which Chennai Rotarians assist the tribals and the millet story is a nice spin-off.



Thanks for letting us know that the name of Rotary India Literacy Mission has been changed to India Literacy Mission as decided by the RI Board. In her message, RI President Stephanie Urchick explains the need to help others by citing a food distribution project of RC Windsor-Roseland, Ontario. The Editor's Note is an eye-opener as she has nicely depicted the hardship and humiliation faced by illegal immigrants in the US, with graphic details of their travails.

RID Raju Subramanian has focused on the importance of growing Rotary membership and strengthening TRF to touch lives around us.

I was happy to read about the Istanbul Peace Conference with the theme *Healing in a divided world* and TRF chair Mark Maloney's focus on stewardship of environmental projects are interesting nuggets. All other articles and columns, with their accompanying pictures, are informative and well-written.

*An open cupboard to clothe women and children* gives a novel idea as it is a great gesture which can be

followed by other clubs too. Club matters are descriptive and photos are good. As a whole, the April issue is superb and kudos to the editorial team.

*Philip Mulappone M T  
RC Trivandrum Suburban — D 3211*

The cover story on a Rotary service project at the Jawadhu Hills on the Eastern Ghats of Tamil Nadu has turned the spotlight on the plight of remote tribals; and the write-up on the Istanbul Peace Conference has dwelt on peacebuilding. All other articles in this issue are also interesting to read.

The fate of illegal immigrants to the US as pointed out by editor Rasheeda Bhagat in her April editorial is very unfortunate. It is up to the Indian government to provide opportunities to our fellow citizens to earn a decent income in our motherland. RID Subramanian has requested clubs to grow their membership and strengthen TRF through their generosity. TRF chair Mark Maloney has asked clubs to explore environmental project ideas.

*KMK Murthy, RC Secunderabad — D 3150*

With reference to the April editorial, the illegal migrants to the US are mostly from Punjab and Gujarat, and most of them do not belong to the underprivileged classes. They pay the 'so-called

### Informative, all-encompassing magazine

I am at a loss of words to convey my compliments to Editor Rasheeda Bhagat and her team for coming out with a beautiful issue each month, with a striking new look, featuring informative articles that speak volumes about the service done by Rotarians across the globe.

In the March issue, the Editor's Note (*Time for self-introspection*) and the article about Kolkata Rotarians' efforts to prevent cervical

cancer in girls and women, are excellent. I humbly request you to continue publishing such informative and well-researched articles in future editions as well.

To welcome, accommodate and absorb foreign students and running peace centres are something only Rotary can do. This is evident from the report that Rotary is educating over 40,000 students from over 80 countries cutting across colour, culture and nationalities. While our scriptures preach *Atithi Devo Bhava*, our governments form peace

commissions now and then, but nothing much beyond that.

Rotarians are ready to accept any challenge as is evident from projects such as the one on cervical cancer in Kolkata where Rotarians are making available costly vaccination to women and girls. God bless them.

*Raj Kumar Kapoor  
RC Roop Nagar — D 3080*

I've been a regular and avid reader of *Rotary News* which has emerged as a reliable and credible source of information under your guidance

agents' huge sums of money up to even ₹1 crore for this misadventure. This is absolutely driven by greed and I do not think they deserve any sympathy from us.

*S Ramachandra Prasad, RC Coimbatore  
Metropolis — D 3201*

Our heartfelt thanks to *Rotary News* for the wonderful coverage of the Jawadhu Hills tribals in the April issue. Spanning more than 10 pages, the article captured every aspect of the work in great detail and offered readers an insightful account.

While our gratitude goes to Rtn Saiseshan for beautifully explaining the details which capture the entire project, our thanks should also go to the editorial and design team for writing the article and presenting it so well. The design and layout were truly commendable.

*Sundaram Seshadri  
RC Chennai Akshaya — D 3233*

We all felt very bad on the tragedy of illegal Indian immigrants as they were deported in an inhuman manner. Can Rotary make children of ordinary Indian families extraordinarily stable so that they need not travel to any other country for earning? Our PM Modi during his US visit said about the fascinating economic growth in India. But I don't know if any Indians settled in the US returned to motherland?

*PN Parikh, RC Bharuch — D 3060*

and stewardship for Rotary activities and projects across the world. My hearty congratulations to you and your team.

The panoramic verdant view of a hamlet in Jawadhu hills on the cover comes as a refreshing change. RI president's call for reinvigorating engagement by following simple but far-reaching and sustainable measures needs serious attention. The editorial touched a sensitive topic of illegal migrants who take the risk at the cost of their lives. This is where Rotary can play a constructive role in reskilling and finding a suitable placement for some of the unfortunate returnees who face social stigma in their immediate environs.

As we observe environment as the focus area, let us hope that Rotary's new strategic partnership with UN Environment Programme brings about more durable and constructive projects into implementation.

### Praise for *Rotary News* from PRIP John Germ

Judy and I have just read the March issue of *Rotary News*. We have always found *Rotary News* to be factual and informative. The March issue was especially so with great articles on (RIPE) Mario (de Camargo) and (RIPN) Sangkoo (Yun).

We also found the tribute to PRIP Bill Boyd extremely well done. Bill was a true gentleman and a friend who impacted many lives around the world. One of his latest accomplishments was leading the committee in the selection of the Peace Center in Turkey. He will be missed.

*Past RI President John Germ*

**On the cover:** A display of solar-powered clay lamps at the Gateway of India, Mumbai, as part of a service project of RC Bombay Juhu Beach in partnership with Porsche India, Liter of Light and Power Pack.

*We welcome your feedback Write to the Editor:*

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**WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.**

Two suggestions. Grammatically, *Director Speak* is wrong. The correct is *Director speaks*. Two, the magazine is wrapped in a gum-smelling brown cover; could you please switch over to a better outer cover either in paper or a plastic wrapper of 120 microns as per rules.

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

## Rotary's young people of action

*No matter how long we've been with Rotary, we all benefit from the energy and fresh perspectives of our young leaders. It is my privilege to place this month's presidential message in the capable hands of one young leader, Vitor Joventino. In his column, Vitor reminds us how teamwork and inclusivity can spark transformative change. As you read his message, I encourage you to reflect on its insights, share in his excitement, and embrace new opportunities to learn.*

— Stephanie A Urchick

I remember the exact moment when I realised the power of Rotary's youth programmes. It was a Saturday morning in Australia during my year as a Rotary Youth Exchange student. I stood among a group of young leaders at a Rotary Youth Leadership Awards event. The organisers challenged us to stand on a large tarp spread across the floor and, without stepping off, find a way to fold it in half.

At first, the task seemed simple. But as we moved, strategised, and adjusted, the reality set in — it required teamwork, agility and constant communication.

Rotaractors and Rotarians guided us, but no one dictated how to succeed. The decisions were ours to make. And then something remarkable happened. Without being instructed, we collectively decided that no one would be left behind as our space on the tarp shrank.

One of our teammates was a person who uses a wheelchair, giving us an opportunity to adapt, ensuring that he was fully part of the experience. We shifted, lifted the tarp, and reconfigured our positions, using our time to think, plan and act as a team. In the end, we successfully completed the challenge together.

As we celebrated our success, one participant said, "Society works the same way — challenges will come, but instead of leaving people behind, we must find ways to include everyone." It was such a profound thought for someone so young, yet it perfectly captured the essence of our experience.



Interact empowers young people to create service projects with real and lasting impact. Youth Exchange builds global citizens who return home with broader perspectives and stronger leadership skills. RYLA develops young leaders equipped to inspire and mobilise others. All of this is *The Magic of Rotary*, emerging through the actions of youth. These programmes are the heart of Rotary's ability to grow and adapt in a changing world.

But the success of these programmes depends on more than young leaders — it requires Rotary members who believe in their potential. I encourage you to sponsor an Interact club, host an exchange student, and support a RYLA participant. Your involvement does more than sustain these programmes; it multiplies their impact and ensures that young leaders are not just beneficiaries of Rotary but active contributors.

To those already supporting youth programmes, thank you. Your mentorship and commitment make all the difference. And to those considering getting involved, now is the time! Because youth leadership isn't just Rotary's future, it's Rotary's present.

**Vitor Joventino**

Rotaract Club of Penápolis, Brazil



# Your words/behaviour define you....

**R**ecently, media articles on a resignation letter from a Singapore employee, written on toilet paper, caught my eye. The blunt message said: "I felt like toilet paper, used when needed, discarded without a second thought." It ended with: "I have chosen this type of paper for my resignation as a symbol of how this company has treated me. I quit."

A female director of the company, shared the letter on LinkedIn, commenting on the "deep impact" it had left on her and said ruefully, "Appreciation isn't just a tool for retention. It's a reflection of how much a person is valued — not just for what they do, but for who they are. Make your employees feel so genuinely appreciated that even when they decide to leave, they walk away with gratitude, not resentment."


This is something all of us — not only employers, managers, supervisors — should reflect on. How do we make people feel by what we say, do or the way we treat them. More often than not, at the workplace the pressure to achieve targets and meet deadlines is so huge, that seniors/superiors show very little tolerance for shoddy work or mistakes. Yes, quality and standards, targets and deadlines are sacrosanct, but not at the cost of crushing somebody's spirit and self-respect so drastically that he/she has no other option left but to quit.

While this is an all-encompassing topic which can be applied to almost anything in life — workplace, family, friendship — let's narrow down the discussion to the Rotary world. Leadership and hierarchy are two very important verticals of Rotary, and for the 1.4 million Rotary family, in this rather transparent organisation it is quite easy to observe how the top leaders conduct themselves in their countries, zones and districts. They too have targets, mainly growing membership and ensuring donations to The Rotary

Foundation to enable Rotarians across the world use some of these funds to do community welfare projects, continue the formidable battle against Polio, etc. But how do these leaders achieve their goals; how is their demeanour, the way they handle/treat/talk to members of their core and larger teams, determines whether they are remembered by the Rotarians in their circle for decades, or are forgotten the moment the Rotary year ends and their position of power passes on to someone else. Think about it.

That brings us to another important topic for debate... what qualities best define a Rotarian. Kind, considerate and courteous? Generous and helpful? Rich and powerful? Pompous and arrogant? The no brainer is that in such a mammoth group there would be a mix of all kinds. So let me leave you with a comment made by Brian Rusch, one of RI's founder-members of the DEI Task Force (Pg 28). Asked whether there were complaints on the DEI front from India at [dei.inquiries@rotary.org](mailto:dei.inquiries@rotary.org), he said he did not monitor the mails. But more than complaints, there were issues which were most of the time resolved at the club/district level. Then he added: "Honestly, most people do not have bad intentions. Rotarians are not bad people, but there are generational differences. Something that was acceptable to say and do 40 years ago is no more so, but sometimes people don't realise that."

This left me thinking... about whether we "think" at all before saying something hurtful or obnoxious to someone. Can "generational" or cultural, regional, religious differences justify behaviour or speech that is offensive to others? Food for thought there...

  
**Rasheeda Bhagat**



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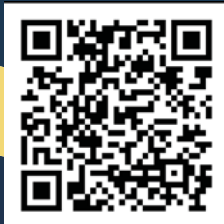
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# Director speak

## Rotary's belief in the power of young leaders

**T**here's something powerful about believing in young people — not just in their potential, but in their ability to lead today, not tomorrow. Rotary's youth service is rooted in that belief. It isn't just a set of programmes or clubs — it's a philosophy. A commitment to nurture courage, compassion and character in young individuals, and to give them the space to dream, act and lead.

Across towns and cities, villages and campuses, young people touched by Rotary are not waiting for the world to change; they are becoming the change. Whether they are organising a blood donation drive, leading climate action campaigns, initiating dialogues across borders or simply standing up for what is right, they are living the values of service and leadership every single day.

Youth Service in Rotary doesn't just teach leadership; it trusts youth with it. It opens doors, but more importantly, it removes ceilings. It

tells a 16-year-old that her voice matters in shaping her community. It tells a 24-year-old that he can lead not just projects, but movements. And in doing so, it creates generations of citizens who are not indifferent to the world around them.

Many of these young leaders may not remember every club meeting or training session. But they will remember what Rotary taught them — that service is more powerful than self-interest, that real leadership is about lifting others, and that even one person, with the right intent, can start a ripple of change.

In a world growing more complex, divided and uncertain, Rotary Youth Service is a quiet revolution, a force that prepares young hearts and minds to be bold, empathetic and resilient. And that may just be the kind of revolution the world needs most.

**Anirudha Roychowdhury**

RI Director, 2023–25

## Message from TRF Trustee Chair



## Meet the moment

There are moments in our journey to end polio when doubt and uncertainty may take hold, yet we must remain steadfast and, above all, hopeful as we keep our eyes on the goal. As Winston Churchill once said in a moment of crisis: “We cannot afford — we have no right — to look back. We must look forward.”

In Rotary, we always rise to meet the moment. No challenge is too great. In 1988, when we partnered with the World Health Organisation to form the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, an estimated 350,000 polio cases occurred annually across 125 countries. Since then, the GPEI — which also includes UNICEF, the US Centers for Disease

Control and Prevention, the Gates Foundation, and GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance — has worked tirelessly with governments worldwide. Together, we have reduced wild poliovirus cases by 99.9 per cent.

The journey has not been without challenges. Today in Afghanistan, vaccinators are prohibited from conducting house-to-house immunisation campaigns, while in Pakistan, conflict, terrorism and migration hinder access to children in certain regions.

Earlier this year, the United States announced its intention to withdraw from the WHO, froze USAID funding, and restricted interactions with the CDC. These developments present obstacles for our polio eradication efforts and other Rotary global partnerships and programmes.

Yet we rise to meet the moment, just as we have done before. We did so in India when we faced spikes in cases before the country was declared free of wild poliovirus in 2014. In Nigeria, we also encountered obstacles, but in 2020, the WHO certified the country — and by extension, all 47 countries in the WHO Africa region — wild polio-free.

We are meeting the moment once again in 2025. Know that Rotary is working behind the scenes, collaborating with governments, international agencies and partners to address challenges, manage disruptions and explore alternative funding. As a nonpolitical organisation, we remain focused on operational solutions while serving communities and protecting public health.

My wife, Gay, and I have witnessed firsthand the urgent need of the moment in India, Nigeria and Pakistan, where we administered vaccines to children. Looking into their eyes, I saw the future we are fighting for — and the responsibility we carry to finish the job.

The winds of change may shift, but with your help, Rotary’s commitment to eradicating polio will stand strong until our mission is complete.

**Mark Daniel Maloney**  
TRF Trustee Chair

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Magazine

## Message from TRF Trustee



## Philanthropy in action: the Rotary way

Philanthropy is a form of altruism that consists of “private initiatives for public good, focusing on quality of life.” The word *philanthropy* comes from ancient Greek word *philanthrōpia* — ‘love of humanity’, from *philo-* ‘to love, be fond of’ and *anthrōpos* ‘humankind, mankind’. That’s an apt description of our support to TRF.

Don Quixote in *The Man of La Mancha* sets out on a quest to find ‘good’ everywhere. This was a seemingly impossible quest. But he went on “to dream the impossible dream, to fight the unbeatable

foe, to go where the brave dare not go.”

In Rotary too our quest is to find good and do good everywhere. But in Rotary the impossible becomes possible because Rotarians are dreamers with an important difference. They are practical in their dreams. In their daily lives they think of the other fellow. They pick up the broken glass in the street so that the boys and girls in the neighbourhood will not cut their feet while playing.

So let me say a prayer: “May god bless all Rotarians with courage and commitment to think that they can make a difference so that Rotarians continue to do those things, work those projects that others say cannot be done.” And the best way to work on that, to do good everywhere is through The Rotary Foundation.

One such good way is our humanitarian grants programme. Through the various grants TRF transforms your gifts into service projects that change lives, closer home, and around the world. Hence supporting the Annual Fund becomes very important. It is our Annual Fund contributions today which help us do grants tomorrow. So my request to all is to invest in the Annual Fund *today*. Your contributions to the Foundation’s Annual Fund empower Rotary members to reach out where help is needed most.

As we move forward positively and work to end polio, supporting the Polio Fund is more critical than ever. Without Rotarians’ contributions we cannot achieve our dream of a polio-free world.

Endowment Fund is the future of TRF. Our investment in the Endowment Fund will ensure that future generations of Rotarians will carry on the good work of Rotary.

Together, we can and we will change the world. That’s the *Magic of Rotary*.

Wish you and your family great blessings, peace and happiness.

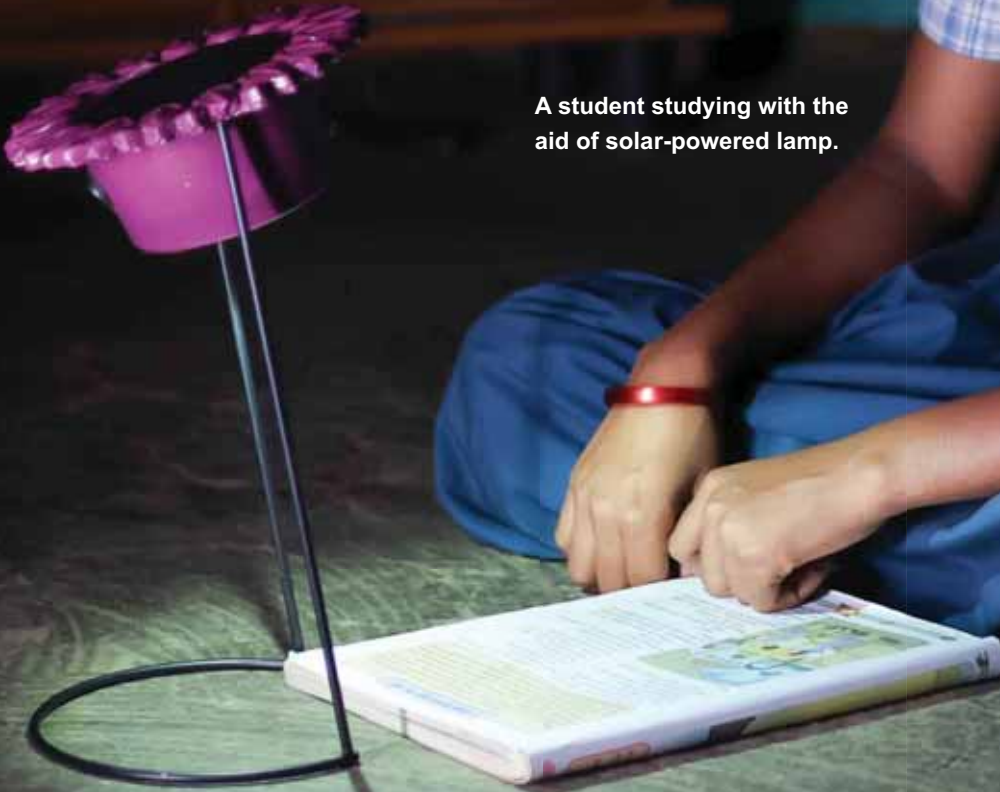
**Bharat Pandya**

TRF Trustee

# Mumbai Rotarians light up lives with solar energy

Rasheeda Bhagat

A student studying with the aid of solar-powered lamp.





**O**n October 30, 2024, the iconic Gateway of India in Mumbai became the canvas for a breathtaking art installation titled *Field of Dreams: A Pathway to a Brighter Future*. This awe-inspiring display featured 1,996 handcrafted clay solar-powered flower lamps, each symbolising hope, innovation, and the promise of a greener, more sustainable future,” says an excited Lata Desai, community service director of the Rotary Club of Bombay Juhu Beach, RID 3141.

She described to *Rotary News* a game-changing and transformative project undertaken by her club (with 65 members, of which more than half are women), to make available solar energy to underprivileged groups in Maharashtra and Gujarat, in the process enhancing Rotary’s public image, through three major initiatives. These include the club’s partnership with Porsche India, Liter of Light India Chapter and Power Pack, to put up a dazzling art show at Mumbai’s historic monument, a hands-on workshop for schoolchildren and women, and distribution of solar lamps in tribal and other villages in the two states.

The genesis of the dazzling art show at the Gateway of India lies in Porche wanting to create an environmental buzz around the launch of its EV (electric vehicle) model in India. To focus attention on sustainable energy sources and raise awareness about the environment, they chose the theme of solar lamps, and contacted Illac Diaz who has popularised the concept of solar bulbs (known as bottle bulbs which use solar energy for lighting homes during night — *see box*) in the Philippines. But since Diaz doesn’t work in India, he contacted his friend Viraj Doshee who works on renewable energy in India. “As Viraj is my son’s friend too, he

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The solar lamps are not merely a source of light, but a lifeline that enables children to study, families to engage in day-to-day activities and communities to thrive despite erratic power supply.

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100 schoolchildren learnt to assemble solar study lamps.

This experience not only imparted technical knowledge about solar energy but also sparked a sense of responsibility and advocacy in the students.

---

contacted me and asked if our Rotary club would be interested in joining as a partner in this event as he knew about the workshops we had done earlier for school-children and local artisans for making clay lamps.”

**R**C Bombay Juhu Beach saw this as a huge opportunity and embraced the partnership invite. “Actually, both Virraaj and Diaz had come to my workshop where I was teaching children from underprivileged families in

a school at Vile Parle in Mumbai on how to make lamps using solar power. This was in Oct 2024, and it was hosted by our Rotary club with the aim to educate the next generation about renewable energy solutions. This workshop was done in partnership with Diaz’ Liter of Light and Doshee’s Power Pack.”

Adds club president Mansi Thakker, “This workshop saw 100 students from Vidhyanidhi School for underprivileged children learning to assemble solar study lamps. This engaging experience not only imparted technical knowledge about solar





Lata Desai, Community Services director, RC Mumbai Juhu Beach, distributing the lamps to students.

energy but also sparked a sense of responsibility and advocacy in the students. Our District Governor Chetan Desai attended this event, highlighting the essential link between education and sustainability in shaping a bright future for the next generation, and turning the youngsters into ambassadors for a cleaner, greener world.”

**R**eturning to the Gateway event, Lata explains that originally Porsche India wanted to place its EV model — Macan

Electric — at the venue but due to a recent murder of a politician in Mumbai raising security concerns, the auto major was not able to get permission for such a display. So it was decided to illustrate the theme of clean energy

by illuminating this historic landmark of the city by lighting up nearly 2,000 clay lamps in an artistic formation. “Priced at ₹3,000 each and created by local artisans, the lamps were not just a work of art, but a statement of



**Left:** Students learning to assemble solar study lamps.

# From a plastic bottle to a clay lamp

Ilac Diaz is a climate hero and a social entrepreneur whose NGO Liter of Light “has already helped 382,000 Filipinos, and 690,000 people throughout the world, to get out of energy poverty,” says his website. This NGO was born from an original idea by Alfredo Moser from Brazil in 2002, who developed the concept of using plastic bottles to give natural lighting to households in areas where there was no stable electric supply. The basic idea of the ‘solar bottle bulb’ as it was called, was further developed by Diaz and converted into a local entrepreneur business model in the Philippines. This bulb uses a

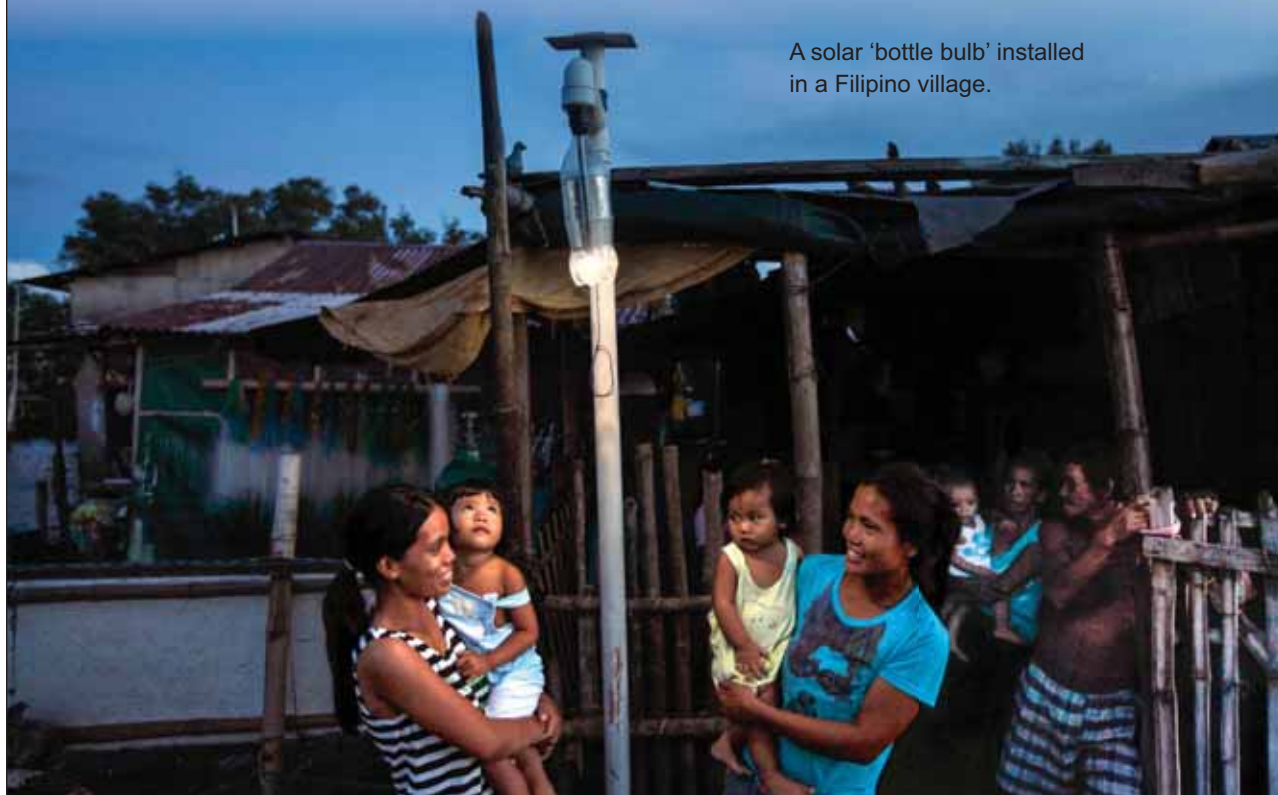
1.5-litre-plastic water bottle filled with water and bleach (to prevent algae from growing in the water) to households and schools in areas with little or no electricity.

These solar bottle bulbs are installed on the roof of homes and can refract sunlight to light up a room. The project’s innovation lies in its utilisation of cheap, durable and readily available material to produce bright natural lighting enabling the urban poor to have access to an affordable, environmentally friendly long-term alternative to electric light for use during the day.

In order to help the idea to grow sustainably, Diaz implemented a “local entrepreneur”

business model whereby bottle bulbs are assembled and installed by local people, who can earn a small income for their work.

Mumbai Rotarian Lata Desai adds that Diaz himself later devised the clay lamp idea and this is what has been embraced by her club for its various projects. “This clay lamp gives power for about six hours and we also distribute a plate with it which can be kept out in the sunlight to recharge the solar lamp. I am also working with Diaz on the idea of doing a much bigger project with plastic bottles, and want to involve clubs from all over India so that this can be area transformational project.” ■



A solar 'bottle bulb' installed in a Filipino village.



environmental consciousness. This was also officially registered by the Guinness Book of World Records; the installation captured global attention, serving as a visual testament to the power of renewable energy, and a powerful reminder that every small step can contribute to a larger, more sustainable world,” says Lata, who has been elected the club’s president for 2026–27.

It was a proud moment for the Rotarians from the club, as 15 of its members were present at the event along with 15 students. “Rotary got a huge boost to its public image as clips of Porsche’s documentary on this event were beamed throughout the world on its various portals, as well as through social and traditional media. Their marketing head from Germany was here and they highlighted the fact that the

lamps are made from clay and the majority of them were crafted by women artists. Not only that, they also chose us as their distribution partners.”

The corporate spent over **₹58.95 lakh** on the project of making these lamps, and “our club also raised over ₹80,000

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*I am also working with Diaz on the idea of doing a much bigger project with plastic bottles, and want to involve clubs from all over India.*

**Lata Desai**

Community Service Director  
RC Mumbai Juhu Beach

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required for transportation and the training. It also took on the task of distributing lamps worth ₹41 lakh in tribal areas of Maharashtra and Gujarat. That project took over three months to execute. The remaining 100 lamps will be distributed to Class 11–12 students of an institution we are working with. They are living in slum areas and need solar energy. Moreover, they are doing electrical courses, so it is important to teach them something about solar energy,” she added.

Sharing details of the solar lamps worth ₹48 lakh the club members had distributed in power-deficient areas, Lata said that the first phase of distribution took place at the Sai Baba Vidyalalya in Haloli village in Palghar district of Maharashtra. Adds club president Mansi, “This is a small village near a

mountain, over three hours' drive from Mumbai, and there is often electricity outage here and during rains power supply fails totally.”

Another set of 75 lamps were distributed in an ashram in a village in Vadodara, Gujarat, where because of frequent power failure and darkness, one of the inmates had been bitten by a poisonous snake recently.

**L**ata, who has done a lot of community service even before she joined Rotary five years ago, adds, “All these places were selected after a lot of hard work, as there is so much of need everywhere for energy. I’ve personally visited many such areas, and we have chosen places where the need is most dire. And we make sure that we give solar-powered lamps to students, providing them with a reliable light source for

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We make sure that we give solar-powered lamps to students, providing them with a reliable light source for their studies.

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their studies. In Tamsai village, Palghar, where power outage is common, 27 additional lamps were distributed to local residents. The support from the Rotary Club of Manor Highway was crucial to the success of this project.”

She adds that to the recipients, “the solar lamps are not merely a source of light, but a lifeline that enables children to study, families to engage in day-to-day activities and communities to thrive despite erratic power supply. The joy and gratitude expressed by the

recipients and school principals alike were overwhelming, and for us, it underscored the initiative’s profound impact.”

In conclusion, Mansi adds, “The Porsche documentary captured the transformative effects of RCBJB’s efforts to change lives of underprivileged people, while spreading the message of sustainability far and wide and driving positive change. Our commitment to empowering communities through sustainable solutions remains steadfast. This collaboration with Porsche, Liter of Light and Power Pack marks a defining moment in the journey toward building a more resilient, environmentally conscious future. Through collective action, unwavering dedication, and the shared vision of a brighter tomorrow, our club continues to illuminate lives, one solar lamp at a time.”

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# Building a stronger Rotary through membership growth

Jaishree

Have good thoughts and do good to people,” said RI Director Elect M Muruganandam, quoting Tamil poet Mahakavi Bharathiyar. Speaking at Disha, a three-day goal setting seminar held in Bhubaneswar for incoming district and zonal leaders of Zones 5 and 6, he connected this message with RIPE Mario de Camargo’s message for the 2025–26 Rotary year, ‘Unite for Good.’

Muruganandam emphasised that becoming a governor is no easy task; it demands a commitment of 1,500 full working days — 365 days each as DGN, DGE and DG; and an additional 180 days as IPDG. “After spending 1,500 days in preparation and service, do not pass on your district with a negative note. Leave behind a legacy of growth, vibrant clubs and a strengthened Rotary that will stand strong for another 50 years and beyond,” he said.

While Rotary in India has made remarkable strides in Foundation giving, he pointed out that India is not growing in membership. Zones 5 and 6, which include India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Nepal, and Bhutan, have witnessed stagnant membership over the last five years. He presented a detailed RAG Analysis, developed with RIDE KP Nagesh, revealing that 42 per cent of Rotary clubs with less than 25 members are in the Red category;

36 per cent clubs are in the Amber category (25 to 50 members); and 22 per cent clubs are in the Green category (above 50 members and considered safe).

He urged the DGEs to focus on moving clubs from Red to Amber and from Amber to Green by increasing membership at the club level. To address this, he proposed leveraging



RIDEs KP Nagesh and M Muruganandam



From L: PRID A S Venkatesh, RIDE Muruganandam, PRIP Shekhar Mehta, RIDE Nagesh and TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya.

the potential of assistant governors. “Each zone has 600 AGs. If every AG charts one Rotary club and identifies one major donor, we will witness 600 new clubs and substantial growth in Foundation giving,” he suggested.

The incoming director next stressed on strengthening Rotaract and Interact, with the 1:2:3 strategy — every Rotarian should add two Rotaractors and three Interactors; and every Rotary club should aim to charter at least two Rotaract and three Interact clubs. “72 per cent Rotary clubs in Zone 5, and 73 per cent clubs in Zone 6 have not chartered even one Rotaract club; and 70 per cent clubs have not established Interact clubs,” he observed, and urged leaders to prioritise the growth of Rotaract and Interact. “After age 50, two priorities dominate our lives — our health and our children. See your children as future Rotaractors and Interactors. Make this a priority,” said the RIDE who began his Rotary journey “32 years ago at 16 as a Rotaractor.”

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Rotary club and identifies one  
major donor, we will witness  
600 new clubs and substantial  
growth in Foundation giving.

**M Muruganandam**  
RI Director Elect

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Highlighting another concerning trend, he noted that Zones 5 and 6 have lost 32,000 Rotaractors in recent years. With focused effort, he believes that India can regain 25,000 Rotaractors and Interactors in the next year alone.

Talking about TRF goals, he reiterated the need for continued focus on polio eradication. With 74 cases reported in Pakistan and 25 in Afghanistan last year, and a total seven so far this year, India’s proximity to

these regions necessitates intensified awareness and vaccination efforts. He urged delegates to give more impetus to polio eradication efforts, and to engage the AGs to ensure that districts become million-dollar and multi-million-dollar contributors to TRF. He said that he wanted to see 50 AKS members, 50 endowments and 100 per cent contributors to Annual and Polio Funds from the two zones during his tenure.

**N**agesh added to Muruganandam’s strategies for membership growth. “For the past 120 years, we have relied on evolution. But for the last two decades, Rotary’s membership has plateaued at 1.2 million. If we want to see exponential growth, particularly in India, it is time to embrace a revolution.” He outlined *Mission 2.25 lakh*, an ambitious plan to launch 365 new Rotary clubs in 365



From L: PRID C Basker, Trustee Pandya and RIDE Nagesh.

days, one club per day. This initiative led by the two directors is projected to add an average of 30 members per club, resulting in 2.25 lakh Rotarians by 2025–26 and 2.6 lakh members by 2026–27. “Multiply to divide; divide to grow. Increasing our membership will lead to bifurcation of districts which is ultimately good for all of us,” he said.

His next formula focused on strengthening CSR partnerships. “If every club can secure even one CSR partnership, the scale and impact of our service projects will multiply exponentially, and enhance Rotary’s public image and influence,” he noted.

**A**s leaders in Rotary, it is our responsibility to inspire and guide members toward a deeper commitment to the Foundation. As the global scenario shifts, TRF faces new challenges that require renewed focus and strategic action,” said TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya, adding that the US government, which has historically contributed around \$250 million annually to the polio programme, has

reduced funding and restricted CDC’s communication with governments. USAID’s shutdown and reduced support for WHO have further strained polio monitoring efforts. He urged delegates to increase membership in PolioPlus Societies and contribute generously to the Polio Fund.

He next highlighted Rotary’s peace programmes and Programs of Scale. The eighth peace centre will soon be established at Symbiosis International University, Pune, marking a milestone for Asia. He also mentioned the fourth Program of Scale, awarded to RC Delhi Premier, aimed at enhancing water access and agricultural sustainability in rural districts of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, with the

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Increasing our membership  
will lead to bifurcation of  
districts which is ultimately  
good for all of us.

**K P Nagesh**  
RI Director Elect

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United Nations Environment Programme as a new global partner.

Pandya noted that the CSR grants programme in India has “gained remarkable traction since its inception in 2021 under Shekhar Mehta’s leadership. From \$2.8 million in 2021 to \$8.1 million in 2023, we are expected to exceed \$10 million by the year-end, having already crossed \$7.2 million with 145 corporate partners this Rotary year. But only 6–7 districts are actively pursuing CSR grants. All districts must engage with corporates to leverage CSR opportunities and scale impact,” he said.

Noting that only 50 per cent Rotarians are repeat donors, he urged the delegates to motivate all Rotarians to contribute to TRF. “The Foundation is on the brink of achieving a historic milestone — reaching \$2.025 billion by 2025. Remarkably, as of January 31, 2025, we are just \$99 million short of this ambitious target. The Foundation’s Endowment Fund has witnessed an exceptional growth of \$249 million between January 1, 2024, and January 31, 2025. The Endowment Fund provides long-term financial security for the Foundation’s programmes, ensuring that Rotary’s mission continues for generations to come. While \$99 million might seem like a daunting figure, the momentum generated over the past year gives us reason to be optimistic. To cross the finish line, we must identify and cultivate relationships with individuals and organisations capable of making transformative gifts,” he said.

PDG Debasish Mishra was the chairman of the event where 256 incoming leaders, including few DRRs, participated. Breakout sessions further enriched their knowledge on various Rotary aspects and helped them set goals for the upcoming Rotary year.

Pictures: Jaishree

# District Wise TRF Contribution

As on March 31, 2025

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

Source: RI South Asia Office

(in US Dollars)

District Number	Annual Fund	PolioPlus Fund	Endowment Fund	Other Funds	Total Contribution	
2981	59,998	14,157	104	38	74,296	
2982	44,281	12,631	10,421	87,188	154,520	
3000	47,590	24,015	1,000	342,578	415,183	
3011	95,654	6,377	70,480	1,475,776	1,648,286	
3012	10,318	151	1,500	1,122,688	1,134,657	
3020	103,390	40,135	96,977	151,372	391,874	
3030	56,624	4,983	14,563	210,975	287,145	
3040	5,142	257	0	89,183	94,582	
3053	59,371	700	0	83,524	143,595	
3055	45,393	4,267	2,071	68,208	119,939	
3056	28,041	2,056	60	133	30,290	
3060	173,877	6,399	13,775	658,381	852,431	
3070	27,114	1,623	0	\$0	28,736	
3080	23,220	9,617	17,384	9,561	59,781	
3090	16,851	109	18,942	\$0	35,902	
3100	30,391	5,445	0	51,677	87,513	
3110	17,693	1,477	4,164	426,070	449,403	
3120	58,988	1,211	8,337	65,312	133,848	
3131	539,693	20,812	142,420	1,427,359	2,130,284	
3132	61,236	2,565	23,339	78,698	165,838	
3141	475,851	36,936	204,941	2,745,166	3,462,894	
3142	404,265	56,723	50,060	582,056	1,093,103	
3150	149,922	31,809	144,486	907,465	1,233,682	
3160	22,798	3,370	1,000	5,787	32,955	
3170	49,252	22,872	58,863	317,540	448,528	
3181	135,296	16,945	77	0	152,318	
3182	105,766	4,104	12	29,270	139,151	
3191	70,703	8,226	158	284,506	363,593	
3192	123,120	9,941	23,500	342,488	499,049	
3201	87,040	35,187	32,370	782,895	937,492	
3203	48,977	13,024	16,034	134,621	212,657	
3204	40,102	14,874	48,001	12,545	115,521	
3211	29,909	4,284	0	29,670	63,863	
3212	291,823	21,170	103,500	170,187	586,679	
3231	16,723	7,620	68,192	43,132	135,667	
3233	63,748	20,480	5,199	461,047	550,474	
3234	125,386	30,165	95,746	970,475	1,221,773	
3240	192,038	30,885	50,000	203,966	476,889	
3250	147,544	5,661	19,231	175,965	348,400	
3261	5,081	632	8,335	10,878	24,926	
3262	75,224	2,356	2,307	15,643	95,529	
3291	147,532	13,748	193,500	150,830	505,610	
3220	Sri Lanka	61,508	4,803	5,052	23,920	95,283
3271	Pakistan	9,775	40,036	0	10,500	60,311
63	(former 3272)*	6,757	2,319	0	0	9,076
64	(former 3281)*	6,259	2,916	1,000	1,050	11,225
65	(former 3282)*	1,021	1,221	0	0	2,242
3292		93,601	26,079	90,026	125,311	335,017

\* Undistricted

# Without membership, there is no Rotary

Jaishree

**M**embership is the core of Rotary's existence. We will still be an organisation even without service projects, but without membership, there is no Rotary," said PRIP Shekhar Mehta, addressing incoming leaders at the Disha event in Bhubaneswar, convened by RIDEs M Muruganandam and KP Nagesh. Mehta noted the lack of sustained

focus on membership growth. While contributions to TRF receive constant follow-up and recognition, membership growth efforts are often neglected. "Just as DGs, AGs and club presidents tirelessly follow up on financial commitments, a similar approach should be applied to membership growth," he said.

Rotary's success in fundraising has been phenomenal. When the

goal was set to raise \$120 million for polio eradication, Rotary surpassed that by raising \$242 million. Similarly, when Kalyan Banerjee as Foundation Chair, set a seemingly ambitious goal of \$300 million that goal was also surpassed, he noted. "Any goal that we have set for TRF, 99 per cent of the time we have succeeded. But every time we have set a goal for membership, we have failed." He recalled his presidential emphasis, 'Each One, Bring One,' urging club presidents to diligently follow up to introduce at least one quality member and retain them.

To facilitate growth, bifurcating districts is essential, said Mehta. India currently contributes 15 per cent of global Rotary membership but has only 42 districts, far fewer than its proportional share. 'Divide to grow' is not just a concept; it is a necessity. "More districts mean more representation at the COL, ensuring India's voice is heard at the global level. Ensure that at least 60 per cent clubs meet the required membership criteria to enable bifurcation," he said, and appreciated the RIDEs for their ambitious goals for membership growth and TRF.

**T**hrough interesting success stories, PRID C Basker explained the role of a leader in accomplishing



PRIP Shekhar Mehta



PRID C Basker and RIDE KP Nagesh light a lamp as RIDE M Muruganandam, Sumathi, Disha chair PDG Debasish Mishra and Aparna look on.

an organisation’s vision and goals. Leaders are not meant to be performers; they are mentors. Their role is to guide, inspire and empower others to take ownership of their roles, he said. District training programmes must go beyond routine sessions, and equip leaders with the skills and mindset required to mentor their club leaders effectively. He recalled initiating Disha in 2017. “Trustee Bharat, its first chairman, named it *Disha*, which translates to guidance, leadership and the path we need to follow.”

Basker advised the incoming leaders to “build strong relationships with your club leaders. Be empathetic, listen to their concerns and create an environment where they feel supported and inspired.”

He noted that Rotary’s growth, “an average of just 400 new members per year over the last decade,

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Just as DGs, AGs and club presidents tirelessly follow up on financial commitments, a similar approach should be applied to membership growth.

**Shekhar Mehta**  
Past RI President

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is simply not acceptable. India today is no longer a developing economy. A consistent growth of 7 per cent year after year, digital transformation reaching even the smallest of vendors, advancements in infrastructure, industry and agriculture, our successful ventures in space and a steadily rising per

capita income demonstrate India’s progress. To harness this potential, club leaders must be empowered, inspired and trained effectively.”

**S**uccess lies not just in working harder but in working smarter,” said PRID A S Venkatesh, and listed three critical approaches — asking the right questions, dreaming bigger and fostering collaboration — to achieve remarkable growth and impact. Holding the audience attention with personal anecdotes, he said, “Whatever you want to achieve, it starts in your mind. It’s not about resources, skills or time; it’s about belief. If you believe you can, you will. In Rotary, when faced with seemingly impossible targets, it’s easy to take the path



RIDE Muruganandam and Sumathi with PRID A S Venkatesh.

of least resistance and say, ‘It’s not possible.’ But if we believe in our ability to achieve, we can make it happen.”

Referring to a question some Rotarians asked him: ‘why do we keep learning the same things in Rotary,’ he said that learning the same concepts repeatedly isn’t about redundancy. “It’s about honing our skills until they become second nature. The moment we believe there’s nothing left to learn, we stop growing. Every repetition strengthens our abilities, making us better at what we do.”

To achieve Rotary’s ambitious membership targets, Venkatesh suggested learning to ask... “repeatedly and consistently”, and asking the right questions. “For too long, we have been asking questions that we believe are important. We tend to lead conversations by boasting about Rotary’s phenomenal work, forgetting that these facts, however impressive, can wait. The person we are speaking to may not be interested in all that information initially. Instead try asking him/her: ‘What do you

want to do?’ This simple but powerful question opens the door to understanding their interests, aspirations and motivations. The story of Rotary becomes far more compelling when it resonates with the individual’s values and aspirations. At that point, we are no longer imposing information; we are offering an opportunity that aligns with their interests,” he said.

He then highlighted two factors that limit leaders from achieving transformational change in Rotary — the desire to finish everything in one year; and reluctance to collaborate

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We set short-term goals with the aim of completing projects within the Rotary year. It limits our capacity to dream bigger and take on more ambitious projects that may span multiple years.

**A S Venkatesh**  
Past RI Director

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across clubs and districts. “We set short-term goals with the aim of completing projects within the Rotary year. While this ensures accountability, it limits our capacity to dream bigger and take on more ambitious projects that may span multiple years. Many of us hesitate to consider multi-club, multi-district, or even multi-country projects. We tend to operate within the boundaries of our clubs and districts, missing opportunities for greater impact. To dream big, we must break free from the limitations of individual timelines and geographical boundaries,” said Venkatesh.

Aparajita Sarangi, IAS officer-turned-MP from Bhubaneswar, emphasised on increasing women’s participation in leadership roles, citing that fewer than five per cent of NIFTY 500 companies have women as chairpersons, and only seven per cent have women executive directors. She appreciated Rotary’s DEI initiatives and suggested installing dedicated toilets for transgenders in public places.

Pictures: Jaishree

# Trustee Chair Maloney visits Bengaluru

## Team Rotary News



RIDE KP Nagesh, TRF Trustee Chair Mark Maloney, AKS member Irfan Razack and Trustee Bharat Pandya.



Trustee Chair Maloney and Gay with DGN Ravishankar Dakoju and Paola.



PDG Jeetendra Aneja, RIDE Nagesh, Trustee Pandya, RID 3191 DG Satish Madhavan, Razack, PDG Suresh Hari, Trustee Chair Maloney, Rotary Bangalore Mid Town president Palani and RID 3192 DG NS Mahadev Prasad.

**T**RF Trustee Chair Mark Maloney and Trustee Bharat Pandya were on a two-day visit to Bengaluru in March. The leaders presented Service above Self Award to Irfan Razack, the first AKS member of the then RI District 3190. RIDE KP Nagesh, DG Satish Madhavan (RID 3191) and past governors were also present. They then visited RID 3192 DGN Ravishankar Dakoju and his spouse Paola at their residence.

At a recognition event, the Trustee Chair honoured 31 CSR partners and 24 Major Donors of RID 3191, and 45 corporates and 40 Major Donors of RID 3192, for their contribution to the Foundation. Both the districts individually pledged to contribute \$1.2 million to TRF for the Rotary year 2024-25. PDG Suresh Hari (RID 3192) and DGN Anil Gupta (RID 3191) were the event chairmen. ■



# South Asia Peace Conference in Bengaluru

## Team Rotary News

The South Asia International Peace Conference, on the theme *Healthier World, Greener Tomorrow*, was held in Bengaluru in March. The event was hosted by RID 3192 led by DG NS Mahadev Prasad, and supported by RID 3191 and other districts of India. Shankar Shrinivas was the conference chairman.

The event focused on five core areas essential for achieving sustainable global peace: environmental sustainability to address climate resilience and conservation efforts; public health awareness to expand access to healthcare and preventive well-being strategies; community-based solutions to foster social and economic transformation at the grassroots level; regional cooperation to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties among South Asian

nations; and integration of traditional and modern practices to harness indigenous wisdom and modern innovations for a sustainable future. Delegates from India, Sri Lanka, Bhutan and Nepal participated.

Brian Rusch, a member of RI's Joint Advisory Council on DEI and RI President's Representative, said the key to peace is to help others achieve peace. "The journey to peace is solo and to each one his own. Together let us build respect, harmony and tolerance."

DGN Ravishankar Dakoju, speaking on 'Peace through ecological sustainability and the Rotary perspective,' stated that according to World Bank estimate, over 40 million people in Asia will be affected by climate change and global warming by 2050. He highlighted some of the great initiatives of Rotary towards environmental

sustainability, and urged delegates to focus on afforestation drives.

Music, as a universal language, can be a vital force for environment advocacy and global harmony, said Ricky Kej, a three-time Grammy Award-winning music composer and an ardent environmentalist. Educationist Aishwarya DKS Hegde underlined education as a catalyst for societal change, and stressed that values built in our homes, classrooms and workplaces can pave the way for a better world. Foundational conditioning is vital early on, not just to follow but to lead the desired change, she said.

A panel discussion on 'Environmental solutions for peacebuilding,' led by the Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group (ESRAG), saw the participation of Biodiversity Conservation Projects chair Meenakshi Venkataraman, Community Development specialist Arun Vaddi, RAG's Council chair and COP 23 Program manager Christopher Puttock and COP 28 Planning Committee chair Yasar Atacik.

DEI Awards were presented to individuals and organisations for their contributions to social transformation. Policy recommendations, bilateral and multilateral partnerships for regional cooperation, community-driven environmental and public health projects were some of the outcomes of the peace conference.

RI District 3192 signed a 10-year MoU with the IIT-Madras Pravartak, an entity of IIT-Madras, to provide digital training in English, Math and Science to 1.8 lakh students studying in Classes 6-9 in KREIS schools (residential schools for the less privileged in Karnataka). The agreement includes providing simulated science labs in 821 such schools in the state. ■

RID 3192 DG N S Mahadev Prasad presents a memento to Brian Rusch, RIPR and a member of RI's Joint Advisory Council on DEI. Also seen: (from L) Club Services director Renukeshwara Swamy, DEI director Abha Saxena, Rajeshwari Prasad, district secretary K T Niranjan and N S Rangaswamy.

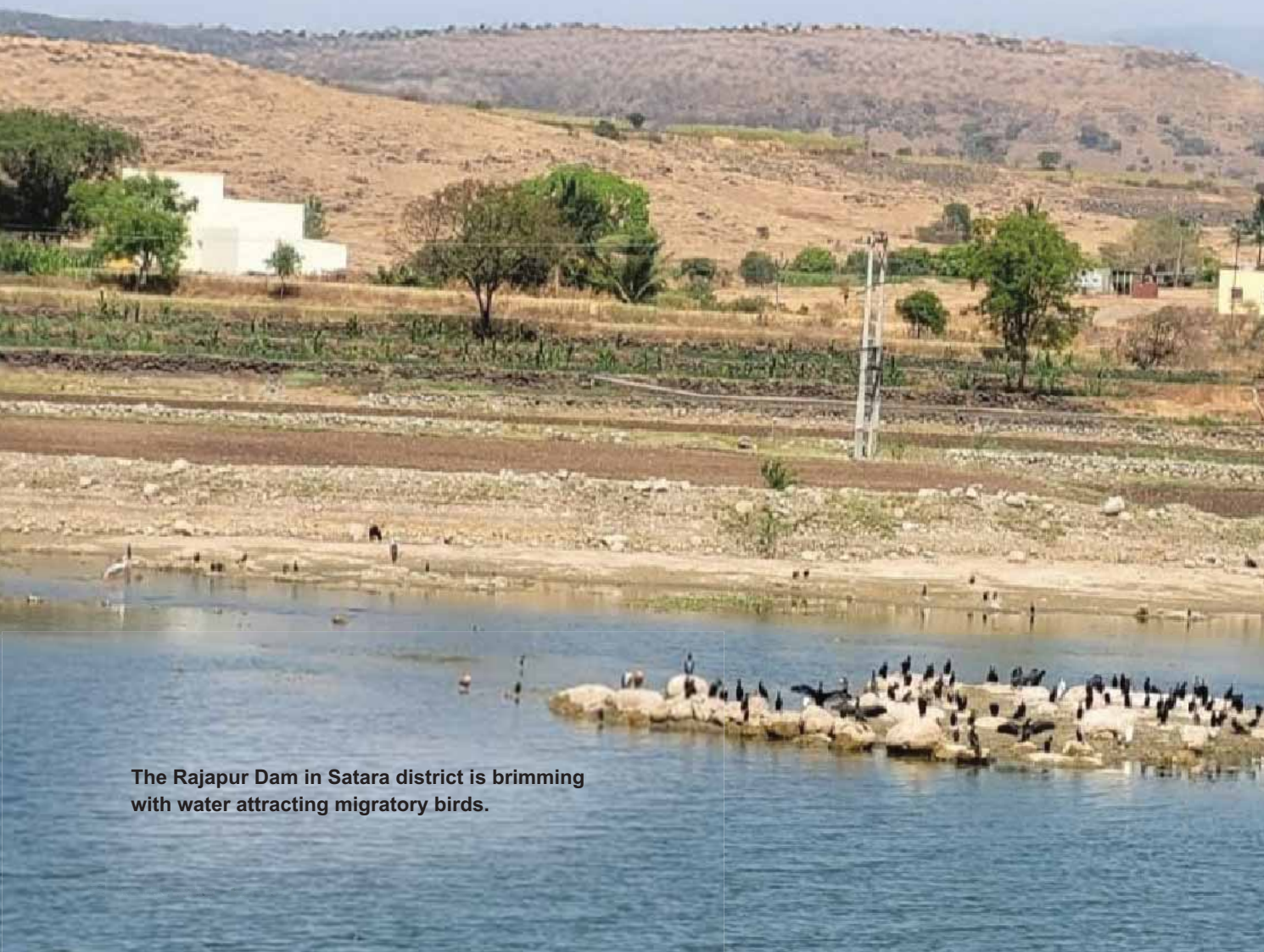


# Rotarians from Pune Central restore ancient dams

Rasheeda Bhagat

When a group of Rotarians led by their Rotary Club of Pune Central (RID 3131) president Brig (retd) P K M Raja took the three-hour long 130km trip to Satara recently to see the outcome of the hard work they had put in to do major repairs to an ancient dam which had sustained major structural damages over seven decades, and saw a flock of birds seated on the embankment of the water body holding the copious, shimmering water, they were left gasping in delight.

This was in Feb 2025. The ancient dam, once a crucial water source for irrigation, drinking water and livestock, had developed severe cracks and other structural damages over time, leading to water seepage and terribly



The Rajapur Dam in Satara district is brimming with water attracting migratory birds.

reduced storage capacity. When the dam's sorry state was brought to the Rotarians' notice by some local good Samaritans, they found that due to a previous poor monsoon, the dam had dried up completely. The result was that women in the 5km radius, where about 15,000 people live and depend on this water body improving the water table in the entire region, had to trek a distance of 2–3km just to fetch a pot or bucket of water for household use.

The club members, who had already done a small project to repair and restore a small dam in the area in 2022, felt they should take up the much bigger challenge of restoring and rejuvenating the much bigger Rajapur dam.

Explaining the background of what soon became a flagship project for their club, its IPP Commodore (retd)

Ajay Chitnis says this dam, built in the 1940s, was meant to provide storage for the villages around the area. "But due to almost no monsoon rains in 2023 and a very lean monsoon in 2022, the storage area of this dam had dried up completely."

Earlier, a past president and major donor of the club Giri Sakhrani had met a local engineer-turned-businessman-turned philanthropist Padmakar Bhide, who has passionately dedicated his life to improving the water availability in this group of hamlets in Satara district of Maharashtra. He explained to him how due to major cracks and poor monsoon rain over the previous three years this dam had run dry, bringing misery to the lives of the people who depend on it as their water source. The local panchayat president Hanumant

Dhandk also explained to the Rotarians that in the face of such severe water shortage, they had no other option than to buy water through private tankers at a substantial cost, or wait for the undependable and scarce government water tankers.

A core group from the club decided to take up the repair and restoration work, and urged the Rotarians of this 117-member-strong club, one of the biggest in RID 3131, to donate for this crucial community welfare project. The work on the dam began last February with a traditional pooja performed by Rotary Ann Dipti Chitnis and PP Sakhrani, and was attended by



From L: RC Pune Central past president Giridharlal Sakhrani, Shireesh Nadkar, Nitin Rajore, club president Brig PKM Raja, PP Ajay Dubey, Rakesh Makhija and IPP Cmde Ajay Chitnis with villagers near the Rajapur Dam.



almost the entire population of Rajapur village, where this dam is located.

Giving a background of the water bodies network in this region of Maharashtra, the ex-commodore explains that Satara district broadly has two parts; the western half comprising the Western Ghats, and home to Mahabaleshwar and Panchgani hill stations which are blessed with copious rainfall during the SW monsoon. But the Eastern half comprising plains and low undulating hills falls in a rainshadow area that receives rainfall only during the withdrawal of the SW monsoon.

To cater to the water requirements of the people in this region, he says, around 180 earthen dams were built in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. “Over the years these dams have developed severe leaks, and the water stored in these bodies lasts only till about

Nov-Dec,” after which the people are left high and dry. The government has attempted repairs of these dams, but as is typical of all such projects, a lot of money is spent on achieving very little,” he says wryly.

**T**hat is when private citizens like Bhide, affectionately called Bandu Bhide by the locals, got involved and also brought in Rotarians for a more effective partnership to bring water, and much needed relief to the local women, to this area.

Another passionate member of the core team of this project, past president Uday Dharmadhikari, says that for two years beginning 2023, the club raised the required funds for the repair

and restoration work of the Rajapur dam, totalling around ₹12 lakh. The anchor donor was Sakhrani, and others included PP Ajay Dubey, Rakesh Makhija, Shireesh Nadkar and Nitin Rajore.

Asked why the club, well-known for its mega projects with CSR partners and GGs, did not go for CSR funds, he said, “When we go to companies for their CSR funds, they first want to see the concrete work that has already been done, before they part with their money. For projects related to the environment like planting trees, or water conservation projects, it is difficult to show them in concrete terms what component of the work will be done with their money. That is why we thought for this first major dam restoration we will raise our own money, but yes, now that we have this



successful project to show a potential CSR partner, we will certainly seek CSR funds and do bigger and bolder water projects in this area.”

He adds that in the last couple of years his club has done, along with CSR grants, GGs and money raised by club members, projects worth nearly ₹11 crore. This year too, the community service work done by RC Pune Central “will be touching about ₹7 crore.”

**C**oming to the actual work involved in such cases, Cmde Chitnis explains that the repairs involve digging a 10-foot wide trench at the base of the dam wall. “The trench is dug till hard rock is hit. The dam face covered with wild bushes and some trees is cleaned, the source of the leakage is identified, and cemented. Thereafter,


thick plastic sheets are laid in the trench and on the dam face, and the trench is refilled with the excavated mud and silt. Once this is completed, we wait for the rains!”

This year, he adds, the region was blessed with early and copious rains. As soon as the rains started, the desilting work was stopped, and the water started filling up. By September, the reservoir had filled up and water started overflowing from the waste weir, located at the western edge of the dam. In November, a group of them, led by club president Brig Raja visited the site, to see for themselves the fruits of their labour.

The Rotarians were greeted by a beaming village sarpanch Dhandk, the headmaster of the local school and a bunch of villagers at the dam. “Along with them we walked over the length of the dam and a very happy sarpanch told us that the drinking water problems of



A trench being dug at the dam site.

A group of six men are standing in a field of tall grass. In the background, there are rolling hills with sparse vegetation and several large white wind turbines. The sky is clear and blue. The men are dressed in casual to semi-formal attire, including polo shirts, button-down shirts, and trousers. They are all looking towards the camera.

From L: IPP Cmde  
Ajay Chitnis, Shireesh  
Nadkar, club president  
Brig Raja, Nitin Rajore,  
Rakesh Makhija and  
PP Ajay Dubey at the  
dam site.

the village were finally over. They no longer had to get water by tankers to fill the community well, and make it available to the villagers.”

This project involved strengthening the dam embankment, desilting the reservoir, reinforcing spillways, and implementing soil erosion control measures. This has not only enhanced water retention but also ensured long-term resilience against climatic variations, adds Cmde Chitnis.

Now, with the dam brimming with water (this was last November), the community well filled up, and clean drinking water was available to all the houses in the village. Also, some houses with wells that had been dry for years, had finally seen water, and some of them were even overflowing. “The joy in his voice was echoed by everybody present. Even more surprising was the fact that even though it has not rained for over a month, water was

still flowing in the waste weir. Bandu Bhide explained to us that this was because the water table in the entire area had gone up. Not only was water percolating into the dam, wells in villages within a 5km radius had also benefitted from this project.”

Dharmadhikari added that meant about 15,000 people had benefited from this project. “This success story will not only inspire greater contribution from members in the forthcoming years, but will also help us get CSR funds, so that we can increase the scope of this project and repair and restore more dams. “

He adds that to create a feeling of belonging for the villagers, and

give them a sense of ownership, the Rotarians had encouraged the locals to contribute whatever little they could in terms of money. Of course they were involved in giving labour for the repair work. “The biggest advantage was that because the villagers participated, the happiness index has really gone up, with women being happier than the men, as it has saved them a trek of 2–3km to fetch water.”

**T**he impact of this project has been transformative. With some time on their hands to spare, the women

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The joy in the voice was echoed by everybody present. Even more surprising was the fact that even though it has not rained for over a month, water was still flowing in the waste weir.

**Cmde Ajay Chitnis**  
IPP, RC Pune Central

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Past president Sakhrani breaking a coconut as an auspicious start to the renovation of the Rajapur Dam.

have been organised into self-help groups and some informal training has been imparted to them for tailoring, poultry farming, and other vocations so that they can get a modest income. The availability of clean water has also reduced water-borne diseases and improved attendance at schools in the area, he adds. The general health of the women has also improved.

“In February we found migratory birds at the dam, and even last week when we checked, we were told that there was sufficient water in the Rajapur dam. I’d say that the improved groundwater table has also helped farmers, who don’t have major crop patterns as this area is a rainshadow region. But whatever vegetables and other products they grow are getting a higher yield thanks to better availability of water.”

He adds that hopefully migration of youngsters — some of them had left earlier to become dabbawallahs in Mumbai — will stop. Next on the club’s horizon is improving conditions in government schools in this region.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



# Council on Legislation 2025

**T**he Council on Legislation is where Rotary members meet every three years to discuss and vote on proposals to move the organisation forward. Representatives from Rotary districts around the world gathered for the 2025 Council on Legislation (COL) held April 13–17 in Chicago, Illinois, USA, voting after much debate to approve a dues increase, and also deciding to allow clubs to be chartered with fewer members.

By far the most-debated issues in this session were the dues increase, designed to keep up with rising costs, and a proposal to make annual district conferences optional.

RI President Stephanie Urchick set the tone for the Council on the opening day, stressing the cross-cultural and cooperative nature of Rotary. “This Council represents the heart of Rotary’s democratic process and the

best of our international spirit. The gathering is one of Rotary’s most powerful expressions of multiculturalism. Here, voices from every corner of the globe come together — not to compete, but to collaborate,” she said to about 480 representatives and the COL observers.

Representatives approved a \$3.5 increase in the dues that every Rotary member pays to RI, which means that dues will increase from \$82 for 2025–26 to \$85.5 for 2026–27, and by another \$3.75 in each of the following two years.

A five-year financial forecast, presented to representatives at the beginning of each Council, projected that without any increase, RI would have a \$42 million deficit by 2029–30. The organisation’s policies require it to have a balanced budget.

“Dues are the primary funding source for everything we do. It provides essential services to your clubs, members and districts. As inflation

continues to drive costs up, we must make sure dues keep pace. The world needs Rotary more than ever. It’s in your hands to protect the future of our organisation,” said RI Director Raju Subramanian to the Council.

Supporters of the dues increase also insisted that RI has and will continue to cut costs as the organisation finds new ways to be efficient. The dues increase, which amounts to about four per cent each year, is below the 2024 global rate of inflation.

But opponents said that dues increases discourage membership, which itself is the lifeblood of Rotary. Several members also argued that the information RI has provided to representatives has not been detailed enough and said they want greater transparency.

“For the past 10 years, membership has been decreasing,” said Shobee Tone, representing District 2650 (Japan), who noted that a loss of members resulting from dues increases hurts smaller clubs the most. He said RI needs better efficiency, with fewer people on the staff. The dues increase prevailed after 45 minutes of debate and a failed attempt to postpone the decision for up to three months.

The Council also approved a measure that will allow clubs to be chartered



**Team India with RIDs Raju Subramanian and Anirudha Roychowdhury, and RIDEs M Muruganandam and K P Nagesh.**

with 15 members, instead of 20. Supporters said the change will remove barriers to starting new clubs and help Rotary grow and expand its reach by trying innovative club models.

Ken Schuppert, the Council chair, thanked the representatives for their hard work, saying the approved measures will make Rotary stronger. “They reviewed and voted on legislation that will change and lead Rotary into the future,” he said.

#### **In other action, the Council**

- Voted, after extensive debate, to make holding an annual district conference optional.

- Defeated a pair of measures to set an age limit for Rotaractors. Opponents cited the low number of current Rotaractors over the age of 40 in arguing that limits were unnecessary and said such restrictions could force members out of Rotary.
- Rejected limiting the number of honorary members a club can have to five per cent of the club’s active membership. Opponents noted that many clubs use honorary membership to stay in contact with former members, such as longtime Rotarians with valuable expertise to offer.

- Approved a measure allowing the Board to test additional new governance models beyond those that were approved three years ago. Those are currently in progress in Great Britain and Ireland, New Zealand and Australia. Supporters noted that the system of governors overseeing districts dates back to the early days of Rotary. They say that trying new governance models can help Rotary adapt to future needs and train and develop new leaders.

- Agreed to allow the Board to consider culture and language in addition to the number of Rotarians in deciding zone boundaries.
- Voted to require that the five-year financial forecast presented at the beginning of each Council includes updates on specific process improvements and cost-reduction measures made by RI. In a similar measure, the Council approved commissioning a regular professional analysis of processes and cost structures in RI’s administration.
- Approved renaming the presidents-elect training seminar as the presidents-elect learning seminar and the district training assembly as the club leadership learning seminar. The measure is part of a shift in culture from training to learning to engage and empower people.

A Report of Action summarising the legislation will be sent to clubs, which will have at least two months to submit any opposition to the Council action. The Council’s adoption of legislation is suspended if there is opposition from clubs representing at least five per cent of the possible club votes.



**RIDEs Nagesh (L) and Muruganandam (second from R) with RIPE Mario de Camargo (centre).**

# Madurai Interact raises ₹16L for charity

V Muthukumaran

A unique two-day fundraiser event by the Interact Club of Lakshmi School in Madurai, RID 3000, in which over 1,000 students, parents and teachers participated has set the template for the way school clubs in India can mobilise resources and funds for doing charity programmes.

Titled ‘Caring Beyond Classroom’ the mega carnival (Nov 23–24, 2024) saw parents, along with their children, enjoying a series of sports, arts, science, and cultural activities on the school campus, “all of them ticketed events for the Interact club to raise funds for charity,” says P Subhashini, school principal. While

shadow puppetry for primary section students focused on avoiding plastic use, mobile phone addiction and the need for healthy food and lifestyle; for middle class students Project Robotics educated parents and their wards about electronic circuits, infrared

sensor, kinematics etc through Creya (a primer on robotics) sessions.

One of the highlights was a mobile planetarium in which parents and children could view 15-minute trailer movies on space exploration and the mysteries of the universe. They also enjoyed a Virtual Reality show at this mobile studio that whetted the appetite to know about space faring and extraterrestrials. Field games like football, throwball, basketball and table tennis created a bonding among parents and teachers like never before. “We had fun games with parents, teachers and students, and by the end, the participants wanted to have more of this play time as they enjoyed the bonding session,” says principal Subhashini.

The art — papercraft, foam board printing — and STEM workshops were attended by secondary grade

Interactors preparing a recipe for the food stall.



Parents and their children at the jute products stall.



students (Class 9–12) with their parents, and interacted with the subject experts. Vocal music and instrumentals weaved a ‘classical magic’ at *An Evening of Music* and “we enjoyed the soulful rendition by students and parents.” It was time for literary

sessions like Guess the Word, quiz and Word Play, along with a Tombola session conducted by senior principal Shanthi Mohan for a lucky draw, on the final day before the event was wrapped up. “Our Home Science department put up a market with stalls for jute products, stationery items and art work like portrait drawing and framed paintings that was a big hit among visitors. Also, the food court with its cuisine stalls for baked items like cakes, cookies and pastries, apart from snacks, was a major draw with its lip-smacking delights,” explains Subhashini.

### Trailblazers

Having collected ₹7.16 lakh from the November fundraiser, the Interact club will give the sum to Kalpataru, an NGO unit of Arogya Welfare Trust promoted by the TVS management, which is catering to the needs of old age homes, orphanages and underprivileged rural women.

Though the club is 18 years old, “we are conducting this two-day mega show over the last two years, and collected ₹9 lakh at our maiden fundraiser,” says Siva Ramya, teacher in-charge of the Interact club. “In the last three years, the Interactors have tied up with Kalpataru which

has the logistics and wherewithal for efficient distribution of essential items, materials and grants to special homes and poor families,” says R Srinivasan, director, TVS group of schools, which manages the eight Lakshmi Schools in Madurai. A past president of RC Madurai Mid Town, and now a member of RC Bangalore JP Nagar, Srinivasan is also the nodal coordinator of the four Interact clubs in the TVS group. All the Interact clubs are sponsored by RC Madurai Mid Town.

On the fundraiser event, Ramya says, “our multiple shows, displays and eclectic programmes fostered a sense of social responsibility and leadership qualities among students which are invaluable for their growth.” Vinita, mother of Aadiv Jain, Class 8, wants this ‘grand spectacle’ to continue for years as “the event is creating a lasting impact on both the participants and the beneficiaries.”

Club president Aishwarya Meena (Class 11) is confident that “our fundraising efforts will create ripples of positive change by creating sustainable happiness among participants and beneficiaries in the years to come.” As a thumb rule, only students of Class 11 are elected as office-bearers of the Interact club which has around 550 members, all from Class 9–12, says principal Subhashini.

All praise for the Interactors of the 25-year-old Lakshmi School, Srinivasan, an alumnus of The Rotary Foundation who has led a GSE team from RID 3000 (Madurai) to Osaka, Japan, in 2001, says, “the school brigade of Rotary has stood up to its ideals, turning out as good ambassadors of Rotary values.” Though living in Bengaluru, “I am always in touch with my Interactors and students of TVS Schools,” he smiles. ■



Interact Club of Lakshmi School president Aishwarya Meena (5<sup>th</sup> from L, back row) and teacher in-charge Siva Ramya, along with Interactors.



RC Thane Hiranandani Legends president Nilesh Dhahifule (sitting, centre) with club members and resource persons at the event venue.



# Illuminating young minds in tribal hamlets

Jaishree

A chance visit to a tribal hamlet near Shahapur in Thane district, Maharashtra, by Nilesh Dhahifule, president, RC Thane Hiranandani Legends, RID 3142, along with two other club members, resulted in a one-day programme for 1,250 young children from 19 surrounding villages.

“When we interacted with the children there, we were amazed by their spontaneity and talent. With right motivation and direction, we knew we could help them build a promising future,” he says. They found that the local schools had dedicated teachers, which laid a strong foundation for learning. “That’s when we

planned *Project Navrang* to enhance students’ learning abilities while also focusing on their mental and physical wellbeing. These children, unlike their urban counterparts, are first-generation learners and need extra care to ensure a bright future.”

The club first prioritised Class 10 students preparing for their board





exams across various hamlets. Teachers and some parents accompanied them to an auditorium in Shahapur where nine specially designed sessions were held. “We arranged transportation for every student, ensuring they were picked up from the doorstep and dropped back home,” says Dhahifule.

To boost their confidence and help them study effectively, the club introduced a study app aligned with the state board syllabus and helped them download it on their mobile phones. “The app offers subject-wise notes, question banks, step-by-step solutions for math problems and chemistry equations. It even helps students plan daily study schedules,” he explains.

A career guidance seminar gave them information about scholarships, higher education options and institutions. Sharad Wadekar, the session’s faculty, also taught

students how to break down lessons into manageable parts for better understanding and retention.

Beyond academics, the programme addressed crucial issues affecting young minds. Club member Anuj Yadav conducted a session on substance abuse, warning students about various addictions, including excessive mobile phone use and the dangers of misusing social media. A QR code was shared to connect students with mental health experts. The mental health app is an initiative by RID 3142.

A medical camp screened students for thalassaemia and sickle cell anaemia. “Around 20 children were found to have either of these disorders and we have offered to support their treatment at the Civil Hospital, Thane,” he adds.

A session on CPR (cardio pulmonary resuscitation) by

Dr Vishwanath Rajput drew enthusiastic response from children and teachers alike. “Since these children come from remote villages with limited medical facilities, we want to equip them with life-saving first aid skills,” explains project chair Dheeraj Mhatre. Club members Meenu Mahal and Aneeta Satish led an awareness session on personal safety, helping students understand safe/unsafe touch, setting boundaries and making informed decisions.

The club honoured 16 teachers from tribal government schools for their dedication to educating children despite limited resources. Breakfast, lunch and refreshments were provided to the visitors; writing pads and stationery items were distributed to the students. “It was heartwarming to see the children sing and dance during the entertainment session. The motivational workshops will undoubtedly help them, especially with their exams approaching. We plan to continue *Project Navrang* in the next year too,” says Dhahifule.

The initiative was supported by volunteers from Fandry Foundation, an NGO working for the upliftment of the tribal population, ensuring the programme’s seamless execution. ■

## Kartarpur Sahib gives an opportunity to Indo-Pak Rotarians to meet and bond

Rasheeda Bhagat

A 34 member-group of Rotarians and their families from RI District 3055, and other districts across India undertook a spiritual-cum-fellowship trip to the sacred shrine Sri Kartarpur Sahib in Pakistan recently. “There we met a group of some 60 Pakistani Rotarians from Lahore and other places, spent a couple of hours with them exchanging flags and sharing the *langar* food. This journey



not only celebrated spirituality and unity but also highlighted Rotary's global commitment to peace, service and international collaboration," said Harish Tekchandani, secretary of RC Ahmedabad Heritage.

What he calls "a momentous event, underscoring the power of fellowship in fostering cross-border relationships", took a lot of planning and coordination with the Pakistani Rotarians, who were keen to meet and welcome the Indian group on their land.

As is well-known, the Kartarpur Sahib, located along the banks of the Ravi River in Pakistan, holds deep religious and cultural significance for not only Sikhs, as it is the final resting place of Guru Nanak Dev, the founder of Sikhism, but also devotees from several other communities. "I am a Sindhi, there were other non-Sikh Punjabis and others in our group, and all of us went there with faith and devotion in our hearts, and prayers on our lips," he adds.

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Apart from the great spiritual experience, what Rotarians on both sides will remember are some special moments, setting aside their differences of caste, religion and culture in the spirit of shared humanity.

### **Harish Tekchandani**

Secretary, RC Ahmedabad Heritage

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Asked about visa hassles, the Rotarian explains that no visa is required to make the trip to Kartarpur Sahib, but the condition is that you have to return the same evening. An application has to be made to the Indian Ministry of Home Affairs with the relevant documents, and police verification is done before their travel is cleared. From Amritsar they made the two-hour bus journey to the Indo-Pak border, where they had to first clear Indian Immigration. Here, all the members of the group were given polio drops as Pakistan is not yet polio-free. "From there, an electric BSF buggy dropped us on the Pakistan border which we crossed on foot; a few steps later, a bus of Pakistani Rangers, which we found in very good condition, took us to the Kartarpur Sahib which is a little over 4km away."

At the sacred monument, the Pakistani Rotarians were waiting for them, and on behalf of the Indian Rotarians, Rajiv Gulati, president of RC Ahmedabad Heritage, gave an introduction



and read out a message from RID 3055 DG Mohan Parashar.

Fortunately, after the prayers and the *langar*, the women had a little time to go to the nearby market and shop to their heart's content!

“We were extremely happy to organise and host this multidistrict initiative aimed to celebrate the spiritual essence of Kartarpur Sahib while emphasising the power of unity that transcends geographical and cultural boundaries. The meticulously coordinated itinerary took participants from Amritsar to the Kartarpur Corridor, which was not only a spiritual journey but also a powerful demonstration of Rotary’s international reach,” says club president Gulati.



RC Ahmedabad Heritage president Rajiv Gulati (second from R) and secretary Harish Tekchandani (third from R) partake the langar prasad in the Kartarpur Sahib gurdwara.

Tekchandani added that a heartwarming aspect of the journey was the warm reception from Rotarians in Pakistan. The Pakistani group included four past district governors and one DGN. Anil Ghai, coordinator of the Indus Peace Park, and club president Gulati worked closely with the Indian and Pakistani Rotarians to plan the entire event and ensure a “meaningful fellowship”. Apart from exchanging club flags, the Rotarians also exchanged gifts; while the Pakistanis got delicious *khakhras* from

Gujarat, the Indians got some beautiful shawls.

“At the end of the day, apart from the great spiritual experience, what Rotarians on both sides will remember are some special moments, such as sharing the *langar prasad* at the Kartarpur Sahib, setting aside their differences of caste, religion and culture in the spirit of shared humanity,” added Tekchandani.

Following the horrendous terrorist attack in Pahalgam on tourists, and closing of Indo-Pak borders, Kartarpur Sahib darshan will elude Indians for some time. ■





**THE ROTARY CLUB  
is both the HEART  
and FOUNDATION of Rotary.**

**Protect its UNITY.  
Promote its GROWTH.**

**Never Let External Influences  
or Positional Power Divide  
or Dictate Your Club.**

**Let Service...  
NOT AUTHORITY...  
be your Guide...**

**Let's build a stronger Club  
and a stronger Rotary.**



**Rtn. AKS. Dr.K.Srinivasan  
Rotary Club of Tiruchirappalli &  
Erode Central, Zone - 5**

# Lessons in disaster preparedness

Kiran Zehra

I had never held a fire extinguisher before. This was going to be fun,” thought Shivani Singh, a Class 9 student and member of the Interact Club of Deep Global School, Tarapur. The red cylinder felt heavier than she expected. Following the instructor’s guidance, she aimed the nozzle at the base of a controlled fire and pressed the lever. A burst of foam shot out, smothering the flames. “I felt like a Marvel Avenger,” she says. When she turned around, she realised nearly 150 students were watching

in silence. “That’s when it sank in — this wasn’t just another school event. This was us learning how to save lives in an emergency. We were all becoming real-life Avengers,” she smiles.

“This sense of preparedness and purpose was exactly what our club had aimed to instil when we organised RYPEN 2025 (Rotary Youth Programme for Enrichment),” says Dr Parag Kulkarni, project chair and member of RC Boisar Tarapur, RID 3141.

Held at the Tarapur Industries Manufacturers Association Hall (TIMA) in Palghar,

Maharashtra, the event brought together students from 14 schools to learn essential life-saving skills. “Unlike previous RYPEN events focused on leadership, this year’s theme was disaster preparedness. The students had expected lectures, but instead, they faced real-life emergency scenarios where every second counted,” he says.

Tarapur is no ordinary town, explains Kulkarni. “With four



**From L:** CPR administration, using fire extinguisher and handling a health emergency being demonstrated.



atomic power reactors and over a thousand industries, it has a history of hazardous incidents. Nestled between Palghar and Dahanu, the ‘sleeping towns’ as the locals call them, with its high-risk nuclear facilities, Tarapur is always on alert. The question wasn’t whether an emergency could happen, but whether the students were prepared when it does.”

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Tarapur is no ordinary town. With four atomic power reactors and over 1,000 industries, it has a history of hazardous incidents.

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Sandhya Shahpure, who coordinated the event, adds: “Emergencies don’t discriminate by age, gender or community. Disasters can strike anywhere — school, home or public spaces. Training students early helps ingrain life-saving skills, making them more resilient. While teaching the general public disaster preparedness can be challenging, students are in a structured environment, making it easier to engage them and ensure effective training.”

Led by Kulkarni and club president Vilas Shahpure, the event was carefully structured to provide hands-on training in critical life-saving skills. The first session focused on firefighting, where the Tarapur Fire Brigade Team, led by PB Patil, demonstrated how to extinguish fires, prevent burns and escape from smoke-filled buildings.

Next, students learned rescue operations from KR Kurkute, Deputy Controller of

Palghar and a President’s Award winner, along with Nilesh S Vaze, a Divisional Field Officer from the Civil Defence Corps. Students were trained in water rescues, high-rise evacuation and stopping excessive bleeding. “A group of students were surprised when they realised how simple it was to turn a shirt into a makeshift stretcher,” says Kulkarni.

In the final session on medical emergency response, Kulkarni himself guided students through CPR, first aid and wound dressing procedures. Vaibhav Piyush Malik, a Class 9 student from Chinmaya Vidyalaya who practiced CPR on a dummy, says, “I thought only doctors could do this. But now I know how to save a life too.”

The event was made possible through CSR support from IPCA Laboratories, Bhageria Industries and Mohini Organics, with a budget of ₹50,000. The club provided meals for the attendees. ■



# Making city walls colourful

Rasheeda Bhagat



Students painting environmental themes on public walls in Talegaon.



In an endeavour to beautify the city they live in and dissuade the habit of scribbling, spitting and other derogatory acts that dirty walls in public places, members of RC Talegaon Dabhade, RID 3131, recently organised a wall painting competition among school children which was a thumping success.

In this clarion call given by the club to all the schools in the city, around 80 children from 21 schools participated and the result is bright, colourful and nicely done walls in certain parts of the city enhancing its aesthetic appeal.





Explaining the project, club president Kamlesh Karle said that his basic objective was to “ensure that we live in a clean and beautiful city. I shifted from Pune to Talegaon, which is about 35km from Pune, about 25 years ago. I noticed many of the walls in the city were looking either dirty or covered in dust and hence dull. So I thought why not transform these walls into vibrant canvases by covering the unsightly walls with socially relevant and environmental messages.”

Prior to the event, which was held on Feb 25, the members of this 33-year-old club organised a drive to clean the walls, and whitewash those which required a simple coat of white

paint. Having family connections with a school of fine arts in Pune, which was founded by his grandfather and in which his aunt teaches art, he requested her to find for them one of their students. She identified Omkar Jadhav, who is a commercial artist and he agreed to help with the wall painting project. The walls identified included one at a telephone office, another in a school, a hospital and even a graveyard. Club members contributed the cost of the project which was around ₹1.29 lakh.

Working in collaboration with the Talegaon Municipal Council, the club identified key environmental themes for the wall paintings, which included air, soil and water pollution, urban waste management, and the importance of growing trees.

During this project, 10 students from each participating school, along with their art teachers, were assigned a specific concept to focus on. They were given 10 days to develop their ideas on paper, and after a review and minor modifications, they were permitted to bring their designs to life on the walls. The commercial artist Jadhav, who specialises in

wall painting, educated the students on how to prepare different shades from five basic colours, and after they had got the concept of the colour mixing technique, the students set about the task of painting their designs on the walls.

“They were so excited and enthusiastic; we had asked them to assemble at 7am, but they were all there by 6.30am. There was such an air of excitement and cheerful atmosphere that the passersby stopped their cars or two-wheelers to stop and watch,” smiles Karle.

Club member Sharmila Shah, who oversaw the project, said it was such a hit that “we are getting volunteers who are saying please involve us the next time you do any initiative to beautify the city.” Once the summer vacation is over the Rotarians are planning similar event, and “to our surprise a local paint company has come forward to sponsor the paint for such an event,” she said.

Karle added that there is one dirty wall at the railway station identified by several residents who have requested the club to beautify it in their next project.

Designed by Krishna Pratheesh S

# Rotary set for a **tech makeover**

V Muthukumar

**I**n step with changing times, Rotary must invest in technology to amplify its action and impact on global communities. Extensive work has been done to upgrade RI's six portals — My Rotary, Rotary International website, Club Central, Rotary Showcase, Brand Center and Rotary Learning Center — in recent years. These are not just tech tools, but pathways to be more connected, efficient and make us future-ready," said RI director Anirudha Roychowdhury, addressing delegates at the inaugural of RID 3233's discon in Chennai titled *Navaratna*.

Digital transformation is no more an option, but a necessity for Rotary. Over the last decade, the RI Board has taken some key decisions relevant with the times, and "I urge you all to visit the *Rotary Learning Center* to know about the changes in membership and service projects," he said. While US President Donald Trump's decision to stop USAID funding will affect healthcare programmes of many NGOs, "Rotary's senior leadership and staff have decided to continue with our ongoing health initiatives including polio eradication without any let up."

Recalling his visits to discons of RIDs 3231 (DG M Rajanbabu) and

3234 (DG NS Saravanan), the RI director said, "the erstwhile RID 3230 was split into two in 2016–17 as it had over 5,000 members at that time. In the next nine years, the new RID 3232 had an explosive growth with over 6,000 members, and now the three districts have a combined strength of over 12,000 Rotarians, the largest in Zone 5. I salute all of you for your leadership which has led to such an explosive growth in membership. But we have to work on retention of members."

DG Mahaveer Bothra has only one agenda, that is membership, and thanks to his efforts, "RID 3233 is now the second largest district in Zone 5. He started with a bang, promoting Rotary through public image initiatives such as Rotary Wheel stickers on mobile phones, Rotary clocks, a clock

tower, peace poles, a Rotary bus stop, promoting RI's service projects on city buses, and ads in cinema halls."

Roychowdhury urged Bothra and his team to engage new members through a 'structured programme' introduced by RI in January this year, and "promote new club versions such as e-clubs, satellite, corporate and cause-based clubs to expand Rotary in remote areas." As Rotary is committed to DEI (diversity, equity and inclusivity) principles, "clubs have to foster a cultural belonging for all members." They have to work together to make their "district a beacon of service, leadership and change," he added.

## **A delicious thali**

This maiden discon of RID 3233 is like a traditional, well-balanced and

**From Left:** PDG I S A K Nazar; RIPR PDG John Daniel, his wife Meera; Jayashree and DG Mahaveer Bothra; former Editor of *The Hindu N Ravi*; Justice Bharatha Chakravarthy of the Madras High Court; ISRO chairman V Narayanan; MSSRF chairperson Soumya Swaminathan; Discon chair K Venkatesan; DGN Shriram Duvvuri; and DGND Ganapathy Suresh.



delicious *thali* with a blend of motivational speakers, spiritual orators and experts on education, tech platforms like AI and deep tech on one side, and entertainment shows on the other, said RIPR PDG John Daniel, RID 3211.

“Rotary is basically a membership-driven organisation, and everything depends on the headcount which is critical for sustaining our service activities, lifting our public image, networking and fellowship, and contributing to TRF.”

As a person who walks the talk, DG Bothra stands by his commitment. With the kind of resources at his command, he is on the right course to achieve the district targets and grow Rotary in this region, he said. The district has a target of \$1 million for TRF-giving, taken up eight CSR grant projects so far, and numerous global grant projects, he added.

In his address, Bothra said, “being a charter governor, I have the responsibility to create benchmarks of growth in terms of membership, and TRF

contributions for incoming leaders to follow.” With the support of CoG and club presidents, “we are laying a strong foundation with a first-year performance that will be talked about in the next 10 years.”

Recalling his breakfast meetings with every club president where he focused on taking up “impactful service projects and growing membership,” the governor said over one lakh Rotary Wheel stickers for mobile handsets were distributed so far, over 1,000 special children were taken on a one-day trip to Tirupati on a chartered train accompanied by 400 volunteers and 150 Rotarians, and 1,500 smartboards will be distributed to government-aided schools by June 30.

Once in three months, clubs were given awards for inducting new members; a NextGen Connect was formed for attracting young members — so far 150 were inducted by clubs, and “we have created a world record by forming RC Chennai Icons with 225 charter members at one go,” he said.

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**DG Mahaveer Bothra**  
**has only one agenda —**  
**membership. Thanks to his**  
**efforts, RID 3233 is now**  
**the second largest district**  
**in Zone 5.**

**Anirudha Roychowdhury**  
RI Director

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### **Bharat space station**

Giving details of future space missions, ISRO chairman V Narayanan said three uncrewed missions will precede Gaganyaan, India’s first human space flight mission with a three-member crew to a low earth orbit of 400km for three days, and bring them back safely. “For the uncrewed missions, we will be using the LVM3 rockets, formerly known as GSLV Mark-III.” The manned space flight is expected by 2028.

Following GoI’s clearance, Chandrayaan-5 will be launched with a 250kg-rover to study the lunar surface in a joint endeavour with Japan, while Chandrayaan-4 is slated for lift-off in 2027 to bring more samples from the moon. “India is the first country to discover water molecules on the south pole of the moon (Chandrayaan-3 mission with Vikram lander).” In a big boost to indigenous space tech, ISRO has developed the C-32 cryogenic propulsion system with a 20-tonne (thrust) cryogenic engine which is critical for heavy-lift missions and prolonged space exploration, said Narayanan, also secretary, Department of Space, GoI. “Earlier cryogenic engines were denied to us, and we were forced to develop our own. Till now, we have



tested successfully three cryogenic stage systems including C-32, thus demonstrating our ability to push the boundaries of space exploration.”

Recently, the docking and undocking of two satellites in space (SpaDEX — Space Docking Experiments) has led India to an elite group consisting of US, Russia, China and SpaceX (owned by Elon Musk), having mastered a complex space technology in its first attempt. “We carried out 125 simulations before the final undocking to ensure that it succeeded without any glitches, thus strengthening our credentials as a space faring nation,” he smiled.

By 2047, ISRO is aiming to set up a Bharat Space Station with five modules, the first set will be launched in 2028, and “work is on for building the entire components and sub-systems in tie-up with all stakeholders,” he said.

Former IPS officer K Vijay Kumar speaking on ‘Leadership in crisis’ said those aspiring to be leaders must “first be team members. Try to be your aspirational model, learn to smile and don’t try to hide your faults.” Citing the recent study of the *Harvard Business Review*, the ex-advisor to the Union home ministry on Naxal threats and former DGP (Tamil Nadu), said “the



**RID 3233 Rotarians and Anns at the Golden Sparrow display centre.**

late LTTE supremo V Prabhakaran was a good leader in his own way, that is, staying on the ‘backstage’ and inspiring his cadres. While the Greek warrior Alexander was an ‘upfront’ leader, and Mongol conqueror Genghis Khan can be termed as ‘middle stage’ leader.”

A fierce leader expects fidelity from his subordinates and followers, ‘rank agnostic’ should be the norm for a leader to succeed in his missions and goals, said Kumar. “As a top IPS officer, I had to control my ‘horses’, be wise, sagacious and practical. Empathy beyond a point is not right for a decisive leader.” Change is the only thing constant, “hence leaders must abandon old ideas, traits, and evolve new strategies to be successful.” Global and national leaders have charisma, boundless energy that make them different from the rest, Kumar noted, and “try to mould yourself as a leader you wish to have in your own life.”

In a presentation, PDG Muthu Palaniappan said not even one per cent of ₹30,000 crore of CSR funds (2024–25) available with corporates are being used by the Rotary clubs in India. However, RID 3233 clubs are “being mentored in a proper way and our target is to do at least \$1 million worth CSR grant projects this year. Till date, we’ve garnered \$800,000 of such funds for various service projects.”

Justice D Bharatha Chakravarthy of the Madras High Court conferred Rotary Lifetime Achievement Awards to ISRO chief Narayanan, M S Swaminathan Research Foundation chairperson Soumya Swaminathan and Kasturi and Sons director and former Editor of *The Hindu* N Ravi. Over 1,500 Rotarians, 400 Anns, 200 Rotaractors and 100 Annets were present at the three-day *Navaratna* discon.

As part of its innovative series programme, RID 3233 conducted an all-women’s event titled *Golden Sparrow* in Chennai on April 19. Promoting it at the discon, PDG ISAK Nazar said, “We want to bring all women Rotarians of Zone 5 under one platform, and it is all about celebrating women in Rotary.” The sessions will focus on women-centric issues in Rotary such as increasing their membership and participation in service projects, added District Communications chair Sashikumar VS.

Earlier during the year, the district had organised *Kalangarai Vilakku* (Light House), where around 500 past presidents of the district clubs were honoured, and this was followed by *Valarpirai* (Crescent Moon) in which 800 newly-inducted Rotarians were given an orientation programme.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

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**One lakh Rotary Wheel stickers for mobile phones were distributed, over 1,000 special children were taken for Tirupati darshan on a chartered train, and 1,500 smartboards will be given to schools by June 30.**

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# The textile to tech journey of a Chettiar industrialist

B ‘Nary’ Narayanaswamy

What were the factors that led up to the birth of the IT industry in Bengaluru in the 1980s? This question on the IT Revolution in India has parallels to the birth of the Scientific Revolution in Britain in the 1680s, in which coffee houses played a surprisingly powerful role. They were democratic spaces, facilitated discussions and arguments, and were hubs of intellectual exchange; “cultural infrastructure” if you will.

The birth of the IT industry in Bengaluru likewise has its own version of the Grecian Coffee House — Sona Towers, which is more than mere cultural infrastructure. It is real infrastructure that served uninterrupted electricity and satellite links. The kind of coffee that computers drink.

*The Sona Story: The Textile to Tech Journey of Chettiar Industrialist C Valliappa* by Chitra Narayanan is part a business memoir and part biography of the man who built Sona Towers and the larger Sona Group into a diversified conglomerate.

We now see office complexes and campuses in all major cities, millions of sqft in size, with offices that employ thousands of white-collar employees. It all began at Sona Towers, the first ever

instance of *white-collar infrastructure* at scale. It’s a fascinating story and the book tells it well: the freeze on construction in Bengaluru in the early ’80s after a seven-storey building collapsed, Rajiv Gandhi’s push to bring in foreign investments in tech, and the setting up of a remote R&D facility by Texas Instruments (TI) in Bangalore.

It’s clear that Valliappa just willed success to happen, solving one problem after another to ensure TI got all they wanted; a roof strong enough to hold a satellite earth station, uninterrupted access to heavy-duty electricity, a wind map etc. It was the first commercial real-estate project for him too. Meanwhile VSNL and C-Dot set up their office also in Sona Towers. Cisco, Oracle, Verifone and a host of other IT and Telecom multinationals soon followed, and Sona Towers became the first Software Technology Park in India. The revolution was underway.

The larger theme of Valliappa’s journey is his intrepid forays into new areas, perseverance while battling problems, figuring out solutions along the way, and finally creating something that was both scaled-up and sustainably so. This innovation streak seems to be uniquely his, and not so much from the lineage of the two generations before him. Both IT / Tech and real estate, that too outside Tamil Nadu (TN), are not areas that Chettiars have really gotten into. (The community tends to focus on TN, and apart from legacy/ traditional industries, their signature impact is in the education business). And he has led the group into a range of new areas in health and wellness, biotech, design and engineering services etc. These range from designing fire engines for US municipalities to stepper motors for the ISRO Chandrayan programme.

At the same time he is firmly rooted in the traditional Chettiar ethos as

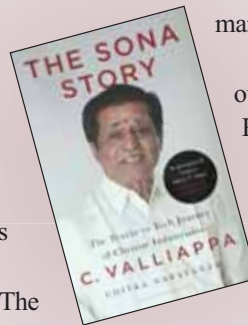
well: The group has a major presence in education in Salem, the family are big contributors to renovation and upkeep of temples, and Valliappa is a deeply devout man with high conformity to tradition. He is positively old-fashioned when it comes to single-minded focus on paying back the money he borrows from banks.

There are stories dotted throughout the book that give a glimpse of the man: he not only learns Kannada enthusiastically but also changes his name from Valliappan to Valliappa to be more in sync with Karnataka, or the anecdote of how he refuses to lease space to a non-vegetarian restaurant. He is also details-oriented without being a micro manager, and has exceptional memory.

Two additional aspects also stand out; the emphasis on innovation and R&D in all his businesses, notably in education where he is also keen that the students get into this invention mindset early. And the emphasis on architecture and design, whether modular furniture or building design on the campus at Salem.

It is good that the family has taken the initiative on this business biography. This book makes for an important addition to the larger stories of business and entrepreneurial success and the contributing factors, and is required reading for family businesses. The evidence from round the world is that just about five per cent of family businesses survive to the fourth generation. The first two generations build and grow the business. The third generation is the one that sees affluence and privilege and usually lacks the hunger and propulsion. There is lots to learn from the way Valliappa and the Sona Group has broken and rocketed past this curse of third generation.

Valliappa is active in a variety of industry associations, and well known in tech, real estate and higher education space in Bengaluru. But otherwise, he maintains a strikingly low profile in a city now synonymous with tech. ■



**Title** : The Sona Story  
**Author** : Chitra Narayanan  
**Publisher** : Bloomsbury  
**Price** : ₹499

# A gender-neutral toilet in Bengaluru

Rasheeda Bhagat

**I**n a major initiative aimed at inclusiveness and to help the transgender community, a gender-neutral toilet complex, which can be accessed by all, including transgenders, has been constructed in Bengaluru by Rotary Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas, RI District 3192. Located opposite the Upparpete Police Station, near the Majestic KSRTC Bus Stand, the complex was inaugurated by RIDE K P Nagesh, who said he would like to replicate this initiative in other Rotary districts of India.

This toilet complex has been put up “recognising the lack of dedicated public toilet facilities for the transgender community in the city. This initiative addresses a fundamental right to safe and inclusive sanitation, aligning with the Supreme Court of India’s 2014 directive for separate transgender toilets in public spaces,” said RID 3192 IPDG V Srinivas Murthy.

He requested the club to take charge of the fundraising, site identification and construction of the complex. “Rotary focuses on impactful community projects. The non-availability of toilets for the trans-community often results in health issues for them as they avoid drinking sufficient water to avoid toilet use,” said IPDG Murthy. The health implications arising from this denial of a basic human right to a section of our community can well be imagined.

Through this initiative, “we hope to bridge that gap and inspire the government to adopt it as a model for future public toilets. We are all grateful to Kirti Mehta, past president of Rotary Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas, for his unwavering support in bringing this first-of-its-kind project to completion, in total alignment with Rotary’s DEI policy,” he said at the inaugural event.

This toilet complex has also been made accessible to physically-challenged



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The non-availability of toilets  
for the trans-community  
often results in health issues  
for them as they avoid  
drinking sufficient water to  
avoid toilet use.

**IPDG V Srinivas Murthy**

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people and those using wheelchair, and comes equipped with grab bars and a bathing facility.

A crucial aspect of this project was selecting a well-frequented location and ensuring long-term sustainable maintenance. Sulabh International, a non-profit organisation dedicated to sanitation and human rights, collaborated with Rotary to adapt the existing infrastructure. Sulabh has constructed and is maintaining more than 10,000 public toilet complexes throughout the country.

As one who had “personally watched this struggle of transgenders,” he put in relentless work for this “dream project” by meeting the Chief Minister, other ministers and then approached Sulabh for this collaborative venture. “It is my fervent hope that we will be able to take this project pan-India,” Murthy said.



An illustration of an Ezee hi-tech toilet being constructed by the Bengaluru corporation across the city.

This project was appreciated by Brian Rusch, founding member of RI’s DEI Task Force who was recently in Bengaluru as RIPR to attend the South Asia Peace Conference. “I am excited to learn that Rotary District 3192 has put up a gender-neutral toilet. It echoes Rotary’s legacy, with our first service project in 1907 being public toilets in Chicago. Nearly 120 years later, this initiative extends that mission, ensuring inclusive facilities for transgender, non-binary individuals and gender non-conforming folks. I have no doubt this will inspire similar projects across India,” he said.

On the funds spent by the club on this project Mehta said that already a toilet existed at the place. “Our aim was to carry out some major alterations and make it accessible to everybody regardless of gender, particularly the transgenders and those using wheelchairs. For this work we spent nearly ₹8 lakh.”

RIDE K P Nagesh (second from L) with DGE Elizabeth Cherian, IPDG V Srinivas Murthy, DG N S Mahadev Prasad and past president of Rotary Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas Kirti Mehta inaugurating a gender-neutral toilet complex.

He added that while Sulabh will be maintaining the facility, it has already been noticed by the local community and “we will be watching the usage for a few months. Depending on that, our club is open to working either in partnership with Sulabh or others to build another such facility, as we’ve had some expression of interest in this kind of facility at other locations from some people.”

Added Murthy, “District 3192 remains committed to fostering inclusive, equitable communities through transformative projects like this one.” He said that the Bengaluru corporation, inspired by this Rotary project, is now building 20 eco-friendly toilets and 40 hi-tech ‘Ezee’ toilets for men, women, disabled and gender minorities across the city at a total cost of ₹28.12 crore.

Ezee toilets, also called New Generation toilets, include sensor flushing urinals, commodes mounted on the wall and no open pipes. Sensors are installed on each tap to save water. There is a two-way drainage system and the treated water is used for urinals and toilets. Perforated sheets and polycarbonate sheets are installed for air and light. The toilets are being built in a precast model and will be completed in two months. ■

# Meet your Governors

Kiran Zehra



**Bipin Chachan**  
*Agrochemicals  
manufacturer  
RC Pataliputra, RID 3250*

## TRF-giving top priority

Finding that only 18 per cent of members have been contributing to TRF, Bipin Chachan studied the giving pattern in his district and ensured that every Rotarian gave at least \$25 to TRF. This led to the district ranking number one globally for TRF's Every Rotarian Every Year (EREY) giving. Of the district's 4,062 members, a remarkable 88 per cent have contributed, including 3,093 EREY donors and 1,392 first-time contributors, pushing the total TRF contributions to \$350,000 surpassing the previous year's \$200,000 target.

"I love TRF. It is the only organisation where money invested comes back to the district and goes straight to those in need. No middlemen, just meaningful impact," he says.

It is important to understand that Rotarians are individuals who "have fulfilled their financial goals in life. The only thing we are looking for is purpose. If club presidents help them fall in love with Rotary projects, they will give to TRF not for recognition, but for impact. What we give is what we leave behind."

He urges clubs to embrace women members wholeheartedly. "Don't treat a woman Rotarian who is also a spouse as just that. Value her for her skills. Women can multitask and lead in remarkable ways."

He has added six new clubs, eight Rotaract clubs and 20 new Interact clubs.

## Focused on impact

Sharath Choudary was introduced to Rotary early, born just a week after his father's club was chartered in 1963. He began as an Interactor (1977–81) and joined RC Hyderabad Deccan in 1993 at 29.

He led his club (1997–98) to become "one of the world's first 100 per cent PHF clubs," with an average membership age of 26. During his tenure as Annual Giving Chair (2001), TRF contributions crossed \$100,000 for the first time. That figure has since grown to over \$1 million.

His membership mantra is "meet often, build bonds, have fun, and create impact. We encourage clubs to develop a cadre of membership-focused Rotarians (Harry Ruggles Fellows) who pledge to bring in at least one new member each year and mentor them for three years." To improve retention, he introduced *Just One*, a programme that tracks engagement and recognises member sponsors.

After a major flood, the district supported 6,000 affected families and renovated six schools. CSR projects have been implemented through TRF and directly. These include an epilepsy care centre, paediatric heart surgery theatres, an oncological histopathology lab, spinal endoscopy setups and diagnostic labs for government and charitable institutions.

Having crossed \$1 million this year in TRF-giving, "we aim to cross another million in contributions and commitments," he says.

**Sharath Choudary**  
*Katragadda  
Management  
RC Hyderabad  
Deccan, RID 3150*





## Rahul Shrivastava

*Educationist  
RC Gwalior Laurels  
RID 3053*

### Quality membership

**M**embership is not just about increasing numbers. It is about building a strong, committed community. Each club is different, and a one-size-fits-all strategy doesn't work. Every club should adopt its own approach to recruit new members," says DG Rahul Shrivastava.

Clubs should form dedicated teams to "carefully evaluate membership profiles and induct only those who truly align with Rotary's values."

The district is working towards "being more diverse and inclusive. We have already welcomed differently-abled members, though adding transgender members may take a little longer. There are 330 Rotaractors in the district, but it is not easy to increase that number because of the new RI dues."

He proudly highlights the five all-women clubs in the district that are "doing amazing projects." Under their *Project Kindness Chain* they are distributing food, clothes, sewing machines, and more to communities in need.

The district is also implementing a CSR initiative worth ₹83,000 to renovate government schools. "We have already collected \$130,000 of our \$200,000 TRF goal," he smiles.

Fellowship is what kept him in Rotary. "It is not just about coming together. It is about coming together with people who believe in making a difference. You are dining, sharing and working alongside the best people in the world," he says.

### Balancing experience with youthful energy

**F**or DG Sudhi Jabbar, member orientation is "non-negotiable. Before we invite, it is important that prospective members understand Rotary's legacy, the impact of our local, national and global service projects, and most importantly, the significance of TRF," he says.

Jabbar, a second-generation Rotarian, joined his father's club at 25. "As a young Rotarian, I was fortunate to be mentored by very senior members. But times have changed. Today, we need the *josh* of young minds to be paired with the wisdom of our senior Rotarians. It is important to maintain a balanced age ratio within clubs."

His district recently welcomed its first transgender Rotarian. Jabbar believes that by providing the right platform and positive experiences, more members from the transgender community will be encouraged to join.

While the district boasts a healthy 85 per cent retention rate, meeting TRF targets remains a challenge. "Many of our clubs operate in semi-urban and rural areas, but this year, we have urged every member to contribute at least \$50 to TRF."

A newly launched upskilling programme is providing sewing, computer skills and beautician courses for women, transgender individuals, the differently-abled, and students from underprivileged backgrounds. Nearly 80 clubs are offering lessons in heavy vehicle driving, and over 500 women have already completed sewing courses.

Cervical cancer vaccination drives are being conducted by 160 clubs.



## Sudhi Jabbar

*Educational institution  
management  
RC Kazhakkottam  
RID 3211*

If you visit Moradabad in western Uttar Pradesh, 175km from Delhi, the presence of the Rotary Wheel and the striking projects of the city's Rotary clubs through buildings and parks impress you instantly. "There are 25 Rotary clubs and around 500 Rotarians in this brass city in RI District 3100," says Regional Assistant Governor Prashant Singhal, a member of RC Moradabad East, the second oldest club in the city, celebrating its golden jubilee this year.

In the media limelight for doing impactful projects, the club distributed sewing machines to 50 well-trained women from less privileged families at a glittering event to mark its 50<sup>th</sup> year in the presence of PRIP Shekhar Mehta. "A panel of Rotarians interviewed the shortlisted women trained at the various skill centres run by the government to know their economic status. Only after that, we finalised the 50 beneficiaries in this project funded

# 50 years of service @ RC Moradabad East

V Muthukumaran

by club members," says PDG and club member Lalit Mohan Gupta. Chartered in November 1974 with 30 members, "we have a reputation for doing long-term sustainable projects that reach out to maximum number of people in Moradabad."

During his tenure as district governor (2004-05), Gupta had set up a Rotary Blood Bank (matching grant: \$50,000) at the Asian Vivekanand Hospital, Moradabad, and "the facility is giving a lifeline to 2,900 patients at various hospitals and gets around

2,500 donors in a year. Though the hospital's management has changed hands, our blood bank is standing tall and supplying blood to patients and hospitals," he explains.

In the same Rotary centennial year, calipers and artificial limbs (Jaipur foot) were distributed to 700 amputees (MG: ₹8 lakh) at a seven-day prosthetic limb camp held with the support of Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayata Samiti.

A Piyau Centre with a drinking water booth in a beautiful park near the

PRIP Shekhar Mehta (seated) and Rashi, along with (from R) PDG Lalit Mohan Gupta, RC Moradabad East president Anil Gupta, DGE Nitin Agarwal, past presidents AK Singhal, NC Agarwal and MP Agarwal with beneficiaries holding the sewing machines.



Moradabad district court was created in 1983 through member contributions. It was inaugurated in 1984 by PRIP Rajendra Saboo, who was then DG of RID 310. “Over the years, this green hub known as *Jhalshala* has become a sought-after place for elders who sit and relax on the concrete benches put up there. More than 100 people use the water booth daily,” says Singhal. “We will set up another Piyau Centre near the taluk office in the coming months.”

### Retinopathy of Prematurity

Through a global grant (\$70,000), the club donated high-tech machines to C L Gupta Eye Hospital in December 2024 for treatment of Retinopathy of Prematurity, an eye disease affecting premature babies. “We trained the paramedical staff, and donated a fully-equipped Bolero van for providing treatment to sick newborns at their homes,” explains Gupta, who is also a DRFC (2022–25).

For the balance amount of ₹3.5 lakh “we did an eye check-up camp screening 900 people at the Gautam Buddha



PDG Gupta and club's past president Vivek Agarwal (2<sup>nd</sup> from R) visiting the Rotary Blood Bank.



PRIP Rajendra Saboo (L), the then DG of RID 310, inaugurating the *Jhalshala* in 1984 in the presence of club president HN Jain (centre).

Park, in partnership with the eye hospital.” Among them, 50 were chosen for cataract surgery, and “their transport, accommodation, food and medicine cost were borne by the club.” At the camp, 350 spectacles were given.

With the approval of a new GG of over \$50,000, the second Rotary Blood Bank will be set up at the Crest Hospital shortly. The club, with a membership of 60 Rotarians, has till now donated around \$150,000 to TRF. The club has three Major Donors, including

PDG Gupta at Level-2, and contributed three governors to RID 3100. “You get a very nice feeling being a member of this iconic club as fellowship with the cream of our society gives you a great feeling,” smiles Singhal.

At the golden jubilee event PRIP Mehta honoured 27 past presidents, three PDGs — Lalit Gupta, BS Mathur and Rakesh Singhal — and two charter members, Shambhunath Tandon and Chander Mohan, with mementos and citations. ■

# Making a difference

## Women achievers honoured

Six women professionals were honoured with Vocational Excellence Awards by RC Bombay Sea Face, RID 3141, on Women's Day (March 8). The awardees are Dr Sadhana K Desai, gynaecologist; Suvarna Raj, a wheelchair-bound sportswoman who has won international medals in powerlifting, table tennis and athletics; Archana Chandra, who teaches intellectually disabled persons; Chinu Kala, a self-made entrepreneur; and two IT professionals, Laina Emmanuel and Rimjhim Agrawal who have developed an AI device for treatment of brain disorders. Club President Minal Turakhia spoke on the award's significance. ■



DG Chetan Desai (3<sup>rd</sup> from R) and RC Bombay Sea Face president Minal Turakhia (centre) with the awardees.



Rotarians along with learners at the Adult Literacy Centre in Pitasiari village near Sambalpur.

## Adult Literacy Centres in Sambalpur

As part of its Adult Literacy Mission, RC Sambalpur Greater, RID 3261, has sponsored five adult literacy centres, and with support from Coal India, they will be supported to add five more centres.

Club president Syed Bilal Akhtar Mallick led a team to one such literacy centre at Pitasiari village, a remote area which even Google could not locate. In fact, it was an old man who guided the Rotary team. Around 40 aged people welcomed the Rotarians with a warm smile. The adult learners said they were now able to read, write and put their signature. ■



## Rotary projects at Odisha villages

In a series of community projects, RC Jubilee Hills, RID 3150, with CSR funding (₹66 lakh) from BGR Mining and Infra Ltd, has reached out to the villagers of Hemgir block in Sundargarh district of Odisha as they face numerous hardships due to the remote location.

Bicycles were distributed to 541 government school students. To address water scarcity in villages like Durubuga, Majhipada, Charpada and Laikera, the club installed borewells, submersible pumps, storage tanks and multiple delivery points.

A community centre at Kirispira village with a population of 2,000-plus was given a facelift with a new cemented flooring. DG Sharath Choudary inaugurated the facilities in the presence of club president Balakoti Reddy and PDG Sam Movva. ■



DG Sharath Choudary (L) presents a bicycle to a student.



DG Sukhminder Singh presents a memento to RC Greater Tezpur president Jayant Tibrewal in the presence of DRFC Debashish Das (L) and RRFCD Basu Dev Golyan, RID 3292.

## Rotary palliative care in Tezpur

A 15-bed palliative care ward has been set up at the Baptist Christian Hospital by RC Greater Tezpur, RID 3240, in partnership with RC Biratnagar, RID 3292, through a global grant project worth ₹38 lakh.

Along with this medical facility, a conference room and admin ward were also inaugurated by DG Sukhminder Singh.

A vehicle was donated to the hospital to provide homecare services for patients. RC Greater Tezpur president Jayant Tibrewal, secretary Ankit Khetawat and IPDG Nilesh Agarwal played a vital role in steering the medical project. Project chair Hemanand Khosla and its primary contact Ramesh Garodia coordinated for project completion. ■



# Membership Summary

Source: RI South Asia Office

As on April 1, 2025

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaract Members	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	140	5,990	5.49	56	110	35	255
2982	91	4,061	5.86	32	458	97	188
3000	148	6,222	11.59	92	1,197	244	218
3011	136	5,333	31.03	72	1,916	235	41
3012	158	3,940	24.62	55	646	110	61
3020	82	4,599	7.96	42	610	137	351
3030	103	5,552	16.25	62	967	510	400
3040	102	2,364	14.81	35	758	63	216
3053	76	3,186	17.58	23	330	40	131
3055	84	3,445	12.37	48	664	58	397
3056	85	3,772	25.05	21	187	107	201
3060	100	5,142	15.64	52	1,840	79	154
3070	116	3,105	15.43	35	287	73	64
3080	111	4,401	13.54	59	1,961	212	127
3090	134	2,609	6.17	24	364	359	174
3100	115	2,202	10.49	17	112	41	151
3110	137	3,742	11.97	21	208	104	114
3120	90	3,790	15.73	34	471	43	58
3131	136	5,469	35.66	122	2,599	305	236
3132	99	3,855	14.81	32	380	199	227
3141	123	6,609	28.69	122	3,505	219	247
3142	116	4,046	22.96	56	1,649	140	99
3150	106	4,097	12.86	84	1,682	126	130
3160	78	2,472	8.94	26	94	97	82
3170	143	6,637	15.05	89	1,073	203	184
3181	89	3,769	11.12	40	444	133	122
3182	87	3,746	10.95	47	278	113	105
3191	90	3,349	19.89	74	1,788	199	36
3192	82	3,380	22.01	62	1,644	163	40
3201	173	6,745	10.11	112	1,981	118	98
3203	100	5,218	7.44	47	759	157	39
3204	84	2,834	9.92	26	276	23	22
3211	162	5,280	9.03	13	206	33	135
3212	120	4,671	10.81	89	607	215	153
3231	94	3,645	7.22	32	396	108	421
3233	88	3,320	18.34	58	1,709	55	63
3234	79	3,204	24.09	64	1,588	95	42
3240	100	3,509	17.01	43	753	72	249
3250	114	4,403	23.55	37	527	77	192
3261	100	3,426	24.37	18	112	37	46
3262	118	3,922	16.37	84	802	652	294
3291	144	3,793	27.55			94	775
<b>India Total</b>	<b>4,489</b>	<b>174,854</b>	<b>16.15</b>	<b>2,157</b>	<b>37,938</b>	<b>6,180</b>	<b>7,338</b>
3220 Srilanka	72	2,102	16.79	86	3,678	142	78
3271 Pakistan	108	1,479	20.76	103	418	275	28
0063 (3272) Pakistan	76	1,162	19.45	48	285	23	49
0064 (3281) Bangladesh	247	5,280	17.27	185	1,003	120	211
0065 (3282) Bangladesh	140	2,879	8.65	167	1,102	26	48
3292 Nepal	158	5,601	19.07	179	5,374	127	141
<b>S Asia Total</b>	<b>5,290</b>	<b>193,357</b>	<b>16.22</b>	<b>2,925</b>	<b>49,798</b>	<b>6,893</b>	<b>7,893</b>

# Project Vignettes

Team  
Rotary  
News

## PRIP Mehta meets VP of India

PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi met the Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankar and his wife Sudesh in New Delhi. Over a 45-minute meeting, Mehta highlighted the initiatives of the India Literacy Mission and apprised the Vice President about a possible Rotary convention in India.



PRIP Shekhar Mehta and Rashi greet Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankar and his wife Sudesh.

## Smart vision, smarter future

As part of a CSR initiative with ITC Filtrona, RC Bangalore Lakeside, RID 3191, in collaboration with the Rotary Avoidable Blindness Foundation (RABF), SHG Technologies and Vision-Aid provided smart vision glasses to 25 visually-impaired students pursuing college studies.



Kashinath Prabhu, District CSR Committee director, and club president Abhilasha Pandit with beneficiaries.

## Cookies and cakes

RC Coimbatore Monarks, RID 3201, and the Rotaract Club of AIHSHEW launched *The Baking Journal*, a vocational training programme. Two batches have been trained and course completion certificates were issued to 29 students. Training sessions are held every Saturday from 11am to 4pm.



A baking session in progress.

## Enhancing maternal healthcare

Through a GG with RC Lake Arrowhead, USA, RID 5330, RC Nagpur South East, RID 3030, donated a 4D ultrasound machine to Shalinitai Meghe Hospital and Research Centre, Wanadongri, to enhance maternal and foetal healthcare for underprivileged communities.



DG Rajinder Singh Khurana (second from right) with club member Rajeev Warbhe (L) handing over the ultrasound machine to the hospital officials.



RID 3000

**RC Karur Young Gen**

A two-day cricket tournament saw 16 teams from Rotary, Rotaract clubs, JCI, BNI, Young Indians, YES, Round Table etc contesting to raise funds for endoscopy of patients suffering from colon cancer. Earlier, two editions also raised funds for other patients.



**Club matters**



RID 3056

**RC Jaipur East**

Woollen jerseys were distributed to 130 students, children of labourers, at the Government Primary School, Kachchi Basti, opposite Sanganer Railway Station to protect them from wintery nights.

RID 3080

**RC Shimla Midtown**

LED streetlights were distributed to residents of five villages, and room heaters were given to students of the Government Senior Secondary School, Summer Hill, for them to focus on studies without interruption.





## RID 3090

### RC Sri Ganganagar City

An eye check-up camp at the Mahatma Gandhi Girls School examined 175 students and distributed 35 spectacles. Ophthalmologist Dr Sanjiv Jindal screened the girls in the presence of club president Surinder Dhaka and other Rotarians.

## RID 3011

### RC Delhi Safdarjung

Organic Holi colours were prepared and sold by women at the Mahila Pratiraksha Mandal, the club's skill centre on Women's Day. The training was given by Anmol Sahara, an NGO, with the initiative from club president Priya Oberoi.



## RID 3132

### Rotary E-Club Empowering Youth

Fifty elderly inmates at the Sharanpur Vrudhashram, an old age home in Newasa, will benefit from a newly inaugurated toilet block (₹25,000) sponsored by Rtn Aarti Mhatre from Thane and Charusheila Joshi from the US. Toilet cleaning solutions, towels and groceries were also donated.

## RID 3141

### RC Bombay Queen City

Over 2,000 patients benefitted from a two-day medical camp (₹25 lakh) in which tests for BP, blood sugar, BMI, acupuncture, cancer detection, physiotherapy and skin care were conducted. Medicines and spectacles were given at the camp held jointly with the Ruchika Club and PD Hinduja Hospital.



# Repurpose with a purpose

Preeti Mehra

Give discarded articles a new role.

**R**epurposing has entered the lexicon of those who wish to respond aesthetically and creatively to environmental concerns in the new millennium, where ‘use, don’t waste’ has become a mantra. Repurposing must not be confused with its cousin, re-use, which, as the term suggests, means reusing something. For example, empty pickle jars can be used to pack more pickles or perhaps jam instead of being thrown away.

Repurposing is far more involved. It requires imagination to transform an item’s function to serve a purpose other than it was initially designed for. A typical example that you come across on the net is converting an old piano into a bookshelf! You are not making it a better instrument for your children to practice

on, but you are giving it a new purpose to display books.

One celebrated example of repurposing from the 1950s–60s is the Rock Garden in Chandigarh. Spread over 40 acres, it has been sculpted from industrial, home and discarded items. Its creator, Nek Chand Saini, a government official, collected material from dumping sites around the city and created the garden. What finally emerged was a landscape of interlinked waterfalls punctuated by sculptures and pathways embellished with scraps of several kinds — old bottles, broken tiles, ceramic pots, sinks, broken pipes, electrical waste, etc.

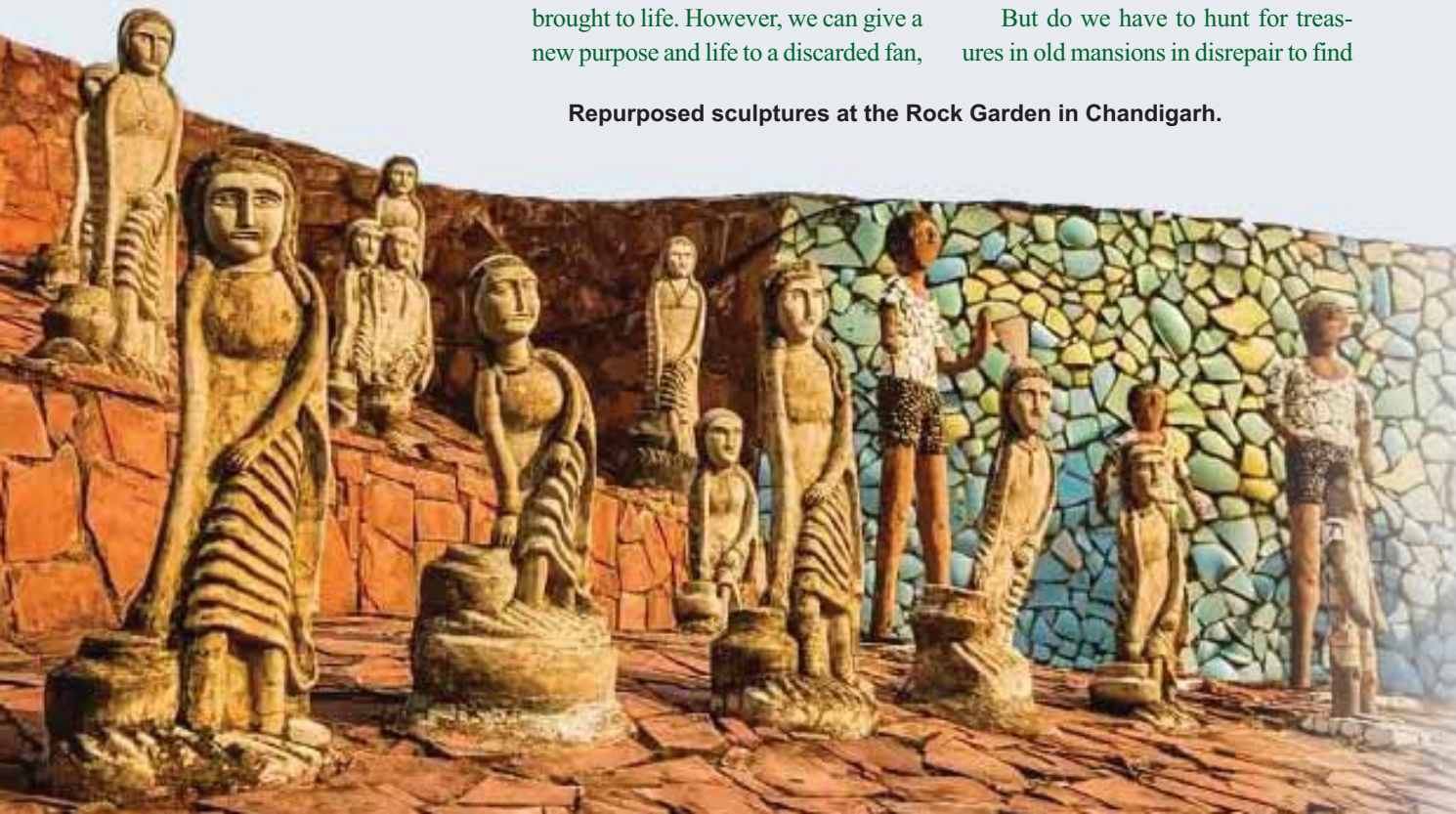
Now, only an exceptional few among us can have the artistry or patience to pull off another marvel like the one the late Nek Chand Saini brought to life. However, we can give a new purpose and life to a discarded fan,

furniture or suitcase lying in the attic of our ancestral home. I believe such an act would give us immense creative satisfaction.

I was inspired to give repurposing a closer look when a friend of mine who lives in Bengaluru showed me pictures of a swing in her verandah that she had fashioned from a discarded ornate door she had chanced upon in her old ancestral home in rural Andhra Pradesh. It looked elegant and old-worldly. “There are several treasures you can discover in these old houses which you can put to use,” she wisely observed. I was immediately reminded of another friend from Kerala who had repurposed a discarded wide community cooking vessel made of metal into a chic and unusual drawing room table after covering its open top with glass.

But do we have to hunt for treasures in old mansions in disrepair to find

**Repurposed sculptures at the Rock Garden in Chandigarh.**





interesting objects for repurposing? Sometimes, our attic will do, or the assortment of material we give to the raddiwala may yield some hidden gems. I am told that an old medium-sized suitcase can be repurposed into a comfortable chair by attaching four wooden legs to its bottom surface and filling the top and bottom folds with comfortable foam cushions. Now all you have to do is rest the backrest of your 'new' chair against a wall in a cosy corner of the room.

Similarly, you can imaginatively use two old wooden ladders to create your innovative and avant-garde bookshelf. Nail the two ladders horizontally, one below the other, and use the steps as shelves to place books. You will find that it works well.

One unique repurposing of old tennis racquets I encountered was in a house in Delhi. All the lady of the house had done was remove the strings from the striking surface of her son's old racquets and replace them with mirrors! The racquets enjoy pride of place in her hallway, and it does look chic.

Indian families have traditionally been very adept at repurposing. In villages, our women are known to work wonders with old clothes. In Punjab, it is a done thing to collect old clothes, tear them into bits of equal size and stitch layers and layers of them together to

make a hardy, washable comforter for the winter months.

Talking of bits of cloth, I am reminded of my aunt who used to keep aside old saree blouses, petticoats and soft muslin cloth. Whenever a newborn was expected in the family, she would bring out her treasure and repurpose it into a whole lot of nappies for the child. Today, diapers have taken the place of cloth nappies. They may be convenient, but for the environment they are a big no-no. They are made of synthetic material which is non-biodegradable, and one of the biggest polluters in the western world. Now, the habit of using diapers is spreading in urban India as well. We are forgetting how we used to



repurpose soft cloth to make them, and then reuse them by washing.

Also, our addiction to fast fashion has translated into clothes being worn a few times and then discarded for the latest trends and designs pushed by influencers. The rejected clothes invariably end up at landfills and are neither repurposed nor reused.

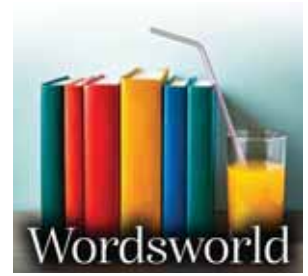


The problem perhaps lies in the fact that all of us are in a hurry to achieve something or the other, and we do not see that in our pursuit of acquiring material conveniences, we have a global emergency right before our eyes. We have an earth that is heating up, our landfills are filling up, our rivers and oceans are polluted, and our homes cannot do without air purifiers. In the face of such a calamity why can't we simply pledge to repurpose, reuse and recycle?

*The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues*



# Gujju Maal!



We made this dish by slow-boiling dried fruit in milk until it thickened and became a divinely delicious dessert which we named *Gujju Maal*.



**Sandhya Rao**

**T**here was a time in our youth when my friend and I made this amazing Gujarati *kheer* every single time we met, and lucky was anyone who happened to be visiting at the time! They got to taste it. She had inherited the recipe from an aunt domiciled in Ahmedabad; we christened it *Gujju Maal*. Transfer this name to Salil Tripathi's book, *The Gujaratis: A Portrait of a Community*, which I have been reading with great curiosity and enjoyment, and it fits just right. The book is like a yummy meal with all the flavours bursting forth. There's even the occasional mouthful that tastes 'off'.

Tripathi's account of being Gujarati and the myriad ways this manifests is a wonderland of masterful writing that extends to some 650 pages, every single one deserving to be savoured with relish. And so, I urge you in the words quoted at the beginning of the prologue, to read this month's column

indulgently: 'Aavo, beso; shu lesho, thandu-garam? Nasto pani? Welcome, do sit down; what will you have, something hot or cold? Some tea? Snacks? Water?' But before moving on, a special thank you to Aleph, the publishing house, for giving us this series. *The Tamils* is on my table, waiting to be read, and I look forward to reading about all the others who enrich this multilingual, multicultural, multiethnic, multifair, multi-many mosaic called India.

Some of you may remember Salil Tripathi's name from the April 2022 column: *The Colonel Who Would Not Repent: The Bangladesh War and Its Unquiet Legacy*. He is a well-respected journalist, fabulous writer, and Gujarati to boot. This book is the result of meticulous research across a wide spectrum of aspects and agencies, and draws energy from the personal experience of being a Gujarati with deep connections with all things Gujarat. The following extract from the prologue provides the perfect context for a definition of Gujarati: 'the one who speaks the language, possibly counts in it, dreams in it, and thinks in

it; the one who has moved to the land where Gujarati is spoken by the majority; the ones who may speak other languages but have made Gujarat their home and preserve their minority identities; and the ones who may live anywhere else in the world, but are of Gujarati heritage. Gujarati is a language, not a religion, not a caste, so the Gujaratis you will meet in these pages belong to all the strata of the society, and include Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Jains, Buddhists, Dalits, Christians, and others who identify with other ethnicities and may be of no faith.'

This is no impressionistic or sentimental painting. Tripathi sketches from the inside out where he is part of the cast of characters, in a sense, while at the same time stepping out of the subjective framework to share clear-eyed accounts and observations. Divided into twelve main sections, the book introduces the people through a range of lenses such as who Gujaratis are, the way they are, where they came from,

where they live inside and outside India, their work and work ethic, their politics, their creativity, their charity and worship, their food, their recreation, and even their peeves, to put it mildly. The chapters under each section are generally short although readers



should be ready to contend with packed text! However, the writing is so lucid, it's like reading fiction. While Tripathi shows us how his people are pragmatic and practical, and courageous, he also points to their proclivity to laugh... at others. In a fascinating — and unusually long — chapter titled 'What is our asmita?' Tripathi discusses the idea often used to describe Gujaratiness: a sense of identity of oneself, awareness of oneself, pride but not arrogance. He applies the idea to Gujarat's historical context, and quotes the Gandhian scholar Tridip Suhrud whose words resonate at different levels, given life today: 'Asmita depends on the context. ... Pride is fine, but is arrogance part of that pride? Identity is great to have, but does it lead to narrowness and does that create otherhood? Consciousness is desirable, but does it make you self-righteous? And conscience — is it exclusionary or inclusive?'

Skimming over the nearly 90 chapters, you see how the titles themselves map a storyline. Take the section, 'The Way We Are'. Here you have 'Who is Gujarati, anyway?'; What are you? Who are you? How are you?; Rich like us: Bhatias, Kapols and Lohanas; Richer than us: Jains; We love them and hope they like us: Parsis; Patels 'r us; Not equal to us: Dalits; Left behind by us: the Adivasis and Denotified Tribes; Neither them, nor us: Pastoral communities and Nomads; Them, not us: Muslims; Where is the rest of 'us'?

An overview of Gujarat's history, migration patterns within and outside India, the business sense of the people, how politics works (or doesn't), Gandhi and others, literature and the arts, faith and worship, culinary habits and vegetarianism, sexuality, riots.... All of these are

tackled in detail yet with a deft, light touch that keeps you reading on and on.

Here, I must offer a disclaimer: Perhaps the reason why I haven't been able to put down this book — and believe me, holding it up is no joke! — is due to my personal connections with Gujarat. I arrived in Ahmedabad 46 years ago to take up my first job. I knew nobody. There was no direct train to Ahmedabad. Thinking I was being considerate, I would speak to people in

Hindi, only to be met with baleful looks. But switching to English transformed the faces into smiles! The first three months were spent in a hostel for tribal girls who showered me with affection. That's where I was introduced to a range of *rotlas* and huge tumblers of *chhaas*! And often, looking out of the bus window, I found myself at almost eye level with camels, also waiting patiently at traffic lights!

This said, it's a brilliantly written tome that anyone who is interested in knowing how people 'work', simply must read. I tend to be linear and so read from page-to-page, but you can pick any page or chapter or section. How Tripathi has managed to keep the tempo throbbing throughout is a miracle in itself. The Gujarat I knew and what it embodied was

“Tripathi quotes the Gandhian scholar Tridip Suhrud whose words resonate at different levels, given life today: 'Asmita depends on the context. ... Pride is fine, but is arrogance part of that pride? Identity is great to have, but does it lead to narrowness and does that create otherhood? Consciousness is desirable, but does it make you self-righteous? And conscience — is it exclusionary or inclusive?'

very different from what it is now and what it is made out to embody. When Gujarat was growing into itself back then, the best minds from all over the world visited and contributed their bit, people such as architects Buckminster Fuller, Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn, choreographer Merce Cunningham, photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson, among others. Then there were Indian stalwarts such as Tagore and Sarojini Naidu. Then again, there were visionary resident families such as the Sarabhais and

the Lalbhais, many of whom set up pioneering institutions such as the Physical Research Laboratory, the National Institute of Design, and the Ahmedabad Textile Industry Research Association, to name just a few. Scientist Vikram Sarabhai's wife, Mrinalini, set up her dance academy, Darpana, which has trained innumerable young people in Bharatanatyam, that quintessential South Indian art form.

So much in this book can help us resist the onslaught of misinformation and false narratives drowning us. For sure, Salil Tripathi has pulled off a literary coup.

Btw, *Gujju Maal* is best consumed cold.

*The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist*

# Swimming: the sport of champions

Bharat & Shalan Savur

**Y**asuhiro Akumatsu developed radiation sickness after the atomic bombing of Hiroshima in 1945. Doctors told him there was no medical cure for his count of dangerously low white-blood cells. Akumatsu began swimming regularly 30 years later in 1975. Six years and 2,000 nautical miles later, he recovered completely. Many swimming champions have been asthmatics. American freestyler Rick Demont is one of them. He won the 400m Olympic gold medal in 1972 at Munich, but was later disqualified for using an asthma preparation held illegal by the Olympic authorities. Demont continued swimming undeterred. He swam an hour daily and

represented the USA once again in the 100m freestyle event.

Water by its very nature is buoyant. Almost anything or anybody that drops in is held afloat by water. Common sense is often the hallmark of survival. So the first thing to tell your frightened self or someone scared is something like, 'What the hell. It's just water. I have two glasses before breakfast.' Incidentally, do both. Drinking to your good health makes a good toast too.

In this context, it is imperative to remember that months before your mother gave you birth, you were swimming in the fluids of her stomach. Swimming is as natural as walking and even precedes it. Having said that, fear is contagious. And you could easily

transmit it to your family. Children can be initiated by playing land games in the water. Place your child in a peer group and get her to play catching, tag, relay races, etc. Engage a coach for swimming lessons. But it helps a child's confidence to have one parent watching when he/she is in the water.

## The science of swimming

Let's go back to school and revise basic Physics. Buoyancy is dependent on the downward pull of gravity and the upthrust is created by the water displaced by that body. It is Archimedes' law all over again. Water density is one gram per cubic centimetre. Hence objects less dense than water float and those denser, sink. A human body is



normally and naturally around 0.98 to 0.99gm. So most humans float. And you most probably will.

Proceeding further down the gravitational lane is navel-gazing in a nautical manner. Our buoyancy centre (BC) is about 5cm above the navel. Drawing our limbs in towards our BC increases body balance control in water. Resistance: Though swimming gives you an upward thrust, the familiar Newton's law of 'each movement has an equal and opposite force' — gravity, kicks in. Think of your body as an automobile with a rear engine. The legs starting from your hips are the empowering engine and rear wheels. The arms are both the steering wheel and the front tyres to achieve balance and direction.

Though I'd learnt swimming (thanks to my dad) by age five, I began serious swimming sessions only after 'early retirement' from magazine journalism in 1984. The shift to Highland Park, Lokhandwala, with a residential pool was planned with health in our minds. I was pronounced hypertensive by a heart specialist back then (probably caused by my genes, work stress and long hours of commuting daily) before I'd turned 40. The good doctor prescribed regular medicines and I planned a swimming schedule. Over time, I began to swim 45 minutes non-stop daily right up to Covid-19.

Mistake One: I neglected drinking water. And consequently suffered severe dehydration, once that rendered my body iron-board stiff. Lesson: drink at least three litres of fluid daily.

The Covid pandemic changed human lives world over. In my case, I had to sacrifice swimming. I resumed swimming late last year — four years after the pandemic. I struggled to swim non-stop for even five minutes. Forget the 45-minutes I had led up to in my first swimming innings.

Mistake: I now watched the clock after every round. At first I attributed

Watching what and how much you eat is imperative. Stick to a balanced diet. Aerobic exercises do not directly address the stomach. Hence, refer to our earlier essay on tummy trimming and toning. Abdominal exercises are in a class of their own.

* Aerobic activity	Time span (in minutes)	Distance or intensity
Walking	42	4.8km
Jogging	7.45	1.6km
Inch stepping/ Rebounding	20	70 steps per minute
Outdoor cycling	21	9.6km
Armchair cycling	20	70rpm
Swimming	15	549 metres

\*Frequency: 5 days a week.

it to lack of strength and stamina *sans* swimming. But that is a half-truth. I had continued resistance training and aerobic arm-chair cycling that was aerobically as effective, actually more so — because I'd never reached swimming's aerobic target of 549 metres in 15 minutes. Though five years older, I was stronger and fitter now compared to my first venture. Time flew in the first-time round. I'd look up and then realise I'd reached my 45 minutes' target. Lesson: Sheer clock watching is a waste of time. Because it is unproductive and subtly undermines patience, perseverance and practice which are hard earned over time and physical effort. Never say enough is enough. Whatever their age or sport, athletes swim to cool down.

### Red flag

All water bodies appear safe. Appearances are deceptive. There could be danger lurking under or beyond that seductively beautiful surface. Sharp rocks that wound, undercurrents that drag, the tide that turns... Go beyond the picture-postcard image and check out the scene with a local

when you're on a water vacation. In addition, have a guide/good swimmer accompanying you.

Swimming adds a great plus-factor and water has been used by non-swimmers to develop their own sport. Rocky Marciano, the G.O.A.T. of world heavyweight boxing and the only one to retire undefeated with a 49-0 record and overall 83 knock-outs in the ring, waded into the pool and punched water until he was exhausted. Water being a denser medium than air meant more resistance. This empowered Rocky to develop twin-bombs in his fists. Sylvester Stallone capitalised on Rocky's success and his film series of the same name have been major box-office hits.

Water also encourages adventure tourism with events like kayaking, surfing, etc. Besides, you could try being your own Robinson Crusoe. And Huckleberry Swim (read; Finn).

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



RID 3170

**RC Dharwad Heritage**

A high-end smart board (₹1.5 lakh) was donated to a government school at Karikatti, Belgaum, at the club's charter night by DG Sharad Pai. The digital board was sponsored by Rtn Jyoti Jeevannavar to enhance the digital learning experience of students.



# Club matters



RID 3211

**RC Kozhencherry**

Kerala health minister Veena George inaugurated the Pranama Funeral Event Management which will manage funeral services. It has two AC ambulances, one hearse van, two mobile mortuary units and experienced staff at a centrally located building.

RID 3231

**RC Gudiyatham**

Over 200 people benefitted from an eye checkup camp organised by the club in the town. Around 140 people were treated for cataract. Spectacles were given to those with eyesight disorder.





# RID 3234

## RC Madras Chennai Patna

Rotary Table Tennis League – Season 4 saw 12 teams with 13 paddlers each competing in a friendly manner at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium. With the support of Fellowship of Table Tennis Loving Rotarians, the TT contest enabled Rotarians to bond among themselves.

# RID 3201

## Rotary E-Club Metro Dynamix

A smart board (₹1.2 lakh) was donated to the Govanur Panchayat Union Middle School which would benefit underprivileged students. An origami session was also held. So far, five digital boards were given to various government schools.



# RID 3250

## RC Patna Kankarbagh

A hoarding to create awareness on safe and disciplined driving was erected at one of the busy roads in Patna. The banner carried details about traffic signals and penalties for violating traffic rules to mark National Road Safety month.



# RID 3261

## RC Wainganga Balaghat Divas

Seventy surgeries were conducted at the District Hospital, Balaghat, as part of a two-day hernia, hydrocele and tongue-tie correction camp for children under 18 held in partnership with the office of the Chief Medical Health Officer and Jabalpur Medical College Hospital.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

# From RI South Asia

## Appoint District Foundation positions for RY 2025–26

To successfully reach the fundraising goals for 2025–26, DGEs must establish a complete team dedicated to prioritising the Foundation among club leaders. Appoint your district chairs for Endowment/Major Gifts (DE/MGC), CSR, Annual Fund Subcommittee, Fundraising Subcommittee and PolioPlus Subcommittee, and Paul Harris Society Coordinator. Log into *My Rotary*, navigate to “Manage,” and select the District Administration tab, to report these appointments to RI so that they will be granted access to essential reports and information that can support all your fundraising efforts.

## Listed contribution on behalf of club members

Clubs have the option to make contributions on behalf of their

members via cheque or DD, along with a list of members indicating their individual contributions.

Under this option:

- ❖ Club or its trust issues a single cheque or DD as a ‘listed contribution’.
- ❖ Provide PAN number of club/its trust, whosoever is issuing the cheque.
- ❖ Club to provide members list with their membership IDs and the amount contributed by each member.
- ❖ The total amount given against individual contributors should match with the cheque amount
- ❖ RISAO’s finance department will issue tax receipt to the club/trust.
- ❖ Based on the details indicated in the list provided by the club, individual members will get

credit using their membership ID. Individual members will not get the tax receipt in this case.

Please also note that the final date for submitting such contributions to RISAO is **May 31, 2025**. The cheque or DD must be drawn from the club or club trust’s account, and not from any individual member’s account, for the purpose of a Listed Contribution.

## Annual Fund Challenge 2024–25

The Annual Fund Challenge is back this Rotary year. Brought to you by Trustee Bharat Pandya and RRFCS from Zones 4, 5, 6, and 7, this year’s challenge comes with exciting new criteria that increase your chances of victory. The Annual Fund Challenge awards will be given at the Delhi Institute in November 2025. ■

## 2024–25 Annual Fund (AF) Challenge

Brought to you by TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya and Zones 4, 5, 6 & 7 RRFCS

	Champion	Platinum	Gold	Silver
For District	District achieving AF per capita of \$200 or more	100% members contributing \$25 or more to AF, or the district reaching an AF per capita of \$175 or more	At least 75% members contributing \$25 or more to AF, or the district reaching an AF per capita of \$150 or more	At least 50% members contributing \$25 or more each to the AF, or the district reaching AF per capita of \$100 or more
For Club	NA	Minimum \$25 contribution by each member along with on AF per capita of \$200	Minimum \$25 contribution by each member along with AF per capita of \$100	Minimum \$25 contribution by each member
Eligibility criteria	To be eligible for district award, the district must achieve 100% clubs giving with minimum \$100 from each club			

## Paul Harris Society Award

From each zone, district with highest new PHS members (minimum 20 new PHS members) with an overall eligibility of 80% (percentage of PHS members fulfilling their commitment) will be eligible for this award.

## Your convention faves

The votes are in: Members planning to attend the RI Convention in Calgary say they're most excited to find project partners and learn about RI's work. They also give high marks to seeing friends from past conventions and meeting new people from around the world, in a just-for-fun poll on Rotary's new WhatsApp channel. A good number of people say they're eager to put on a cowboy hat in Calgary, a modern city with Western frontier roots.

President Stephanie Urchick asks you to join her in Canada June 21–25 because the convention is your place to form lifelong connections and discover new perspectives. "This motivating event will inspire and transform you," she says.

Calgary is a travel destination that's easy to love. The bustling city centre is simple to get around and close to hotels and the convention grounds, where you can watch a heart-pounding Wild West entertainment extravaganza. Your fellow members who are helping to organise the convention and special experiences can't wait to share with you Calgary's diversity in food, arts and cultures, and its sustainable features like a light rail line powered by wind energy. The dining scene is a favourite of the HOC co-chair Mark



Starratt. He recommends the many downtown restaurants that feature ingredients from nearby farms or global fare from international chefs.

With so much to do close to the main event, he says all members will find unforgettable experiences, "regardless of your age, or whether you're bringing your family, travelling single, or you're a Rotaractor."

Learn more and register at [convention.rotary.org](https://convention.rotary.org).

## Wheelchair basketball tournament in Mumbai

### Team Rotary News



The Rotary District 3141 Disability to Ability Avenue, along with RC Ghatkopar West, hosted the Women's

Wheelchair Basketball tournament at the YMCA Grounds in Ghatkopar. "Our aim in conducting the event was to highlight Rotary's inclusivity

initiative and celebrate the resilience, determination and sportsmanship of the differently-abled women. Many of them fell out of their wheelchairs, yet they were up and about in seconds," said Avenue chair Kala Shridhar.

The event was held under the guidance of the Wheelchair Basketball Federation of India, Wheelchair Basketball Association - Maharashtra and the Wheelchair Sports Association.

The event was supported by NGOs Project Mumbai who contributed towards the prize money, and ACC-RED as accessibility partner. RCs Deonar, Mumbai Neo, Bombay Pier, Neo Mulund Valley, Juhu Beach and Sobo were the co-hosts. ■



# The taste of.. home

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

LBW



**F**rom 2018, my wife and I have visited Switzerland every year except 2020, the Covid year. This is because my son lives there, working as an economist. Each year, within a couple of days of arriving, my wife reviews the kitchen for stocks of Indian ingredients. Then on Day-3 we go shopping for whatever might be missing and what we have not carted over from India. In Lausanne, where my son lives, there are quite a few shops owned by Sri Lankan Tamils. One or two of them now recognise us, especially my wife. They chat as my wife hunts for the masalas and other things. It's like not having left India at all. Even the smells are like the ones back home.

On this year's visit we met, for the first time, a waiter in a Vietnamese restaurant who looked South Asian. Despite my wife's strong disapproval, I asked him where he was from. He said Sri Lanka. This was surprising because people from our subcontinent doing similar jobs tend to be from Bangladesh. I asked him where in Sri Lanka and he replied Jaffna. When I started speaking to him in Tamil, his face lit up. We had a long chat and the upshot of it was that he craved Tamil food. He became very distracted at my mentioning *vatha kozhumbu*, which is a spicy sauce made from tamarind. You can eat it with almost anything.

A couple of weeks later, I went to see a professor of economic history who had taught our class 55 years ago. Inevitably, our conversation quickly turned from the exchange rate controversy of the 1930s to Tamil condiments, a case of going from the ridiculous to the sublime. The thing he

craved for most, he said, was *vepalaikatti*, another powder, but this time from the region that borders Tamil Nadu and Kerala. At the mention of *mavadu*, a typical Tamil mango pickle, he became very animated. I promised to bring him a hamper on my next visit.

I have had similar experiences with other Indians who don't live in their home states. I remember a long flight on Air India on which there was a steward from Maharashtra. He was domiciled in Punjab. After takeoff, at around midnight I drank a lot of whisky and woke up very thirsty a few hours later. So I went to the back of the aircraft for water and found this steward sitting by himself. We started talking and it turned out that he really missed something called *agri masala*. I had never heard of it. He said it was very chilli hot and went very well with fish. Punjab, he said, had no idea of fine dining. And then he took out a small ziplock bag from his pocket and gave it to me. "Try, sir," he said. I did, with the bland breakfast they served on the flight. It pretty much woke up the eggs in the omelette.

But when it comes to food nostalgia nothing can beat the Korean who came to our house for lunch 40 years ago. My wife recently retired as a professor of Korean language and studies. In the 1980s she used to keep a stock of Korean seaweed and the original traditional *kimchi*, not the toned-down thing they serve you now. She served both to the Korean with, guess what, Maggi noodles. I am not exaggerating but the guy broke down in tears. He had missed both so intensely. She took pity on him and gifted the whole lot of seaweed and *kimchi* to him. Thank god! The smell of traditional *kimchi* can be, well, quite overwhelming. ■



**Rotary**  
District 3212



# Yadhumanaval



**EMPOWERING  
GIRLS**

The voice of Yadhumanaval is a war cry against women illiteracy, gender inequality, gender bias and sexual harrassment.

Yadhumanaval is the voice of the voiceless and voiced less. It is for the women, by the women and of the women.

Rotary strongly encourages partnership with like-minded Institutions and Corporates which support Rotary's Programmes. Empowering girls has been a major focus of Rotary in the recent years.

## Jayanthasri Balakrishnan



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

LEKHA abv/May 25/Rotary/BIW

**Get in Touch**

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+91 94887 66388

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" SHE PAVES A PATH FOR GIRL CHILDREN TO BECOME STRONGER VERSIONS OF THEMSELVES THROUGH HER MESMERIZING TALK. "

No. of Occurrences  
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No. of Beneficiaries  
**1,41,600**



**Rotary**  
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 3500 MINUTES



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**START PRODUCING JOB(S)**

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 49.0: 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> & 20<sup>th</sup> JULY 2025  
 50.0: 22<sup>nd</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup> AUG 2025



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