

ROTARY NEWS



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WITH ACTION**

 **SETUBANDHAN**
ORGANISATION
THEME 2017-18
MAKING A DIFFERENCE

In Tagore's
footsteps



The cliff divers of Acapulco

Old timers will remember the famous Elvis Presley Hollywood blockbuster from 1963 — *Fun in Acapulco*. It brought to the attention of the world a band of expert cliff divers who dive from the steep cliffs at La Quebrada, a famous spot in Acapulco in Mexico. During a recent holiday, we watched, with bated breath and our hearts in our mouths, a group of professional divers climb the cliffs and dive down a distance of

between 100–135 feet into the sea below, where the depth of the water is around 18 ft. Their expertise lies in ensuring that they do not hit the craggy cliffs in the vicinity as they perform this spectacular feat. A regular tourist attraction, in 2002, the Guinness Book of World Records classified this daredevil act as “the highest regularly performed headfirst dives” in the world.

Text and picture by Rasheeda Bhagat



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A celebration of friendship, fun and frolic as the Rotary Anns of RC Kanpur Greater tour Amritsar.

On the cover: Delegates at Setubandhan, an international conference held in Agartala.

Photo Courtesy: Rasheeda Bhagat



A great November issue

Once again, an excellent November issue. The cover photo of the children is captivating. Thank you, madam photographer. The inside cover picture of the Board of Directors has just one lady and I do hope soon a lady occupies the central position of the RI President! We hope to see a lady in a saree soon in such a picture.

Compliments to *Team Rotary News* — Jaishree and V Muthukumaran, designers Krishnapratheesh, N Krishnamurthy and L Gunasekaran, Kiran Zehra, Sandhya Rao, Sabita Radhakrishna and Sheela Nambiar as well.

It was good to see thumbs up for the magazine in your survey; the credit goes to Editor Rasheeda and her team. I was thrilled to know our District 3000 has the largest number of Rotaract and Interact clubs (*Membership Summary*).

Your editorial and cover story on pure drinking water was great and we noted that the Editor and



Jaishree have written so many articles.

Nan Narayenen
RC Madurai West — D 3000

The November issue is lovely and fantastic right from the cover page to the last.

I enjoyed reading each and every page. In particular, the *Survey Analysis Results* impressed me the most; the results were as expected by us! A small request — incorporate two photos for every

district in *Club Matters* as this will encourage the clubs to take up more activities.

KAS Jagabar Sadik
RC Nagore — D 2981

Nice to see *Rotary News* is improving in a big way. I suggest that you focus on green issues by giving it a special place in the magazine and carry articles on green buildings, rain water harvesting and water recycling.

Pramod Chaugule
RC Krishna Valley — D 3170

The coverage, quality and in-depth articles in the November issue are truly good. Congrats.

Perumal Murugan
RC Nagercoil
Golden City — D 3212

A big “Thank you” for the lovely article *Giving Dignity to the Forgotten* in the November issue.

Cdr Pradeep Bahri, Secretary
RC Delhi South — D 3011

Rotary-GOI partnership

As soon as I receive *Rotary News* every month, I usually glance at the Editorial. The October Editorial, *The power... to do good*, inspired me.

It's good to find the GoI seeking partnership with Indian Rotarians in the Universal Immunisation Programme. I feel proud that RI has established its credibility by achieving a near polio-free world. The two Indian Rotary icons, PRIPs Rajendra K Saboo and Kalyan Banerjee, are

mainly responsible for Rotary's dedicated service. We salute the duo with deep reverence.

Rotary's partnership with the government is welcome but the need of the hour is to make the Rotarians of our zones aware of the 'Plus' theme. That Rotary's service has caught our government's attention is good. Both the DGs and PDGs have to work now to achieve the goals set out by the PolioPlus programme.

Arun Kumar Dash
RC Baripada — D 3262

RC Birmingham

The Editor's interview with two icons of Birmingham Rotary club, USA — its President Fred McCallum and Executive Director Susan Jackson — is informative and inspiring. Established in 1914, and with 640 members, the activities of this club are worth emulating. The members hail from top business and philanthropic organisations, and have spent millions of dollars in various projects such as school buildings, cancer

detecting centres in Sri Lanka, and has the biggest Rotaract club with 290 members. God bless the members for their selfless service.

G V Sayagavi
RC Davanagere
Vidyanagar — D 3160

Simple ideas matter a lot

You have rightly said in the Editorial that “most beautiful things come in small packages”. We also had a small package campaign of banner messages that read

No Horn, Do Not Smoke and Wear Helmet While Driving at four petrol pumps in Kolkata. It blossomed into a much larger image building exercise. Over one lakh vehicle users read the message. A simple idea scaled into a huge momentum.

Piyush Doshi, RC Belur — D 3291

A wonderful, unusual Governor

In the article *Meet your Governors* (November Issue), I find Governor Dr Zamin Hussain's attitude rather different. He collects only Rs 50 as consultation fee from his patients, thus justifying the theme: Service Above Self.

It is surprising to observe that when a Rotarian approached this DG last year and said he would give to TRF during his tenure, he had said "Why wait for my year? Why not now? People's suffering can't wait. Your timely donation will help people when it is most needed." A wonderful reply.

N Jagatheesan, RC Eluru — D 3020

Exclusive world of books

Sandhya Rao's article *Gifting ideas* reminds me of my time spent in browsing books in Shimla's bookshops. Maria, the shop that I never miss, has a good collection of old titles, and I always spend at least half-an-hour here. An old shop on Mall Road, I once found an issue of *Punch* magazine dated way back to 1895!

This British magazine laced with humour, satire and cartoons was very popular, but unfortunately, ceased publication in 1996.

H S Khurana, RC Ludhiana — D 3070

Informative article

An article on Dr Amar Agrawal and glued AIOL surgery is very much informative. No doubt he is a pioneer for IOL surgery. But he is not a Rotarian and hence, such a detailed article is not justified. We are looking forward to the publication of articles on the contribution of Rotary in the UN formation, the memories of late Rtn Inder Kumar Gujral and Rtn JRD Tata, who were active Rotarians in their times.

Sanat Jain, RC Raipur Heritage — D 3261

Shudhu tablets: A laudable project

Hats off to Rotarians of RC Jalna Midtown in Maharashtra for taking up laudable and replicable projects (*Shuddha Jal*, November) to provide pure drinking water to school children and the community. My compliments to the Editor for covering and gathering details about Shudhu tablets and Project Taral by visiting the areas personally and writing the eight-paged beautiful article *Shuddha Jal* which will motivate other clubs to replicate this project. These Rotarians are really rendering service to mankind. The Editor's apt headline for her Editorial: *An exemplary, replicable, scalable project*, and her opening remarks: "Some of the most beautiful things come in small packages" and the statement that a small and simple idea that is replicable and can be easily scaled up are appreciable.

The Editorial rightly states that by taking care of the health care and educational

needs of our children, Rotary clubs in India are making an invaluable contribution to India's march towards progress and development. Rotarians are doing what the Governments can't do.

Again Giving *dignity to the forgotten* by Rasheeda Bhagat is a wonderful project RC Delhi South has taken up with the Inner Wheel members. *Gifting ideas* by Sandhya Rao, *Rotary partners HRD and Drinking water and Sanitation ministries* by Shekhar Mehta are other articles of value and worth reading.

Raising awareness on organ donation by Team Rotary News is a noteworthy project of RC Sri Ganganagar in Rajasthan. DG Bagh Singh Pannu has delivered a lecture on awareness among school children. Organ donation is the best gift one can give to others and much more needs to be done for creating more awareness.

Raj Kumar Kapoor
RC Roopnagar — D 3080

A thumbs up survey

Congratulations to *Team Rotary News* as the online survey has shown that 82 per cent of the readers are happy over the quality of the magazine, while 70 per cent have given a thumbs up on the topics. But still there is scope for improvement.

DP Muniyappa
RC Kolar Gold Fields — D 3190

Congratulations on your big success as *Rotary News-Survey Analysis Results*, in the November issue, depicted positive responses. Hope you will contribute further and achieve bigger goals in the years to come.

Krish Chitale
RC Madras — D 3232

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor: rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com

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A promise to the North East

Move over Chennai, Delhi, Mumbai and Bengaluru; at this magazine, we have decided to turn both our time and energy to focus also on the smaller clubs that are not located in the metros of India but where the members are doing their bit to improve the lives of the people in their communities. And, slowly, but surely, changing the face of India. So while the last issue focused on a relatively small club in a small town of India — RC Jalna Midtown, which is doing a remarkably simple and scalable project to provide safe and pure drinking water to the schoolchildren and their families in the far-flung villages around Jalna town, this month, your Editor grabbed the opportunity and accepted an invitation to visit, address and cover an international conference — *Setubandhan* (building a bridge) of the two districts of 3240 (North East of India, and parts of West Bengal) and 3282 (Bangladesh), organised in Agartala, the capital of the tiny North Eastern State of Tripura. The huge demand from the Rotarians of District 3282 came as quite a shock for the organisers and the host club — Rotary Club of Agartala City. President of the club Dr S K Banik said that though a small club with only 40 members, they took on the challenge, for the first time ever, of organising an international conference with 800 delegates. Finding rooms, and organising transport and other facilities for the 660 delegates from Bangladesh... yes there were only 140 from India... was indeed a big challenge, but then turning the difficult, if not impossible, into possible is the Rotary spirit; isn't it?

So during those two days you couldn't go around the tiny, but so beautifully green town of Agartala, without bumping into a Rotarian. And the queues at the opening

night's dinner had to be seen to be believed! When I expressed my surprise at the spanking clean city, Dr Banik said that the municipality cleaners are out at 5 am on the roads. "And do you know that while everybody talks about Kerala, our literacy rate is 100 per cent; and maternal and infant mortality rates much lower than the rest of India? And we have a maximum number of institutionalised deliveries; I should know because I am a gynaecologist by profession!" Both he and D 3240 DG Sunil Saraf said the Rotarians in the district were looking for projects that were not only unique but also sustainable. I have come away after promising the DG that *Rotary News* will feature, in detail, one or two of the better projects being done by the Rotarians in the northeast region in the near future.

Following the publication of our commitment to make the coverage of *Rotary News* pan-Indian and not confined to the South or the metros — Chennai has a natural advantage because the RNT headquarters is located here — Rotarians from smaller cities are now approaching us to cover their projects. We have requests from Tirunelveli and Surat and will soon cover these projects... by visiting the town or village and telling the story from the ground level, the best way to tell a story. So irrespective of the size of your club or the city you belong to, do keep pitching ideas and proposals to cover your iconic projects. Your best chance of getting a project covered in detail: Tell us how you are impacting lives and livelihood in any of the core areas of Rotary — health, education, economic impact, environmental benefits, and above all, offering hope to the hopeless that with your help they can usher in a better tomorrow for themselves and their children.

Rasheeda Bhagat



Towards a more peaceful world

Dear Fellow Rotarians,

Seventy-two years ago, the United Nations was founded “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war... (and) to practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbours.” Despite those worthy aspirations, and generations of investment in achieving them, the “scourge of war” is still with us: Last year, more than 102,000 people died in 49 armed conflicts around the world. Some of those conflicts were in their fifth decade or beyond. Terrorism, intolerance and extremism; the refugee crisis; and environmental degradation are now global challenges.

Collectively, we seem further than ever from achieving the goals that were set with such ambition and optimism in 1945. Yet hope endures, as long as there are people willing to work for a more peaceful future — not only through their governments, but also beside them and beside each other. Today, Rotary is better placed than ever to have a real and lasting impact for peace: through

our peace-focused programmes, such as Rotary Peace Fellows, and through every area of our service. Water, sanitation, health, education, and economic development are all interrelated and part of the complex interactions that can lead to conflict — or avert it. To best leverage our service in all these areas, and to maximise their impact for peace, it is essential to understand these interactions and plan our service accordingly.

For these reasons, we have scheduled a series of six presidential peacebuilding conferences between February and June in Canada, Lebanon, the UK, Australia, Italy and the United States. These conferences will focus not on peace but on *peacebuilding*: We will share ways that we can work to build peace through the service of our Rotary clubs and districts. Five of the one-day conferences will illuminate the connections between peace and another area of focus. The first conference, in Vancouver, BC, will explore the link between peace and another sphere of great concern to us in Rotary: environmental sustainability. You can view the full schedule and register at www.rotary.org/presidential-conferences.

The goals are simple: to help Rotarians find new ways to advance peace through their service, to learn from experts, and to strengthen our abilities to build peace. It is my hope and belief that these conferences will help us move closer to a more peaceful world, through *Rotary: Making a Difference*.



Ian H S Riseley
President, Rotary International

Message from the RI Director



A Rotary-Bank partnership worth emulating

Dear Rotarians,

Twenty-seven years ago I joined Rotary. On my first day, I asked a senior Rotarian about the prefix in his name — what is PP? His simple answer made me understand Rotary. He said PP was a short form for Past President; but it also clearly defines the services of Rotary... helping to lift people out of poverty; prevention of conflicts, wiping out diseases like polio, alleviation of hunger, and ultimately the promotion of peace, hygiene, health and all good things under the sky.

The well-known saying ‘Prevention is better than cure’ is a true advice to anyone who loves to lead a happy and healthy life. Rotary is a service organisation and not a 100 per cent charitable organisation. Prevention saves time, money and improves our happiness quotient and keeps us in good health. The best service of Rotary is to create awareness and take action. With support from our partners in service, Interact and Rotaract, we can jointly create and organise regular awareness campaigns on better and happy living.

For example, India is the diabetes capital of the world with more than 70 million people suffering from diabetes mellitus, the second highest number of cases after China. Recent studies show a rising diabetes epidemic across all classes, both affluent and the poor. The study reported high prevalence of diabetes, especially of undiagnosed cases, in the adult population, most of which had uncontrolled blood sugar levels. This indicates the need for systematic screening

and awareness programmes to identify undiagnosed patients in the community and offer early treatment and regular follow-up.

Our Rotary clubs can organise diabetes detection camps in association with local hospitals and raise public awareness on its prevention and treatment. Let me recall how my fellow Rotarians, associated with the Lakshmi Vilas Bank, promoted an LVB-Rotary Project to serve the people of Karur. When the management of the Karur-based LVB decided to mark its 70th anniversary with a project to serve the people of Karur, affordable medical care became its choice. The Bank then approached the Rotarians of the Rotary Club of Karur who enthusiastically accepted the responsibility of running the medical centre. Since then the number of patients seeking free medical care has gone up to 100 a day, which amounts to over 300,000 patients a year. The club, with the support of LVB’s annual contribution of Rs 500,000 and matching grants from The Rotary Foundation, buys medical equipment and medicines to run the medical centre. The LVB-Rotary Medical Centre is an outstanding model of what a well-organised and efficiently run corporate–Rotary partnership can achieve. All this, thanks to the vision of the founders of the bank who laid down in the Articles of Association that one per cent of the net profit will be spent on community development, almost 100 years before the idea of CSR was born.

Let us emulate this example and strive to create greater awareness of the importance of good health and preventive care within our communities, thus demonstrating this year’s theme, *Rotary: Making a Difference*.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Basker'.

C Basker
Director, Rotary International

Message from the Foundation Chair



Power of Partnerships

This month my focus is on the purpose and power of partnerships.

We have a history of partnerships at all levels of Rotary. We partner member to member, club to club, district to district, all finding support from the wide variety of The Rotary Foundation's programmes, projects and grants. How powerful this continues to be!

But only in the last several decades have we paid much attention to the idea of partnering with organisations outside of Rotary. Most would agree this change led to the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, which has accomplished so much through each partner sharing its expertise and working together with a common purpose. This public-private partnership for global health is on the verge of eradicating an infectious disease affecting humans for only the second time in history.

Simply put, partners agree to cooperate in advancing mutual goals. In so doing, they accomplish much more than one entity can alone. We now understand that to maximise our impact, Rotary must establish innovative partnerships, not just at all levels within our organisation, but outside of Rotary as well.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paul A. Netzel".

Paul A Netzel
Foundation Trustee Chair

Our second major partnership initiative has been the Rotary Peace Centres programme. In little over a decade, our peace centres have trained more than 1,100 individuals. Through this programme, Rotary Peace Fellows develop the skills they need to serve as leaders and catalysts for peace and conflict resolution both in their communities and around the globe.

Thanks to the ongoing work of the Joint Committee on Partnerships, which includes RI directors and Foundation trustees, the number of Rotary partnerships continues to grow. The Partnerships page at Rotary.org (go to About Rotary, then choose Partners) has a tremendous amount of information. Please take a few minutes and explore the page. Make sure to scroll all the way down to learn more about the partners and — most important — how your club or district can get involved.

As we head toward 2018 and consider which New Year's resolutions we will make, dream big about the service opportunities waiting for us with our dedicated partners.

Make 2018 the year to take advantage of all that Rotary offers and see how much more productive and effective we can be using the power of partnerships.

Best wishes to you for a very happy new year.

Share your ideas for
new partnerships with me at
Paul.netzel@rotary.org.

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Rotarians should be courageous, counter divisive activity

Rasheeda Bhagat

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar has called upon Rotarians from both India and Bangladesh to fight the “divisive forces” that were trying to undermine the unity of their countries. He told Indian Rotarians “to be courageous and oppose the divisive activity happening in the country and counter it strongly. You must try and ensure that the unity and integrity of our people is maintained.”

Inaugurating the multi-district conference titled *Setubandhan* (building a bridge), in which Rotarians from RI Districts 3240 (India) and 3282 (Bangladesh) participated, he said first of all Rotarians from both India and Bangladesh have to assess the situation prevailing in their respective countries. Taking India first he said, “The situation prevailing in India is not good and turning from bad to worse. The secular fabric of our country is under severe attack and democracy is under peril. Divisive forces are trying to divide people of our country... particularly the downtrodden, working classes, who are rendered unable to solve their basic problems like food security, shelter, clothing, healthcare and livelihood.”

Sarkar said that unless we can sort out these problems “within our



own country, what is the point of raising the slogan of friendship, bonds and bridges between India and Bangladesh?”

Similarly, he added, “the situation in Bangladesh is not good too. Some of the forces there are not happy with the independence or liberation of Bangladesh and are trying to vitiate the atmosphere there by

fanning religious hatred. They are trying to weaken the unity and integrity of the people of Bangladesh. Long hands are active in both these countries. So I appeal to the Rotarians of Bangladesh also to do your best to strengthen the unity of your people. Only then you can take necessary steps to build a bridge of friendship with India.”

Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar lights a lamp to inaugurate the International Conference *Setubandhan*. On his left are RI District 3282 DG Tayub Chowdhury and RI District 3240 DG Sunil Saraf; and on his right Bangladesh Railway Minister Mazibul Hoque and RC Agartala City President Dr S K Banik.



CM made honorary Rotarian

RI District 3240 DG Sunil Saraf appealed to the Chief Minister to become an honorary member of RC Agartala City and he promptly agreed, and was presented the Rotary pin.

Addressing the meeting, Past RI President Kalyan Banerjee said he was very happy to see such a large contingent (660 of 800 delegates were from Bangladesh) of Rotarians from Bangladesh had come to take part in *Setubandhan*. He recalled the words of the former US President D Eisenhower, who had said: “If only the people will come together, so too will nations”, and that’s just “what you are doing today — bringing people together — not just in Dhaka and Kolkata but in smaller places like Agartala, where I can say that people are very warm-hearted. Indeed, smaller places build firmer, stronger friendships. They build lasting relationships.”

Another US President, “Woodrow Wilson, I think, said that if I could,

I would start a Rotary club in every village and in every town and so ensure growth, prosperity, harmony and peace everywhere. And when you really think about it, it’s true, isn’t it,” asked Banerjee.

He said just one example from the plethora of things that Rotary does would suffice. “In the International Youth Exchange programme, students from one country stay in the homes of Rotarians in another country, living their lives, studying in their schools, eating their food. Believe me, it’s a life-changing programme. When they return, they are never the same. They now understand the world better, tolerate more, share your joys and your sorrows and for both, the students and their host families, host brothers and sisters, it is a life-changing experience. Try it out if you have not done so already.”

3240–3282 exchange programme

They could start, suggested Banerjee,

In both India and Bangladesh, divisive forces are trying to weaken the unity and integrity of the people. This is affecting the poor and the downtrodden the worst.

Tripura Chief Minister
Manik Sarkar



PRIP Kalyan Banerjee being honoured with a memento by (from L) Setubandhan Convener Baharul Islam Majumder and D 3282 DG Tayub Chowdhury, as D 3240 DG Sunil Saraf looks on.

by exchanging students between Districts 3240 and 3282 for a year. He told the parents in the hall, “Trust me, please don’t worry about your child losing a year in school. These exams do not matter, because your children will get an experience they can never get otherwise, no matter how much money you spend!”

And why confine the IYE programme only to two places, he said. “Let your children know the subcontinent of India — Rajasthan, Kanyakumari, Bhubaneswar, Mumbai, Pune. There is a wonderful, growing, changing world out there; let us become a part of it. And if you need my help, let me know what I can do. Now that I am a past RI President and past TRF Trustee Chair, I am really jobless in Rotary. Let me help you if you need any help. I have plenty of time for you.”

Banerjee added that both as RI President and then TRF Chair, one of his main focus areas was building low-cost shelters for homeless people... “a simple, 300 sq ft construction, with a tiled roof and a

toilet. A small pump attached to an overhead small tank and you are in business. You have given a home... a shelter, which means security,” he said, recalling the low-cost shelters that had been built in Bangladesh, a country that has been pounded by many disasters — both droughts and floods. One of the worst cyclones the country saw was in 1991, in which 135,000 people were killed and thousands of homes were destroyed. Along with others, Banerjee recalled, Rotary also built low-cost shelters in the country. (In the Rotary year 1997–98, as many as 530 low-cost shelters were built and handed over to beneficiaries under matching grants received by 53 different clubs of the country. A sum of \$636,000 was received from TRF by these clubs under matching grants.)

There was nothing like giving a home to a family who didn’t have one, or had lost it in a natural disaster. “So, go and build homes. Having a home gives a new meaning of life to the homeless,” he said, urging the Rotarians to also ensure

that they put an end to the practice of open defecation by putting up toilets. Having family members go out in the open to relieve themselves had all kinds of dangerous possibilities, he said, and related the story of a leopard recently having attacked a child in a congested city such as Mumbai, in the Aarey Milk Colony.

Low-cost schools

Banerjee looked back with satisfaction at “one of the last things I could do, as Chair of TRF last year. That was to get the Trustees to approve the construction of low-cost schools — 2–3 classrooms, village schools in places where there are no schools.” In such places, children either had to walk or cycle for miles to go to the nearest school. “And, if they are girls, they have to miss out on going to school altogether. That’s not acceptable. Not in this day and age. Not in modern India nor in Bangladesh. So get together, get some Government or idle and free land, and build a school. It will be the most satisfying thing you can do.”

He told the Rotarians that now they can use TRF Global Grant funds for school construction, but of course, adhering to the guidelines that had been given. (See <https://rotarynewsonline.org/now-global-grants-low-cost-shelters-simple-schools/>, August 2017 issue of *Rotary News*). These guidelines could also be got from RI South

Now that I am a past RI President and past TRF Trustee Chair, I am really jobless in Rotary. Let me help you if you need any help. I have plenty of time for you.

PRIP **Kalyan Banerjee**

Asia office; “or you can write to me. Let’s make India fully literate,” he added.

A literate India

While bringing total literacy to India was a daunting task and it was often asked can it be done through Rotary, “as I have always said, thanks to PolioPlus, the world discovered Rotary, and more importantly, Rotarians discovered themselves. Just think about it. We know we can do whatever we set out to do, whatever needs to be done. Someone once described Rotary as having the tenderness, the softness, the kindness of a parent and the strength of a Government. Indeed, it is my experience in my years in Rotary that’s exactly what we are.”

Banerjee concluded leaving a final thought with the impressive gathering of over 800 Rotarians. “We talk a lot about our fourth avenue of service — of International service, of cooperation, understanding and peace.” RI also had its “much-promoted peace programmes and peace scholarships. But I have often

I got the idea why not make the Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar an honorary Rotarian. We asked, and he agreed.

DG **Sunil Saraf**

wondered, is the world any more peaceful because of our programmes and scholarships? Are we making a difference or bringing in peace? And I don’t feel satisfied with what we are doing. Are you satisfied, let me ask you,” he said.

Rotarians have to reflect if what they were doing was fine or it needed tweaking, or they should do something different. “I often think we need more peace nearer home — maybe in our own homes — than in the world. Peace between Nagaland and the rest of the country. Peace in Manipur, Arunachal Pradesh, among our students when they go to other parts of India and where they are not treated properly. Should those not be a priority for us Indian Rotarians and our neighbours,” he asked, and



RI Districts 3240 and 3282 DGs and their spouses exchange gifts.



From R: RI District 3240 DG Sunil Saraf, RI District 3282 DG Tayub Chowdhury, Tripura Chief Minister Manik Sarkar, Bangladesh Railway Minister Mazibul Hoque and RC Agartala City President Dr S K Banik.

quoted the English saying, the gist of which is that it's not difficult to care for the whole wide world; it's that fellow next door who is the real problem!

An immense challenge

President of the host club, RC Agartala City Dr S K Banik said that even though theirs was a small club with only 40 members, they took on the challenge, "for the first time, of having a conference, and that too an international one, where over 800 delegates were registered. Finding rooms, and organising transport and other facilities for the 660 delegates

from Bangladesh was indeed a big challenge, but our Rotarians worked as a team to organise this *Setubandhan*."

He said that recently he was taken aback when he was asked at a school that "when the GoI itself is doing Swachh Bharat, what can Rotary do." But he had the presence of mind to quickly reply, "Whatever the government cannot do, Rotary will do."

Saying that Tripura had very good human index indicators, he explained that while literacy was 100 per cent in this tiny North eastern State, maternal and infant mortality rates were much lower than in the rest of India. "And we have a maximum number of institutionalised deliveries; I should know because I am by profession a gynaecologist." And for somebody from a city like Chennai, it came as a pleasant surprise to find the city so clean and green.

Dr Banik added that the club's motto was to do projects that were sustainable; "we have some unique projects and one of these is a dialysis centre where low-cost dialysis facilities are available,

in Jorhat, which was inaugurated recently." And now his focus was on "formalising some sustainable joint projects with clubs from Bangladesh".

DG Saraf said District 3240 includes nine States, parts of West Bengal "and geographically, it is one of the largest districts in the world. When I took over as the DG, we had 87 clubs, now we have 88. Most of the clubs are focused on upgrading the infrastructure in the schools. And I am so happy to find, from my visits, that the Rotarians are upgrading schools and providing clean water to the community."

DG Tayub Chowdhury from D 3282 said he and his Rotarians were very happy to plan and execute joint projects with Rotarians from D 3240. Bangladesh Railway Minister Mazibul Hoque delivered the keynote speech.

A colourful and impressive rally that began its march from the Rabindro Bhavan, where the conference was organised, served its purpose to raise the public image of Rotary.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Someone once said Rotary has the tenderness, softness, kindness of a parent and the strength of a Government. In my years in Rotary, I've found that's exactly what we are.

PRIP **Kalyan Banerjee**



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Building a bridge



Above: Tripura dancers get ready for the entertainment programme; **Below:** PRIP Kalyan Banerjee being received at the airport while RC Agartala City President Dr S K Banik (extreme left) and DG Sunil Saraf look on.





DG Sunil Saraf (third from left) and spouse Jyoti accompanied by delegates from Bangladesh.



Above left: D 3240 DG Sunil Saraf and D 3282 DG Tayub Chowdhury; **Above right:** Rally to boost Rotary's public image; **Below:** DG Sunil Saraf, along with RC Agartala City President Dr S K Banik and PDG Swapan Choudhury (right), gets ready for the rally.





Hospet Rotarians

mark their presence in the community

V Muthukumaran

Hospet, a small town along Tungabhadra river in the Bellary district of Karnataka, owes a lot to Rotary with the local club, RC Hospet, D 3160, setting up a slew of projects in health care and education.

On the sidelines of the TRF seminar, RC Hospet President PS Gurunath and his team had a CSR meet with local businessmen and their main agenda was on WinS (Wash in Schools) projects that would target 10–12 Government schools. “We will change the children’s mindset and sensitise them on hygiene and sanitation with the installation

of gender-segregated toilet blocks, drinking water units and awareness on menstrual hygiene among girl students,” says Gurunath.

The club is popular for its social outreach and medical facilities it has installed on one side of the Railway Station Road. Even the club’s spacious hall is available for public meetings. P Bala Subba Setty Rotary Physiotherapy Centre and R Pampapathy Rotary Eye Hospital are synonymous with “our public connect through effective medical service.” Since May 2011, the physiotherapy centre headed by Dr P Jaya Rao has been treating 80–100

patients a day. They conduct electro-physical therapies for accidents, paralysis and back, knee and neck pain, besides handling children with cerebral palsy. Dr Jaya Rao is assisted by six paramedics.

The 10-year-old eye hospital has done 11,000 cataract surgeries and performs nearly 100 of them free of cost each month. A weekly eye camp is held to select the patients for the cataract procedure. An Eye Collection Centre to facilitate donors will be opened before March 2018 as they now depend solely on the Eye Bank at Bellary, 65 km away.



Dialysis and other facilities

For the kidney patients in Hospet, P Bala Subba Setty Rotary Dialysis Centre which was started with a Term Gift supported by a global grant, is a boon. Noor Ahmed (53) used to travel either to Bellary or Hubli, 152 km away, for dialysis thrice a week before the arrival of the Rotary facility. Now, he saves a lot of money and time by using this dialysis centre. "It is very comfortable; all the tests are being done by the local staff," he says. With six dialysis machines, the centre handles 11–12 patients in a day and charges Rs 900 per cycle.

RI Director C Basker, who presided over the TRF seminar, visited all the medical facilities set up by the club and suggested that the Rotarians try and further reduce the cost of medical tests and treatment. "You should try and find global partners and then apply for global grants to subsidise the cost of the services you are providing."

He complimented the club members for the enthusiasm with which they were serving the community in Hospet.

Dr Pallavi Amarnath, Chief Medical Officer, says a nephrologist visits the dialysis centre once in 15 days. "In the last two years, 5,762 dialysis procedures were done, 480 free of cost," says Rtn Y Srinivasa Rao, Project Chairman, Dialysis Unit. At present, 42 patients are getting treatment. But the oldest health project is the AAPI Charitable Dispensary, started in 1991, that gets a monthly contribution of \$1,000 from Dr Vijayanagar, an NRI from the US and a former resident of Hospet. "A nominal fee of Rs 10 is charged per visit for consultation and free medicine for two days," says Dr Amarnath. The main takeaways from the general clinic are the free antenatal check-ups for pregnant women; free distribution of iron, calcium tablets; IV injection for anaemic pregnant women; and nebulisation, given free of cost for

asthmatic patients. The health centre gets about 90 patients a day.

The Asha Project run by two doctors has bagged Rotary's Significant Achievement Award and it gets nearly 100 HIV positive patients a day who are given free counselling. The Vocational Centre holds two courses on Tally and basic computer operations for 80 trainees. It has already trained 3,000 beneficiaries who are mostly women and small traders, apart from students who enrol in computer batches.

Regular health camps enable the club to stay connected with the community. "There is good response for our acupressure camps too," says Gurunath.

Focus areas

On the hygiene front, a toilet complex was built in June 2003 with a matching grant and a sponsoring club — RC Union County, Georgia, D 6910 — at the town's shopping area. The public comfort facility has seven toilets for

Rotary school headmistress Bharathi Hosakeri, Club Secretary Rajesh Korishetar (centre) and President-elect Dr P Muni Vasudeva Reddy along with Class 9 students and their teacher.





From Left: Rtn Abdul Haq Sait, ARRFC Vinod Bansal, RI Director C Basker, PDG R Gopinath and Dialysis Project Chairman Y Srinivasa Rao at the club hall.

men and four units for women, besides a urinal block and a cloak room. “We have spent Rs 3.5 lakh to renovate the toilet complex recently to match the needs of the local shoppers,” says Dr P Muni Vasudeva Reddy, President-elect of the club. Shortly, two more toilet complexes will come up for the general public.

Through a matching grant, 10 low-cost houses, 300 sq ft each, with attached toilets and running water, were handed to the beneficiaries in 2000–01, says Rtn Tirupathi Naidu, District Secretary. He adds that the club will soon become a 100 per cent PHF entity.

Bharathi Hosakeri, the headmistress of the Rotary English Medium Higher Primary and High School, is all excitement that the school is going to get Class X from the coming academic year. All the students, she is optimistic, will excel in the board exams next year. Class 9 student K Manjula is euphoric. “I have vastly improved on my studies with encouragement and personal coaching from the teachers. Next year, we will bring laurels to the school by earning good marks at the public exam,” she says. The club spent Rs 25 lakh under a global grant project in which e-learning devices were given

to 50 government schools for smart classrooms. A school for the mentally and physically-challenged children will be started and “the municipality will soon give us land,” adds Gurunath.

Membership, TRF targets

The 122-member club, which has inducted nine new members, is getting ready to soon induct its first woman member. In TRF, the club has set a target of \$30,000, up from \$24,000 in 2016–17. “From 2000, there is a mining boom in Hospet, because of which we are able to find donors for our projects,” says Rajesh Korishetar, Secretary of the club. But air connectivity is a problem in this region — it has only two private airstrips in Toranagallu, 35 km from Hospet, and Ginegara in Koppal district, 25 km away from the town.

All important festivals are celebrated and now the club allows parents and children of Rotarians and Inner Wheel members to compete in indoor games such as carrom, table tennis and throw ball; as also cricket. “The idea is to involve the extended families of Rotarians in our activities,” he explains.

With three Rotaract and two Interact clubs, Gurunath is still looking to expand Rotary’s reach in the student community.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran



P Bala Subba Setty Rotary Dialysis Centre Chief Medical Officer Dr Pallavi Amarnath examines the patient Noor Ahmed, while Project Secretary Abdul Haq Sait (centre) looks on.



Art for Charity

Team Rotary News

The Rotary Club of Thane Uptown, D 3142, organised a two-day exhibition, 'Art for Charity', in an art gallery in Thane. Forty-six artists displayed their paintings which were appreciated by over 250 visitors. Thirty-seven paintings were sold for a total Rs 2 lakh. The proceeds were shared between the club and the artists. The club intends to use the funds for its Happy Schools project.

The exhibition provided a platform especially for amateurs to display their artwork. "Young artists, who were struggling to promote their paintings, got good orders," said Club President Usha Murali, adding that it has promoted Rotary's public image too, thanks to the extensive media coverage.

"Every person has some latent talent. To encourage them with an infrastructure programme is what Service

Above Self embodies," said DGN Mohan Chandavarkar after visiting the exhibition.

A workshop on 'Fundamentals of Digital Photography' by Sagar Gosavi, Photo Mentor - Canon India, was also organised on the sidelines. An audio-visual showcasing Rotary's Happy School success stories impressed the visitors encouraging some impromptu donations for the project. ■



PRID Ashok Mahajan receives cheque for Rs 50 lakh from Rajashree Birla, Chairperson, Aditya Birla Foundation for Community Initiatives and Rural Development.

Rotary's Thalassaemia centre gets a bounty

Team Rotary News

Rajashree Birla, Chairperson of the Aditya Birla Foundation for Community Initiatives and Rural Development, recently donated Rs 50 lakh to the Thalassaemia Day Care Centre, an initiative of the Rotary Club of Thane Hills, D 3142, and BHEL. PRID Ashok Mahajan received the cheque on behalf of the club. She had donated a similar amount last year too.

Rajashree is the largest individual contributor to The Rotary Foundation. Her contributions to TRF has crossed over \$11 million and she was

honoured with a crystal at the Atlanta Convention by the then RI President John Germ.

The club runs the thalassaemia centre through its trust — Triumph Foundation. The Triumph Blood Bank, established in 2013, is equipped with NAT (Nucleic acid Amplification Testing) technology to provide the safest blood and components for thalassaemia patients and others in need of blood transfusion. The centre supports 75 thalassaemia children under its care. PRID Mahajan has been its guiding force ever since its conception. ■

Let RI take up the challenge of eradicating TB:

Soumya Swaminathan

Rasheeda Bhagat

Now that Rotary and Rotarians have scored such a huge victory in ridding India of polio, it is time “Rotary International takes up as its next big challenge the eradication of tuberculosis, a huge problem that affects disproportionately countries that are poor.”

This suggestion was made by Dr Soumya Swaminathan, the Director General of ICMR (Indian Council for Medical Research) when she was felicitated recently by the Rotary Club of Madras East, D 3232, on her being appointed as the Deputy Director General of WHO. This is the highest international position held by an Indian in the health care segment.

Addressing the club meeting where her illustrious parents — Dr M S Swaminathan, an honorary member of this club, and Dr Mina Swaminathan — were present, she traced her career in research and health care and said that over the last 25 years, India “has made a huge progress in health care. And in this, the eradication of polio is a very big, perhaps the biggest success story, in which Rotary played a huge role internationally. And you must now look for the next big global challenge, because the success of polio showed you need partnerships.”

Any campaign needed the government, but also the civil society and “in polio, mobilisers like the Rotary clubs, media, big funders like the Gates Foundation, and of course, scientists came together.” Science made a huge contribution in the polio success through the work on vaccines — “how they work, how many doses should be given, at what age, when to replace one vaccine with another, how to monitor the



Dr Soumya Swaminathan, Deputy Director General of Programmes, WHO and Director General, ICMR.

From L: Dr Soumya Swaminathan, RCME President B S Purushotham, former Director of the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis Dr P R Narayanan and RCME Secretary Paparao Nalluru.



Rasheeda Bhagat

environmental samples for traces of wild poliovirus.” But in motivating people to go out and give polio drops Rotary had contributed a lot.

TB a huge challenge in India

Dr Soumya said that among the poorer countries India had the largest burden of tuberculosis cases. “There cannot be a global eradication of TB without India making a big dent. Of the ten million new cases of TB detected every year, we are contributing at least three million, if not more.” The biggest risk factor in India for TB today was malnutrition and not HIV, which is the factor responsible in Africa. “There are tribal areas where every family has a TB patient; the story is similar in urban slums, where TB is not diagnosed in time.”

When you are a young scientist you are not very clear on what your particular area or path should be. You need a mentor and a guide who will push you in the right direction and give you the space and freedom.

Calling upon the Rotary clubs in Chennai to join hands with her in the initiative *TB-free Chennai* in which she was associated, Dr Soumya said after discussions for several years it had finally been recently inaugurated by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister E Palanisami. It is a people’s movement where several agencies have come together “to show that we can get rid of TB in at least one city of over eight million people.” The initiative was led by the Chennai Corporation, in partnership with the ICMR and the NGO Reach founded by Dr Nalini Krishnan and other NGOs who would be the link between the programme and private physicians as many TB patients are with the private sector.

Several celebrities had come on board as advocates such as actors Surya and Suhasini Maniratnam “who wrote to me saying what can I do for TB; I’ve had it twice. Amitabh Bachchan is a national icon who has had TB, which doesn’t spare anyone. I know of medical students who died of drug resistant TB.”

The ‘neglected disease’

She underlined the need to involve the media, “and be open with them and give them correct information” on any health care subject. Or else the wrong kind of news gets highlighted. “Science

communication in our country is still in its infancy; it’s growing but we need more journalists to report on science.” Unfortunately, bad news always makes it to the headlines, Dr Soumya said, and gave the example of how every year, during the dengue epidemic “the TV channels flash 3 or 7 died in 24 hours. I tell them during the same period 1,000 people died on tuberculosis in India, why is nobody reporting on that.”

This was so because it had been happening for long and not in Delhi, Mumbai or Chennai but in some remote places and “these people are not important; that is why TB is called the ‘neglected disease’. I’m involved because I’m trying to create a clean and safe environment for children to grow up in, and take one disease and show it is possible to eliminate it. If Chennai can do it, so can the rest of India. Rotary has taken many challenging projects in the past, and this is a very challenging job that requires concerted efforts for a minimum of five years.”

Down memory lane

Responding to TB veteran Dr P R Narayanan’s introduction, Dr Soumya said, “By now he must be getting fed up of introducing me but he does it patiently; he knows me extremely well. Most of my career was spent under

A mentor's introduction



Dr Soumya's elevation to this post is a very special moment for her family, colleagues, seniors and mentors such as Dr P R Narayanan who was the Director of the Tuberculosis Research Centre (now the National Institute for Research in Tuberculosis) and worked with her for long years. Complimenting her for becoming the Deputy Director General for Programmes in the WHO, he said with pride: "No Indian has ever occupied such a senior position in a world health body, but then Soumya is a globally recognised researcher on TB and HIV/AIDS. So how did she achieve it? Was she given a golden spoon and a silver plate overlooking her peers in the places she worked? No, I assure you that is not the case," he said.

He recalled that in 1992, when she joined TRC (now NIRT), "she came into a situation that was not bright. Typically, in government institutions staff complain of lack of elbow room, facilities... I can say this confidently. But here is a woman highly qualified from prestigious institutions in the north and having an exposure to institutions in Europe and USA. Instead of complaining, she started

focusing on patient care from day 1 with all the patience required."

When he became the institution's director in 1996, there was a pressing need for someone to handle the HIV area "and I chose Soumya because of her willingness and commitment to start a department of HIV/AIDS. Within a short period, she formed an excellent team and came forward with some pioneering research in both TB and HIV. This resulted in scientific publications in peer review journals. So the world recognised her as a potential researcher and a care provider."

But, added Dr Narayanan, despite having reached great heights in TB and HIV/AIDS research, she did not lose focus on her basic training in paediatrics at any time. He narrated the story of how he'd take his staff to a tribal area in the Javadhu hills near Vellore in Tamil Nadu. "But when we reached the location, Soumya would be missing from the room and could be seen surrounded by a huge group of tribal women and children, consulting her on a host of problems. Patiently, and most important for a doctor, compassionately, which is much more important today, and gracefully, which we

find missing most of the time, she would address their demands within the framework of what is permissible in a research institution. She became so popular as a paediatrician in those tribal areas that every time the tribal people would expect her to be part of the team!"

Dr Narayanan said that he was the chair of the technical working group of WHO for seven years for the South East Asian region and Dr Soumya would attend these meetings and "always raise her voice repeatedly, year after year, to pay attention to the diagnosis and management of children with TB."

Soon international organisations started noticing her and wanted her to address issues related to global health. Her ability to create an excellent team and sustain it; her contribution to the policies for disease control programmes, her global exposure by being in international committees was soon noticed by the Indian authorities. "I can assure you that she did not make any efforts at visibility but the world saw her work and has recognised her merit, research and extraordinary qualities of leadership. No wonder she was given the Director

General's post in the Ministry of Health and the ICMR and made a Health Secretary."

He added that during her two years at the ICMR she launched several key projects, very boldly merged various small arms of the ICMR to make it more cost effective and cohesive, and recruited a large number of young talented scientists, who had been missing for a long time. "She had the ability to mobilise the resources from the Ministry to do that."

He also stressed on her ability to coordinate, cooperate and collaborate with larger institutions such as the Department of Biotechnology, Science and Technology, etc to carry forward the TB control programme and still contribute as a paediatrician and provide care to the community. "All this was now noticed by international forces and the DG of WHO probably noticed her capability as a quality researcher, collaborator, policy maker, field worker, etc and invited her on October 12 to occupy the DDG chair of WHO."

He explained that the DG of WHO has presently formed a new team with members from 14 countries of the WHO region and "this new team comprises former ministers of health, world's leading physicians, scientists, researchers, experts in universal health coverage, communicable and non-communicable diseases and women, adolescent and children's health."

Dr Narayanan concluded saying that having worked with Dr Soumya, "discussing, debating, negotiating, not always agreeing... most of the time disagreeing, I found her to be a true and genuine professional. No wonder the world wants her to address health issues globally... knowing her well I am sure she will meet its expectations and without expecting much in return!"

If at the school level children get opportunities to explore things, do their own tests in the lab and feel they are discovering something new, it triggers early interest, which can potentially result in a career in research.

Dr Narayanan's mentorship and whatever I have achieved wouldn't have been possible without it, because when you are a young scientist you are not very clear on what your particular area or path should be. You need a mentor and a guide who will push you in the right direction and give you the space and freedom and encouragement to go ahead."

She said we in India need to introspect on why India is not really a global leader in research, particularly medical and health care research. "Except for space, where I think we've done exceedingly well and made a mark, in other areas, I think we can do much better."

She recalled that her first real research came after she got a science talent award in Class 11. She spent her summer holidays with Prof Archana Sharma, a very well-known geneticist and her research was on the genetic chromosomal disease called Turners syndrome. At the hospital she met a 16-year-old girl who had not yet achieved puberty, took her blood sample and did the tests in Prof Archana's lab. "This was very exciting as the diagnosis could be made immediately because one X chromosome was missing. A girl is supposed to have two X chromosomes; against a boy having one X and one Y chromosome. Because of the missing X chromosome, such girls can't attain puberty and have a normal reproductive life."

That really kindled her interest in research. If at the school level children get opportunities to explore things, do their own tests in the lab and feel they are discovering something new, it triggers early interest, which can potentially result in a career in research.

That is probably missing in many of our schools. There is no opportunity for children to try things on their own and find things for themselves."

Research mentorship missing

Secondly, much later in her education, she really missed, in India, research mentorship. So during medical school and even in PG, "when you do your thesis, it wasn't particularly exciting. But when I went to the US for my Fellowship there, I had excellent research mentors and that's where I learnt most of my research. It is very important to have somebody who can guide you on what exact research question to ask, how to frame it and go about answering it."

Later of course she got a mentor in Dr Narayanan. Dr Soumya recalled that when she was working on a tuberculosis project at the TRC (Tuberculosis Research Centre) and would visit the very backward tribal village in the Javdhu hills, "I noticed that the mothers had a completely different concern. They'd ask why do you come and keep talking about TB all the time. Once a year somebody might have TB; we have so many other health problems, but you are not bothered. The whole team comes and talks about TB, you find that one patient and then leave. You're not helping us with our other health needs. If somebody has a fracture, we have to carry him for three days before we reach a primary health centre."

This set her thinking that "while we as researchers have our own ideas, that's not what the people really want, their priorities are different. And so, when you deal with public health it is important to find out what people actually need."

In the beginning you need to know what exact research question to ask, how to frame it and go about answering it. In the US, I had excellent research mentors, something that is lacking in India.

Her work in HIV/AIDS

Another important lesson she learnt was during her work in HIV/AIDS, when the first six cases were discovered by Dr Suniti Solomon in some sex workers from Mumbai. HIV infection carried a huge stigma and nobody would touch the infected, who were all sent to the TB Sanatorium at Tambaram, which later became the largest hospital in Asia for HIV/AIDS patients.

“Many people were thrown out of their homes, and faced stigma and even violence and had nowhere to go. The wards here were filled with AIDS patients dying of all sorts of complications. I then saw what is stigma and what it can do to families. How women got blamed when the husband died of AIDS and what happened to the children with HIV when the parents died.” Very few medical teams were prepared to take care of these patients, so “we started looking after them with some support from NGOs who donated drugs. Many of the children died, but some did survive and did well. I still meet some of those children who are in their 20s and who got educated.”

So in the case of HIV and AIDS it was not only about research, prevention and treatment but also dealing with the social aspect, the stigma and a lot of misconceptions on how HIV spread, and the rumours of the modes of transmission of the virus and how protection was necessary. But over the last 25 years, India had made huge progress on the health care front, she added.



Club member Radhika Satyanarayana greets Dr Soumya Swaminathan.

Lifestyle diseases

Other huge problems facing India were lifestyle diseases such as diabetes, and preventable diseases that were water-borne and could be contained through cleanliness, hygiene and safe drinking water. Diabetes, she said, is a huge concern in India. “We are either eating too much or eating the wrong kind of food; too much of carbohydrates, lots of salt and sugar, getting hidden and unnecessary calories. We have moved away from traditional foods like millets and are eating a lot of processed food, and exercise less. Diabetes is a huge epidemic leading to other

complications like stroke, kidney, cardio vascular and other complications, and the situation can be corrected only by preventive measures — changing lifestyle and reducing risk factors such as alcohol and tobacco.”

Another worrying statistic from India, said Dr Soumya, was the increasing rate of suicide, which was today the “the leading cause of death in the 15–29 age group in India. Why are young people killing themselves? They are not able to cope with depression and other pressures. And now there is the internet addiction and things like the Blue Whale Challenge!”

Malnutrition too was a big problem; 38 per cent of our children under five are stunted, with both their height and intellectual capacity affected, but in urban India obesity was growing and chronic diseases increasing. “So we live in two Indias — the poor can’t even afford a balanced meal and the rich have diseases like diabetes.”

Past president of the club M Srinivasan introduced Dr Soumya and Club President B S Purushotham presided over the meeting.

Unfortunately, bad news always makes it to the headlines; TV channels flash 3 or 7 died in dengue in 24 hours, but not 1,000 people dying of tuberculosis in the same period.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Let's help recreate Rotary!

Rekha Shetty

The greatest thing about Rotary is that every Rotarian has a chance to change its very Constitution. Any Rotarian can propose resolutions or enactments to the COL (Council on Legislation) which meets once in three years. The next meet is in 2019 at Chicago. The enactment has to be endorsed by all clubs in the district.

At the April 2016 COL, a new annual Council on Resolutions (COR) was approved. Here are the two Indian resolutions passed in the first edition of COR that met online in October-November 2017.

- To request the RI Board to consider revising the Rotaract club certification form – endorsed by D 3141
- To request the RI Board to consider publishing the annual presidential theme in Hindi – by D 3070

The COR is a separate governing body that will meet online every year. It will review resolutions sent by clubs and districts to the RI Board.

The proposed resolutions express opinions and make recommendations to the Board. They do not seek to amend RI Constitutional documents but other RI policies, procedures and programmes. If approved by the COR, proposed resolutions are referred to the RI Board for consideration.

The proposed enactments seek to change Rotary's constitutional documents — the RI Constitution, RI Bylaws and the Standard Rotary Club Constitution. If approved by the COL, the enactments become effective from July 1 of the following Rotary year. But they must be received by RI by December 31, 2017. So, the districts must pass them by November.

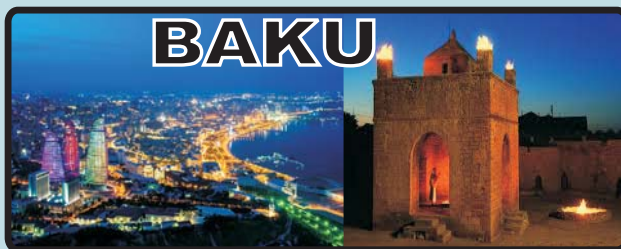
The proposed legislations must be submitted to Rotary through the online form: https://rotary.qualtrics.com/SE/?SID=SV_1zb6VhSSzgQXLLL.

Timeline for 2017–20 Council cycle:

- 2017–18 COR: November 15
- Enactment submission deadline: December 31, 2017
- Amendments to proposed enactments deadline: March 31, 2018
- Resolution submission deadline: June 30, 2018
- COL book published: September 2018

So, Rotarians energise your clubs before December 31 to create an evolutionary new Rotary!

The writer is a PDG and COL Representative of D 3232.



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Fun, food and charity... in aamchi Mumbai

Rasheeda Bhagat

The Rotary World Festival organised by District 3141 at Mumbai's Mahalaxmi Race Course was a fun charity event... packed with races, music and dance, stalls offering the most delicious Mumbai street food and of course drinks for thirsty tippers... all at a cost, of course, because the objective was fundraising for The Rotary Foundation.

Right at the onset, DG Prafull Sharma and spouse Vidyottama struck the gong to mark the packing of 10,000 free meals for underprivileged girls in certain areas of Mumbai. Jaishree Dave, a Rotarian from RC Bombay Nova, who was busy packing the grains in bags, along with 30-odd international student volunteers, said this was Rotary's contribution to reducing hunger in the world.

Dola Mohapatra, from RC Bombay Worli, who runs the NGO Rise Against Hunger India, said meal packaging events are at the heart of this NGO, which works on donations; the cost of feeding one person for a month is Rs 1,100. He said RC Bombay Worli, his club, and his NGO had partnered for three years. About 30 persons can pack a meal for over 10,000 people in two hours, he added.



“The meals packed today will go to undernourished children from Matunga, Mahim and Ghatkopar; they are children of ragpickers, vegetable vendors and others.”

DG Sharma said the Rotary World Festival, which had earlier been held for a couple of years, after which there was a break, “has now been given a makeover, and is totally different this year.” The main objectives were threefold — showcase Rotary to the world, fellowship and generate funds for TRF. At the Mahalaxmi Race Course, which had been totally taken over for the event that was akin to a mega gay, colourful and buzzing carnival, seven races were conducted, each sponsored by a Rotary club from his district. In all \$260,000 would be raised from the races. “This is over and above the money committed by the clubs.”

A lively music and dance performance put up by physically-challenged youth.



IPDGs Christine Buering, D 1950 (second from left) and Gopal Mandhanian (D 3141) at District 3141's Rotary World Fest. In the centre is R/Ann Malti Jain (Rotary Club of Bombay).

TRF goal of \$3 million

Sharma added that during his year as DG he has “set a goal of \$3 million for TRF; we have already given \$370,000, which have been deposited in the TRF account.” He is also making a big bet on CSR funding, and hopes to get the who’s who from Mumbai’s corporate world during the sit-down TRF

dinner planned in Mumbai on December 12, during RI President Ian Riseley’s visit. “During the same event, which will be an august gathering of some 150-odd people, we will recognise the AKS members from our district,” Sharma added.

He thanked PDG and TRF Trustee Designate Gulam

We have set a goal of \$3 million for TRF this year and have already given \$370,000, which have been deposited in the TRF account.

DG **Prafull Sharma**



Youngsters busy packing 10,000 meals.

Vahanvaty, who is the Chairman of the Board of Stewards and a member of the Managing Committee of the Royal Western Indian Turf Club, “for getting us this location, exclusively for our use, free of charge. Normally this venue would cost around Rs 20 lakh on a Sunday.”

Vahanvaty said there were two challenges in putting together the races for this event; “they wanted it in November, but that is also the month when the Mumbai race season begins. Also we had unseasonal rains which make the track unfit for holding the races.” However, the day proved to be

Mutton kheema toh khatam ho gaya, lekin seekh kabab mei se kheema gravywala bana dengey.

The person manning a food stall

a sunny one and the races were conducted without any hitch.

A special postal cover

The festival had a wide participation from both governmental and non-government agencies. The Postal Department had an impressive presence and a special cover to mark the Rotary World Festival was released in the presence of PRID Ashok Mahajan.

Sandeep Shah, Assistant Governor and chief coordinator of the festival, said a major project of the festival was raising money for girls’ education. “A single artist — Sohail Degani — is donating his



Rtn Kevin Colaco, Assistant Governor Sandeep Shah, TRF Trustee Designate Gulam Vahanvaty, PRID Ashok Mahajan, DG Prafull Sharma, along with other Rotarians, at the release of the special Postal Cover.



DG Prafull Sharma and spouse Vidyottama Sharma strike the gong to mark the beginning of the meal packaging programme.

three years' work, a total of 56 paintings, and the money raised from their sale, about Rs 17.5 lakh, would be utilised to educate girls." A desk calendar for 2018, carrying all these paintings, has also been brought out,

instead of a catalogue, which has a limited shelf life.

Kavita Godbole, President of RC Bombay Worli, the host club, said a lot of hard work had gone to ensure that this carnival, while being a fundraiser for TRF, also became a fun-filled family event.

DG Sharma said planning for this mega colourful event had begun a year ago and the attempt was to unleash the power of collaboration, and free stalls had been given to NGOs such as the Marrow Donor Registry, National Burns Centre, National Liver Foundation, Rise Against Hunger, Parkinson's Disease and Movement Disorder Society. One of the counters showcased ISKCON's midday meal scheme to explain to the Rotarians and non-Rotarians — about 2,000 people — how the organisation assures

both quality and taste of the food served to schoolchildren.

Music par excellence

The Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai was another participant and questions were answered and doubts cleared on the handling and segregation of waste.

A highlight of the evening entertainment, by which time the crowd had swelled, was the *Jazz Kathak* with saxophonist George Brooks, famous for combining jazz and Indian classical music, and jazz maestro Louis Banks, Sheetal Kolwalkar

(Kathak), Isheetta Chakravarty (vocalist) and drummer Gino Banks, which presented a special composition. This was followed by a performance by the Salim-Sulaiman duo, who cast a magic spell with *Allah hooo Allah hoo, Ishq wala love, Qurbaan hua* etc. The Manganiyar Brothers from Rajasthan — Raj Pandit and Vipul — enthralled the audience next.

For me, the most defining moment of the festival was the opportunity to walk around the food stalls, recall childhood and adolescent moments spent devouring



A major challenge was the unseasonal rain which makes the track unfit for holding the races. But luckily the day proved to be a sunny one.

TRF Trustee Designate
Gulam Vahanvaty



TRF Trustee Designate Gulam Vahanvaty addresses the audience. Also seen (from right) DG Prafull Sharma, spouse Vidyottama Sharma, Devika Shah, RC Bombay Worli President Kavita Godbole and Assistant Governor Sandeep Shah.

Mumbai's street food. But not before enjoying a few races, seated in the comfort of Vahanvaty's box at the Race Course. It was a great opportunity to rub shoulders with two celebrities — former Mumbai Police Chief Julio Ribeiro, who was advising a group of youngsters on how to bet and which horse/jockey to back, with small sums of course, and the other celebrity was the gutsy woman IPS officer from Karnataka

D Rupa, who was in the limelight recently.

Delectable food

After making a grand profit of Rs 20 from betting, at 2.45 p m, the stomach growled and I made my way to the stall I had eyed the entire afternoon — the *Tikka Mughlai* counter — which was offering *dum* biryani, mutton *seekh* kabab, brain masala, brain fry etc. As expected,

It was interesting to find former Mumbai Police Commissioner Julio Ribeiro advising a few youngsters on which horse/jockey to back, with small sums of course!

it was too late for the brain fry and brain masala; the dishes that simply fly off the counter in any eatery. So, I settled for mutton *seekh* kabab with *naan*. Predictably, it was delicious, being freshly prepared and with the right mix of spices. I next wanted to try mutton *kheema*, but alas, it was over.

But then came the never-say-die spirit of the Mumbaiker; “*Maam, seekh kabab mei se kheema gravywala bana dengey.*” (I’ll make *kheema* with gravy from the *seekh kabab*), offered the ‘chef’, and it was an offer that couldn’t be refused. With the happiness of a glutton I have returned to Chennai, mouth still watering from that delightful gourmet experience!

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat
Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



DG Prafull Sharma presenting the cup at one of the races.

Gulam Vahanvaty

nominated TRF Trustee

Team Rotary News

PDG Gulam Vahanvaty has been appointed Trustee of The Rotary Foundation for a term of four years (2018–22).

A management graduate from IIM Calcutta, Gulam Vahanvaty worked for a while at Tata Administrative Services, and later joined the family business of scrap processing and ship breaking. The TRF Trustee Designate is himself a beneficiary of a Rotary scholarship and exchange programme. In 1978 he

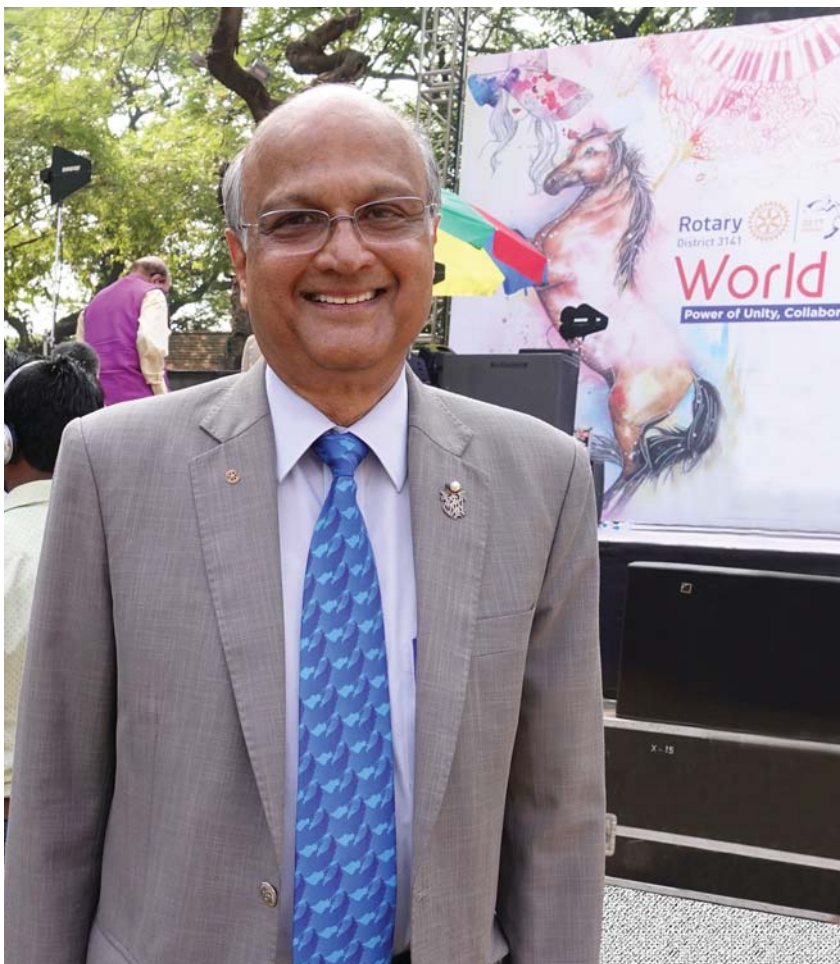
was selected as a member of TRF's Group Study Exchange programme and went to Indiana, US, which he describes as "a life changing experience" that made him want to join Rotary.

In 1979 he joined RC Bombay Downtown, and was unanimously nominated DG of D 3140 in 2002–03,

and oversaw a record contribution to TRF — \$654,000; the largest in Indian Rotary Districts till 2006–07. His tenure as DG was marked by transparency and integrity, the two qualities, said PRID Ashok Mahajan, when Vahanvaty was felicitated by his D 3141 during the Rotary World Festival in Mumbai in November, which were mainly instrumental in his being appointed TRF Trustee Designate.

Vahanvaty was appointed RRFC during 2004–07 for Zone 5, was later a member of RI President Nominee Kalyan Banerjee's "think-tank" and was in charge of his Secretariat in Mumbai during his tenure as RIPE and President. Earlier, he was appointed by TRF Trustees to be Assistant Advisor to D 3280 (Bangladesh) for five years (2007–12); has served as a member of TRF Stewardship Committee and was appointed RI Training Leader for the International Assembly in San Diego in 2007, 2008.

Observed PRID Mahajan at Vahanvaty's felicitation: "The million dollar question is how did Gulam get nominated as a TRF Trustee, because the selection of Trustees is very crucial and important. Well, the RI President Elect sees the involvement of the individual in TRF activities, knowledge of TRF, integrity and honesty. Seeing his performance, credibility and integrity, the President Elect put forth his name to the Board. This is a proud moment for D 3141 and our country as a whole." ■



TRF Trustee Designate Gulam Vahanvaty

Regional Editors

Rasheeda Bhagat

The biennial Asia Pacific Regional Editors' conference of the Rotary World Magazine Press was hosted this year by Thailand at Bangkok. Editors from the Philippines, Japan, Korea, Taiwan and India, and of course Thailand attended

the meet. Presided over by Donna Cotter, the Rotary International Coordinator for both Regional Editors and the Global Communications Committee, the seminar was a useful platform for the editors to share their experiences in bringing out the regional magazine in their countries.

Giving an update from RI, Donna said the communications committee of the RI was today very proactive and the editors just needed to place their requirements for any information from the RI side. Everybody acknowledged the promptness with which she responds to the queries or doubts



meet at Bangkok

from the regional magazines. Donna added that in 2010 it had been decided to hold the Rotary regional magazine editors conference once in two years to alternate with the World Magazine Press editors meet in Evanston.

One of the sessions debated the future of the print magazine in an era of increasing use of digital technology. Vanit Yotharvut, the Editor-in-Chief of the Thailand

magazine, which has a circulation of over 8,000 copies, and serves four RI districts in Thailand, Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar and is published once in two months, said the “situation in the marketplace is quite frightening and so many print magazines have simply disappeared in Thailand.”

But most of the editors felt that the print version of the regional magazine will hold its own in the

Asian region for some time, even as the digital version grows, and Donna said the way forward was to examine ways in which the editors could continue adding value to print while expanding their digital presence in a variety of ways.

The conference debated on the different ways in which the magazine could be made more interesting and relevant to Rotarians and their families by good content, eye



Above: Yoshio Shimizu, Chairman of the Japanese magazine, Rotary-no-Tomo, addresses the meet. Also seen: the magazine's Editor Kyoko Nozaki; **Left:** Participants at the Rotary Regional Editors Conference dressed up in traditional Thai costumes; **Below:** The famous bridge on the River Kwai.





Above: RI's Regional Magazine and Committee Coordinator Donna Cotter addressing the delegates in the presence of Vanit Yotharvut, Editor-in-chief, Rotary Thailand, Supong Chayutsahakij, Vice Chairman, Rotary Centre and PDG Somphop Thirasan.

catching designs and candid photographs. How to attract ads from luxury brands such as Rolex, Audi, etc was one of the subjects that figured at the discussions.

Subscription dues

Some of the regional editors, including your editor, expressed concern over the reluctance of the Rotary clubs in their region to subscribe to the magazine and pay their dues in time. The Philippines Rotary Magazine Editor-in-Chief Chit L Lijauco, shared her experience where, with help from the RI and Donna Cotter, her team had sent out suspension notices to 187 Rotary clubs in August 2017, giving them 120 days to pay up. The letters had a desired effect and 120 clubs did pay





Letting go of negativity by floating diyas in the River Kwai.



up their magazine dues, but the rest are yet to comply.

The editors also underlined the need to share interesting content from their region so that it has a wider coverage in the entire region.

Reader feedback and surveys were also discussed and the results of the online survey done by *Rotary News* (see November issue), were presented at this seminar, and the feedback was appreciated.

The venue of the seminar was the very impressive and plush Rotary Centre in the heart of Bangkok, just off the famous Sukhumvit Road in the Thai capital.

Great hosts

The Thailand magazine and Rotary Centre teams proved to be great hosts and for welcome dinner gave the regional editors a taste of the best of Chinese cuisine at the Sombon seafood restaurant, an iconic Chinese restaurant, which is a must-visit eatery for all Chinese tourists visiting Bangkok. The seafood here, as well as at Sanyod,

a signature Thai restaurant, where the dinner was organised the next evening, was delicious.

Also, the manner in which the outing to the Kanchanaburi district, where the famous bridge on the River Kwai, made into a Hollywood blockbuster, is located, during which we also visited a charming project for paediatric patients at the local hospital, was commendable. One of the Rotary clubs hosted a lunch for us on the banks of the River Kwai, where we had some great fun moments learning a traditional Thai dance, which one must admit, has a lot of influence from Indian classical dance styles.



RI's Regional Magazine and Committee Coordinator Donna Cotter at a paediatric hospital in Kanchanaburi district where Rotarians have donated play materials and facilities for children.



Donna Cotter learns from Vanit Yotharvut how to grate coconuts the traditional way.

The outing ended with an evening at the charming village of Mallika which transports visitors, most of whom change into traditional Thai costume, which is available on rent and as part of the tour package, to another era, and where you can shop only by converting your currency to the earlier era coins.

The evening ended perfectly with all of us being given a charming little basket of flowers and diyas to be floated into the waters of the River Kwai. It was an experience so reminiscent of the *aarti* time on the banks of the Ganga in Hardwar. As Danucha Bhumithaworn, Director of Rotary Centre, Thailand, who had



A traditional Thai dance



meticulously planned our trip, put it: “Along with the basket, you float away all the negative energy, influence or thoughts that might have crept into your system, and make way for positive energy, thoughts...”

What more can one ask for?

All in all, it was a learning experience, an opportunity to share our experiences and difficulties and find solutions, and a fun-packed trip where the pains taken to make everyone comfortable were amply evident.

Pictures by
Rasheeda Bhagat &
Courtesy: Rotary Centre,
Bangkok.

Designed by
N Krishnamurthy



Sewing hope

Kiran Zehra

What do the inmates of the Central Model Jail Kanda, Shimla, find in sewing a flower, stitching a button, fixing a loose hem or putting together patches for a quilt? "Calmness and hope," says Pramod, a 32-year-old convict serving a life sentence here. A tailor by profession, he now has a certificate of specialisation in

tailoring and design, all thanks to the Rotary Singer Sewing Centre that was inaugurated in June 2017 by Somesh Goel, Director General of Police - Prisons and Alpana Sarna, Deputy General Manager - HR, CSR and Advertising, Singer India.

Rotary's partnership with Singer India has been providing decent livelihood to many families across India, says Manu Aggarwal, past president of RC

Shimla, D 3080. "Initially, we wanted to start a vocational training centre at a home for destitutes in Shimla. But setting up one inside the prison seemed to be a better idea. It could help reform the inmates and ease their transition back into the community."

With 22 sewing machines (seven designer machines included) and a special training programme from Singer India, the Rotary-Singer Ek Nayi Pehchan Centre, housed inside



I used to slit throats... now
I am sewing flowers and
leaves with a needle.

Maan Bhadur, a trainee.





From L: DGP-Prisons Somesh Goel, IPP of RC Shimla Manu Aggarwal, Savita Goel, DGM - Singer India Alpana Sarna and the then Jail Superintendent SC Sharma at the tailoring unit.

the prison, has already scored a tie-up with the Himachal Khadi Yog and an independent designer. “We are already into production,” says Aggarwal.

The Jail Superintendent Sushil Thakur says that the vocation helps the inmates channel their aggression into positive energy. Currently, the scheme is training 35 prisoners each of whom earns about Rs 3,000 a month by “sewing clothes and embroidering cushions.” They work for 6–8 hours a day which helps

them “pass their time with ease and restores a sense of identity and dignity.” While most inmates joined the programme for the money, “the real reward of sewing is visible on their faces when they completed stitching their first kurta-pajama set. They were amazed by their own capabilities,” says Thakur.

Maan Bhadur, convicted for murder, has this to say: “To cut a long story short, I used to slit throats... now I am sewing flowers and leaves

with a needle.” Creating good embroidery that can sell requires concentration, patience and dedication; it cannot be rushed and pushed, he explains, adding, “I never thought that I would bend down to anything. But “embroidery *ne jhuka diya* and it is immensely satisfying.”

Ratan Chand, an ex-forest department official, facing a 7-year sentence for corruption, says, “When I step into the tailoring class, my mind steps out of the prison. Inside the cell, one can easily feel dejected and useless; but this class makes you very creative.” For Sham Lal (64), who is serving his final year, learning to stitch the pajama, kurta and other garments is definitely going to come handy. “*Sab purani baaton ko bhul kar master ji banna hai hamey aur silai ki dukan kholni hai* (I want to forget my past and start a tailoring shop),” he says.

“We are working with men whom you wouldn’t be able to imagine as tailors,” says Aggarwal, “but then they sit down and stitch only to find peace and we hope that they find it.” ■

*Sab purani baton ko bhul kar
master ji ban na hai hamey aur
silayi ki dukan kolni hai.*

Sham Lal serving his final
year in the prison.



106 Happy Schools

by a single club in one year

Rasheeda Bhagat



Happy children in a school made 'happy'
by Rotarians of RC Bangalore.

The Rotary Club of Bangalore, RI District 3190, has built/renovated a whopping number of 106 Government primary schools in the Rotary year 2016–17. The 100th school was inaugurated at Lakenahalli in Karnataka on June 27 by PRID Shekhar Mehta, with PRID Panduranga Setty and PDG Ravi Vadlamani participating in the event. By June 30, the number of schools built by this club had gone up to 106!

Immediate past president of the club, which has 255 members and was started in 1934, Ranga Rao says that in its 83-year-history, the club has constructed 40 rural primary schools, established the Rotary Bangalore Vidyalaya, Rotary TTK Blood Bank, a dialysis centre, a hospital in Channasandra in Bengaluru, where free treatment is given, toilet blocks, given solar-based energy solutions to villages and many more socially relevant projects.

The 100-school challenge started when in the 100th year of The Rotary Foundation, the club wanted to engage its members in an impactful project in the field of education and literacy, as education is a fundamental human right, along with food, shelter and water. “A major reason for such high levels of illiteracy in India is the low priority given to both adult literacy and primary education and lack or inadequate infrastructure for schoolchildren,” he says.

With this background, the incoming 2016–17 board of the club was convinced that literacy was the way forward, and during the TRF Centennial it would do something unique under the TEACH programme. “At the installation meet on July 3, PDG Ravi Vadlamani encouraged us to ‘Dare to Dream’ and implored that we accept the

PDG Ravi Vadlamani said we should build 100 schools during that Rotary year. The entire audience was spellbound and we accepted the challenge while still in a daze.

RC Bangalore IPP Ranga Rao

challenge to build 100 schools during that Rotary year. The entire audience was spellbound and you can say we accepted the challenge while still in a daze,” says Rao.

Rao says he went home still dazed and recalls, “That night is tough for me to forget... was the challenge we had set ourselves realisable, or was it just a pipe dream, I kept asking myself. And finally, I carried that dream into my sleep. I credit PDG Ravi for making an appeal that went directly to our hearts. I found out later that many of our members did not sleep well that night, thinking all the

time how to turn this dream into a reality,” he adds.

The challenges ahead were aplenty. The first one began with the thought process in his own head. “I was really wondering if we could do such a huge project.” One evening, seated with a drink in hand, he was sharing with a friend over the phone the idea of this mega project and the challenges in executing it. After a while, he found his wife Kanchana entering the room with a cheque for Rs 3 lakh in her hand. She quietly said: “This is for your school project. And I said I don’t even know whether we will be able to do it and she said I know you will do it. Take this money as the first contribution,” recalls Rao.

Interestingly, and significantly, his wife Kanchana is a trained Montessori teacher, and would surely understand the importance a happy learning place makes to the children in their studies.

The Rotarian knew he had to build just not ordinary schools, but



While we have not approached anyone for funds for this project, recently when some club members went to the UK and US and spoke about this project, two or three districts there want to associate with this project.

PRID **Panduranga Setty**

Happy Schools, with all the elements that go into the definition of one: Neatly and cheerfully painted and well-maintained school buildings made secure with boundary walls, adequate and functional separate toilets for boys and girls so that girls have the much-required privacy; handwashing stations, clean and

adequate drinking water for both students and teachers; a well-equipped library, play material; games and sports equipment; benches and desks for students; well-maintained space for the teaching staff; and books, school bags and shoes for the students.

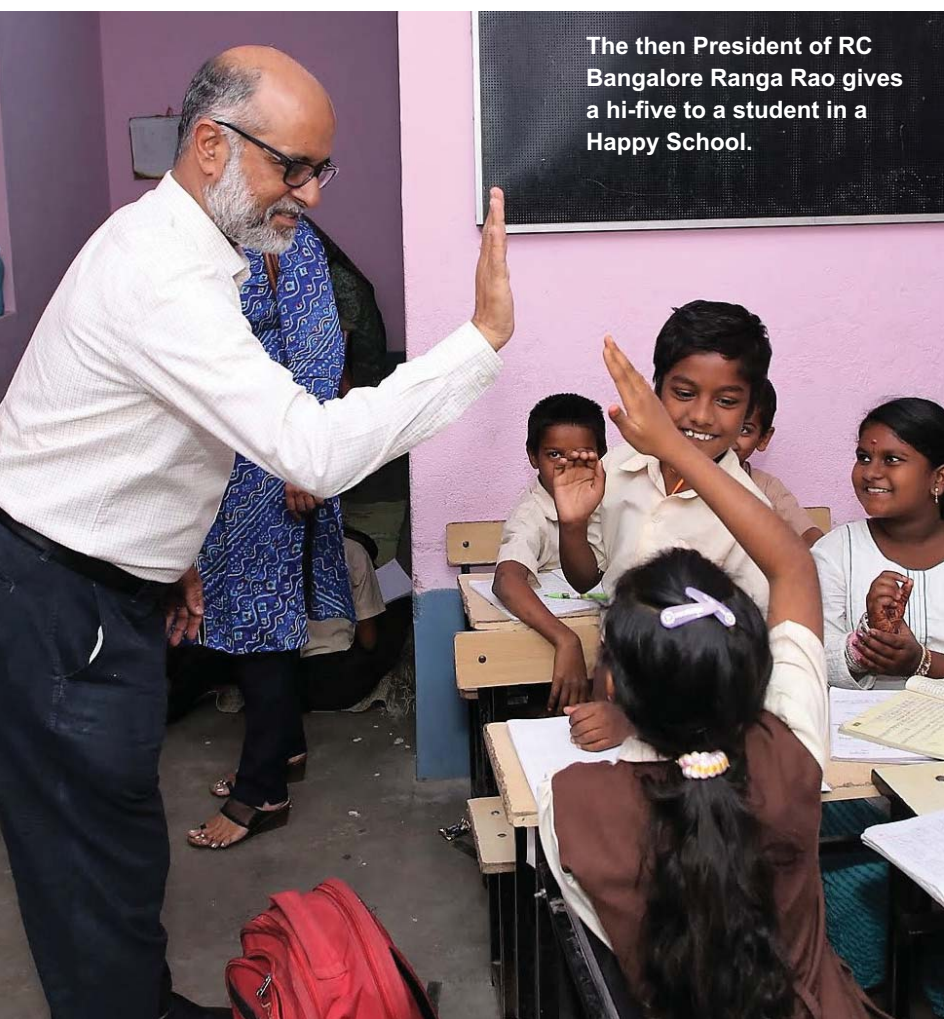
To his own surprise and amazement, the ground reality at the club level was enthusiasm and hectic activity for this project. Meetings followed in quick succession; garnering of logistics support, sourcing material at huge discounts, formation of five teams of contractors and putting together an Action Group of 12 members headed by PRID Panduranga Setty, with Rtn Arjun Menda, two past

presidents and others, followed. “The rush of spontaneity that the club witnessed was something to be seen and savoured. Members felt the need to contribute and reach out, many who had tasted the success of the PolioPlus programme were convinced we could do it and others wanted to be a part of history in creating the ‘HAPPY 100’.”

The next challenge was to identify the schools. Karnataka has 50,632 government primary schools; “we wanted to take up only government schools, because they badly need good facilities. But the question was which 100 schools and how to find them.” So, the team got in touch with the Sarva Siksha Abhiyan of the Karnataka government, and narrowed down the list to 584 schools. “But the problem was that they were located at a distance of 40–80 km from Bengaluru. Though extremely difficult, we visited each and every one of those schools and identified the 100 schools, where the project cost would not exceed Rs 3 to 4 lakh, the amount we had fixed for each school,” he adds.

But in hindsight this was the easier part; the next huge challenge was getting accommodation for the workers — maistries, carpenters, plumbers, electricians, etc — as “many of these schools were in far-flung villages where there are no facilities to stay. So the workers had to stay/sleep either in the verandahs or the classrooms and even face the danger of being bitten by snakes.”

Some of the schools were in such a pathetic condition that “plants and weeds were growing out of



The then President of RC Bangalore Ranga Rao gives a hi-five to a student in a Happy School.

windows, the walls were filled with fungus and there was either no water or it was highly contaminated. So first of all, we had to organise safe drinking water for the workers!”

The next challenge was to organise the transport of building material to these schools and carry out the construction while the classes were on. “We had the luxury of working only in a few schools where there were holidays; in most of the schools, the classes were on and we had to carry on the work without disturbing the children, and ensuring their safety as construction materials were moved around,” says Rao.

Here the Chairman of the Happy Schools Project Committee, Rtn Manjunath, played a big role. Being himself in the construction business, he managed the procurement of construction material at a discounted rate, found the workers, another challenge, and solved problems as and when they cropped up. “We got great cooperation from the education department of the State Government. It was estimated that on an average, each school would cost around Rs 350,000, with discounted material and services. The project was formally announced at a club

This is a TEACH programme at its best; for a single club to do more than 100 Happy Schools in a year, and then continue it for the second year, is an example of what we can achieve if we put our heads together.



meeting on September 19, 2016 and the first school that was taken up for conversion to the ‘Happy School’ category was at Haroketanahalli and was inaugurated in the presence of Vadlamani in November 2016, says Manjunath.

Coming to the Herculean task of raising funds — an estimated Rs 350 lakh was required — it took the project team 270 days to raise this amount required for the 100 schools and 210 days to convert the modest-to-crumbling buildings into ‘happy schools’ with all the facilities on the checklist.

A golf course held to raise funds got them a kitty of Rs 36 lakh, a *Kala for Vidya* show in which many prominent artists from Bengaluru such as Jatin Das, S G Vasudev and Gurudas Shenoy gave their works at half the cost, helped the team raise another Rs 9 lakh.

But it was mainly Rotarians, says PRID Panduranga Setty, a member of the club and Chairman of the Project Committee, who donated sums ranging from Rs 1 to 12 lakh for the project, “with some people giving even Rs 30 to 40 lakh”. His own educational trust Rashtreeya Shikshana Samiti Trust donated Rs 25 lakh for this project.

“What is unique about this project is that the year has ended but the project continues and this Rotary year too, our club has taken on the challenge of converting another 100 government primary schools into ‘happy schools’,” he adds.

Adds Rao, “We have planned to train 500 teachers from the 106 schools already completed, in partnership with the Azim Premji Foundation, and will continue other value-add activities in these schools.”

PRID Mehta, Chairman of the Rotary India Literacy Mission, who inaugurated the 100th school, says, “This is a TEACH programme at its



best; for a single club to do more than 100 Happy Schools in a year, and then continue it for the second year — the next two club presidents are also equally committed to this Happy Schools project — benefitting some 16,000 children in 300 villages is an example of

what we can achieve if we put our heads together.”

Complimenting the members and presidents of the club, “PRID Pandu and all the donors, and of course the Chair of the Happy Schools National Committee Ravi Vadlamani, for mooted the idea and encouraging the club to

carry out the project”, Mehta added: “This fills my heart with the greatest joy and optimism on what more Indian Rotarians can do towards making India literate and creating a happy environment for children to learn.”

PRID Setty added, “While we have not

approached anyone for funds for this project, recently when some club members went to the UK and US and spoke about this project, two or three districts in the two countries want to associate with this project, though we have not sought financial support from anybody.”

Adds Rao, “We now want to convert all these 100 schools which teach in Kannada, Urdu, Tamil and Telugu languages, into model schools in three years. This gigantic task of planning, logistics, fund raising and execution that impacted 106 schools in 300 villages, benefitting 50,000 people, which involved 9,500 man-hours, has given us the confidence that we can continue this project to benefit the children of Karnataka.”

Designed by
Krishnapratheesh



F R Singhvi, MD of Sansera Engineering and a generous donor (left), and Ranga Rao along with the children in a renovated school.

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District Wise TRF Contributions as on October 2017

(in US Dollars)

District Number	APF	PolioPlus	Other Restricted	Endowment Fund	Total Contributions
India					
2981	14,172	882	0	0	15,054
2982	15,319	70	2,725	0	18,113
3000	6,217	3,738	33,195	0	43,150
3011	39,925	284	39,598	0	79,807
3012	47,068	1,578	0	3,016	51,661
3020	11,227	934	19,950	17,378	49,489
3030	203	22,724	1,050	0	23,977
3040	418	0	10,435	0	10,853
3053	1,158	0	5,250	0	6,408
3054	70,042	102	73,000	0	143,144
3060	20,028	486	206	11,000	31,720
3070	12,518	148	16,617	89	29,372
3080	8,821	3,845	10,500	0	23,166
3090	508	0	0	0	508
3100*	3,575	0	0	345	3,919
3110	22,554	2,245	50,132	0	74,931
3120	13,514	508	0	0	14,022
3131	57,758	4,400	126,479	48,094	227,930
3132	23,177	660	0	0	23,836
3141	209,430	5,971	105,323	4,000	324,723
3142	139,215	336	0	1,000	138,551
3150	21,049	3,093	9,126	0	33,268
3160	31,317	0	0	0	31,317
3170	17,980	6,788	3,007	0	27,775
3181	18,362	250	0	78	18,690
3182	11,217	0	20,843	0	32,060
3190	803	300	6,095	16	7,214
3201	37,103	1,959	71,700	0	110,762
3202	3,694	556	0	0	4,249
3211	21,754	0	0	10,000	11,754
3212	164,330	1,748	0	0	166,078
3231	20,131	0	61,250	16,000	97,381
3232	35,801	10,234	23,664	0	69,699
3240	12,643	225	0	555	13,422
3250	16,339	0	0	0	16,339
3261	22,760	100	0	0	22,860
3262	924	100	0	0	1,024
3291	22,034	24,973	21,325	0	68,333
India Total	1,175,085	90,433	711,470	89,570	2,066,558
3220 Sri Lanka	19,703	10,092	0	1,217	31,012
3271 Pakistan	2,000	23,006	0	0	25,006
3272 Pakistan	329	885	0	1,000	444
3281 Bangladesh	148,552	2,535	28,353	25,025	204,465
3282 Bangladesh	26,626	1,151	0	0	27,777
3292 Nepal	18,770	105	91,271	0	110,146
South Asia Total	1,391,064	126,437	831,094	116,812	2,465,408
World Total	29,230,389	11,149,651	4,240,777	6,903,249	51,524,066

* non-districted

Source: RI South Asia Office

IPDG K Vijayakumar (centre), IPP G Vasu, PDG T A Nellainayakgam and DGN S Sheik Saleem with students and staff of the Ramaseshier School after inaugurating the toilet block.



75 years of doing good

Jaishree

Rotary Club of Tinnevely, D 3212, turns 75 this year; their platinum journey has brought significant transformations in the community through construction of toilets and furniture given to schools, water storage tanks for nearby hamlets, an *anganwadi*, bus shelters across the city

and health camps. This, besides giving three governors to the district!

The Rotarians revved up the milestone celebration last year by constructing toilet blocks and hand wash stations for the students of the Ramaseshier School in Pattamadai near Tirunelveli. “The school is 125 years old, but within its hallowed

campus, the toilets were found in a pathetic state. We unanimously decided then that this will be our platinum jubilee venture,” says Satheesh Kumar, the club’s TRF Grants Chair. The school strength is 750 with 500 boys and 250 girls. While the boys rushed to the nearby fields to attend nature’s call, the girls used the lone toilet

in the school. It had no water facility, was badly maintained and “a nightmare, especially for the adolescent girls.”

But today this heritage school can boast of a modern washroom facility, all thanks to the club’s ‘comprehensive health management project’ that included toilet blocks and handwash stations for girls

and boys, an incinerator for girls to dispose of their sanitary napkins, and borewell and pumpset for water. A lot of thought went into constructing the washrooms; both Indian and Western closets, complete with health faucets, were installed and floors laid with anti-skid tiles.

K Vijayalakshmi, an eighth grader, cannot yet suppress her awe whenever she visits the washroom or uses the incinerator. So do most of the children. The teachers now face a challenge of keeping the children in class. “They want to visit the restroom even during class hours,” says one teacher. As for the objective of making them ‘agents of change’, some of the students are now insisting their parents construct a toilet at home! Vijayalakshmi, for instance, wants a toilet

built in her home “before my next birthday”.

The club has arranged specialised training in wash habits and hygiene for the students and teachers through the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Institute in Kodaikanal. “Since most of the children were not familiar with the western toilet, it is important we train them on its usage,” says Satheesh Kumar.

The project cost \$33,000, which was met through a global grant with Rotary Clubs of La Crosse Valley View and La Crosse Downtown of the US, D 6250, and TRF, and an initial seedfunding from the DDF. “Earlier I struggled to understand the process of applying for a grant, but when I went through the Rotary website, it was a cake walk. It is so easy that anyone with a bare knowledge of

Since most of the children were not familiar with the western toilet, it is important we train them on its usage.

Satheesh Kumar

TRF Grants Chair 2016–17, RC Tinnevely

computers can successfully implement a project,” says the Grants Chair.

The completed set up was inaugurated by the then DG K Vijayakumar and handed over to the School Management Committee which promised proper maintenance.

The club is now planning to provide toilet facilities to 40 houses in an adjacent hamlet. “Most of them are farm labourers. Open defecation is rampant there. The entire area stinks. We will provide them a solution

soon... with help from the same overseas partners,” says Satheesh Kumar.

The project estimate is \$60,000. Back in the US, Rotarians Sandra and Roger Legrand from the partner club have already begun their fundraiser, having hosted a Diwali Nite.

Celebrating Platinum Jubilee

To commemorate the landmark journey, the club recently organised a grand event which was attended by PRIP K R Ravindran and spouse Vanathy. Asking them to scale new heights and uphold Rotary’s rich tradition, he impressed upon the Rotarians to carry out selfless service to uplift the downtrodden. Such projects were bound to improve Rotary’s public image and attract new members.

Ravindran lauded the club’s humanitarian projects and inaugurated prototype of a clock tower that the club will install at the bus stand. Club President P Chockalingam listed out the platinum jubilee projects that included a cancer clinic and an old age home. ■



DG Chinnadurai Abdullah (second from right) and Club President P Chockalingam cut the anniversary cake in the presence of PRIP K R Ravindran and his spouse Vanathy.



The printed landscape

Sandhya Rao

The sharp, icy fingers of a howling wind snatched the sheet of paper from my hand. I screamed but no sound escaped my lips. The last page of the last book on earth was gone, disappearing into the fathomless darkness of a black hole, and I stood rooted to the ground gazing at my past, my present, my future, now echoing with emptiness. All around lay scattered — nothing, not one scrap of paper, not one book on my shelves, my desk bereft of tomes piled one on top of the other, my life a lashing sea of stories lost forever...

This is every reader's nightmare: a world without books. If I have to say this differently, I'm grateful every day to live in an age of books of every colour, taste and texture. For the briefest moment it was feared that technology would overturn the secure world of printed books. Thankfully that threat disappeared as swiftly as it appeared, without sound or fury or madness.

Books rank among the most significant inventions in the world.

Indeed, both live happily together. Kindle or Apps on the phone are fine especially on journeys when you must travel light, but the paperback in the hand, your finger turning the pages and occasionally a bookmark to remember the place where you left off — that usually always wins. Few can resist the touch and feel of books. Fewer still can remain indifferent to their smell: the toasty crispiness of new books, the mellow yellow of old; books that live and show signs of age, and become ever more beloved.

Johannes Gutenberg invented the printing press with moveable type in 1450 in Europe. This set off a book revolution that reverberated around the world. The first major book to be printed was the *Bible*, in Latin, popularly known as the *Gutenberg Bible*. However, as far back as 594, the Chinese, Japanese and Koreans were already familiar with print technology. In fact, paper was invented in China around 100 BC, and the first paper-making industry is believed to have been started in 105 AD when the Han dynasty ruled in China.

Books are babies of this collective consciousness, born after knowledge and expertise from East and West met and married.

The first printed book to be born in India is said to be *Tampiran Vanakkam*, back in October 1578. It is a 16-page translation into Tamil of the Portuguese book, *Doctrina Christam*, by Francis Xavier. At the time this book was printed in India, powerful rulers of empires in Vijayanagar, Mysore, Madurai and Thanjavur were all still using copper plates and stones to disseminate information. Meanwhile the Mughal empire was consolidating itself. The Mughals knew all about books because foreigners visiting their courts often brought them along. They were not particularly interested in them, though; they were more into calligraphy. But they engaged with history and therefore every court had scribes who kept track of the emperor's life and times. That's how manuscripts such as the *Akbarnama* came to be. It is a record of Akbar's rule meticulously documented by Abul Fazl. The *Baburnama*, a memoir of Akbar's grandfather, Babur, the first Mughal ruler in India, is autobiographical. Akbar's grandfather, unlike the grandson, was educated.

Despite the printing press, however, manuscripts continued to be handwritten: mechanical typewriters became available only in 1874.

Then came electric typewriters and electronic typewriters, and today we have devices that have almost completely ended the relationship between pen/pencil and paper. Only QWERTY prevailed, then and now. Everybody knows this ‘character’: it’s the system of arrangement of letters and numerals on a typewriter. The word ‘QWERTY’ is formed by the first five letters in the row of letters just below the numerals on any keyboard, like the one on your mobile phone.

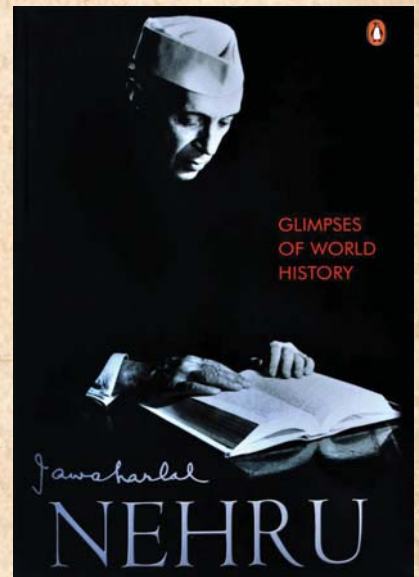
But even after the typewriter was well entrenched in society — with the Shakespeares and Tagores and others of the world scratching and rewriting their way to fame and name with inky fingers — people still wrote by hand. When I was about 11 or 12, I chanced upon a black hardbound book called *Glimpses of World History*. It had about a thousand pages, and was printed elegantly in small type on thin paper. The flyleaf bore an inscription that revealed that it had been gifted to my father on the occasion of his marriage on May 5, 1954. I turned the pages to the first chapter: ‘A Birthday Letter’. It said it was for ‘Indira Priyadarshini on her thirteenth birthday’, and was dated October 26, 1930, Central Prison Naini. I started reading: “On your birthday you have been in the habit of receiving presents and good wishes. Good wishes you will still have in full measure, but what present can I send you from Naini Prison? My presents cannot

be very material or solid. They can only be of the air and of the mind and spirit, such as a good fairy might have bestowed on you — things that even the high walls of prison cannot stop.” I was hooked.

Described as a “rambling account of history for young people”, this book is a compilation of letters from Jawaharlal Nehru, our first Prime Minister, to his daughter, Indira. It was first published in 1934. The copy we had on our bookshelf was the fourth edition, published in 1948. It became a sort of ‘go-to’ for me. Any homework, any assignment, any time was good enough reason to randomly open the book and read whatever appeared on the pages. That’s what I’m doing at this very moment. I have flipped the book open: to pages 70–71. My eye goes to the shortest paragraph. Here’s what it says: “During the Han period two other important events are worthy of note. The art of printing from wooden blocks was invented, but it was not much used for nearly 1,000 years. Even so China was 500 years ahead of Europe.” What is this? Coincidence? Prescience? History?

I continue reading: “The second noteworthy fact was the introduction of the examination system for public officials. Boys and girls do not love examinations and I sympathise with them. But this Chinese system of appointing public officials was a remarkable thing in those days. In other countries, till recently, officials were appointed by favouritism chiefly, or out of a special class or caste. In China, any one passing the examination could be appointed. This was not an ideal system, as a person may pass an examination in the Confucian classics and yet may not be a very good public official...” Examinations — a subject the continues to vex our society!

Picture the scene: imprisoned for long periods of time



even as the nation seethes and burns for freedom and the people look to you for light and direction. In that ambience, with only limited access to sources of information, you write about the world with such perspective. The details are engrossing, the writing felicitous. No, it’s not a definitive history of the world; Nehru confesses as much in the preface that there are errors and many things he probably should have rewritten or crosschecked. But as you travel with him from Carthage to France to Japan to Turkey to Russia to Germany to Arabia, you get a real sense of time and events. In a strange way, it’s comforting to understand that you too are a part of this teeming hive of activity we call earth; you belong. All this, just from letters to his teenage daughter.

And, if you are worrying about why the letter is dated October 26 when we know Indira Gandhi’s birthday is November 19, a footnote explains that in 1930 her birthday was observed on October 26, according to the Samvat era. Yes, there’s an explanation for almost everything — in books!

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist.

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S



The Gutenberg Bible

With Love

From Kanpur to Amritsar

Neeta Mehrotra and Priyanki Garg

An all-women group comprising Anns, Annets from the Rotary Club of Kanpur Greater (RCKG), D 3110, set off on an excursion to the Golden City of Amritsar, which we fondly call Ambarsar. The itinerary was a

package of spirituality (Golden Temple), history (Gobindgarh Fort and Jallianwala Bagh), patriotism (Wagah border), fellowship (conclave with Rotary Club of Amritsar), gastronomy (delicacies) and shopping (from spices to *phulkaris* to *jootis*).

Under the leadership of Ann Wing Director Ritu Tandon and

seasoned 'trip advisor' Ritu Bhargava, we took off westwards. Although the trip was just a 4-day-3-night affair, the number of events in the jam-packed schedule made all of us wake up early and retire late at night.

Clad in multi-coloured polka attire that caught attention everywhere, we took a flight from



Lucknow and made our way to Amritsar via Delhi. After the check-in at The Grand Hyatt and a quick lunch we were excited and all eager to visit the main attraction — the Golden Temple.

The Golden Temple is an epitome of spirituality and beauty; having been brought up in the religious city of Kashi, I (Priyanki) felt immediately connected. The ambience gave me positive vibes and I stood transfixed. The ardent devotees, the dedicated guards, the *gyaniji* taking care of the *Guru Granth Sahib* — all of them had an unconditional *sewabhaav*. The most striking observation was the cleanliness in the entire complex despite the footfalls of thousands of devotees who throng to this magic temple day after day.

Back home, as I opened the *namkeen* tuck boxes we got as souvenirs, memories came flashing — the incessant clicking of photos, the joy of being together, the laughter and the pranks!

Queuing up for the darshan, taking the *parikrama*, eating at the *langar*, witnessing the *shayanpalki* ceremony and doing the *Kar Seva* in the sprawling kitchen, we went through it all. Many of us did more than one trip to the temple. With each visit, we saw a different aspect of the temple, during the day it glittered in the sunlight and in the evening the temple lent radiance to the periphery — magical, majestic and magnetic!

The Indo-Pak Attari-Wagah Joint Check Post (JCP) was our next destination. Thanks to our President Anup Mehrotra, who had made the arrangements, we got special seating in the VIP enclosure, to witness the Beating the Retreat ceremony — the simultaneous lowering of the national flags of both India and Pakistan. It began with a commentary, in legendary actor Amitabh Bachchan's voice, on the feats of the BSF. There was a patriotic

**The Golden Temple,
Amritsar.**



fervour in the air as the BSF personnel and the Pakistani Rangers performed the march amidst the sounds of the bugle. And finally, when the national flags of both the countries were simultaneously lowered against the golden backdrop of the setting sun, the daily ceremony was over. And the crowd dispersed. Thanks to the special arrangement, we were allowed to visit the very last permissible point of the border and we were also invited for high tea by the Indian Army. The historic RCKG highlight was when we, Anns, left our mark there by jogging in the retreat area with gusto and pride.

Next on our itinerary was the Gobindgarh Fort built in 1760 by



The Ann Wing in front of the Golden Temple.



Left: Ann Suman Agarwal performing the Kar Seva.

Maharaja Ranjit Singh. A lesser known destination among tourists, but a must visit place. It is a unique museum, a repository of the Punjab's history, opened to public viewing only since February 2017. The State government has taken this heritage monument as a pilot project and provided exclusive tourist attractions. A 7-D film showcases the beautiful architecture of the fort, replica of the unmatched Kohinoor diamond, realistic wax statues of Sikh warriors, a laser show in the evening, *gatka*-style (sword and shield) performances of the fearless sword-fighting warriors and the graceful folk dance *Giddha*. Punjabi culture comes alive at the Gobindgarh Fort. And if this was not enough, work is still in progress for its expansion.



Right: Annets Surabhi and Tanvi Tandon.

A mention of Amritsar is incomplete without speaking about the carnage at the Jallianwala Bagh. The place still evokes a feeling of horror as we remember the massacre of hundreds of helpless and innocent people on the command of General Dyer on April 13, 1919.

The real essence of belonging to RC Kanpur Greater was felt when we were invited by the Rotary Club of Amritsar, D 3070. Established before Independence, it is one of India's oldest Rotary clubs. Our team was welcomed lovingly by the simple and humble group of Rotarians and Anns with evening tea and snacks. The clubs exchanged flags and also shared their areas of service to humanity. RC Amritsar works for the welfare



of cancer and leprosy patients and also runs a small unit teaching sewing to the local women.

How can any trip, that too for an all-women's group, be complete, without shopping? Flouting all norms of extra baggage on the flight back home, we shopped bags full of exclusive *phulkari*, exquisite *pashmina* straight from the weavers' units and of course, Amritsari *jootis*.

And last but not the least, the lip-smacking, finger-licking local cuisine from the land of *kulchas*, which we had at the iconic Kesar Da Dhaba. The taste of their *kulchas*,



Above: At the paan shop.



Ann Nita Parikh marching with the National Flag at the Attari-Wagah Border.

chhole bhaturas and the pure *lassi* in Patiala glasses still lingers.

Our giggly gaiety was at its height when we had *chaat batashas* from a roadside *thela* at 10.30 pm and special *paans* from the Chaurasia Pan Shop.

By day four, like Alice out of Wonderland, we boarded our flight back home, to return to the real world from a dream tour.

Back home, as I opened the *namkeen* tuck boxes we got as souvenirs and dug into the delicacies, memories came flashing back — the incessant clicking of photos, the joy of being together, the laughter and the pranks! And then the picture of the sacred Golden Temple, came floating before my eyes... so peaceful and tranquil...

The Amritsari wand had spun magic on us. We are now complete *Ambarsariyas*.

Neeta Mehrotra is spouse of RCKG President Anup Mehrotra and Priyanka Garg is spouse of Rtn Prashant Garg.

*Pictures by Neeta Mehrotra
Designed by Krishnapratheesh S*



A road safety project

Team Rotary News



Deputy Commissioner of Police D Shanmuga Priya interacts with a road user on safety rules.

Rotary Club of Chennai Bharati, D 3232, always known for its uniqueness, once again exhibited its spirit to serve the community, collaborating with 12 other clubs in Chennai, to carry out a road safety project. Chennai Traffic Police teamed up with Rotary in this mega public image exercise to raise awareness on road safety.

The other clubs which participated with RC Chennai Bharati were Rotary Clubs of Chennai Galaxy, Chennai Sunrise, Madras North, Adyar, Madras Silver Beach, Madras Golden City, Madras Industrial City, Chennai Coastal, Chennai Gemini, Madras Besant Nagar, MCC and Chennai Chola. Members from these clubs took up positions at 11 points across North Chennai which

is notorious for its traffic congestion and chaos.

This joint effort on road safety got tremendous support from the dynamic woman police officer, DCP D Shanmuga Priya, who readily accepted this proposal at the very first meeting and offered the police department's cooperation on the roads at all points.

Knowing the power of the student community, the organisers had trained volunteers from the Road Safety Patrol (RSP) and 25 RSP volunteers were posted at each of the designated points, along with police officers and wardens.

Generous contributions from Rotarians and elaborate planning by RC Chennai Bharati President Suguna Devi Muthuvel, Secretary Shruti Nair Reddy, Club Service Director Nishrin

Madraswala, Public Image Director Jayashree Kidambi, along with the "Trendsetting" Presidents Anshul Agarwal (Chennai Galaxy), Metilda Vijaykumar (Sunrise), Anita David (North), Boopathy (Adyar), Ethiraj (Silver Beach), Ravi Chakravarthy (Chennai Gemini), Arokiaraj (Golden City), Balaji (Industrial City), Anand (Coastal), Aroonkumar (Besant Nagar), Latha (MCC), Babu (Chola) and District Chairman Ranjith, helped in the smooth progress of the project.

Later a meeting was held at the auditorium of St Mary's High School where D 3232 DG R Srinivasan, students and staff of RSP participated. Seven traffic policemen, identified by DCP North, as well as the DCP herself, and one student chosen from every point, were honoured. ■



Perfecting vision beyond borders

Kiran Zehra

Indian Rotarians provide eye care for children and adults in the Gambia.

When the Gambian Health Ministry requested ophthalmologists Dr M V Ravikumar and Dr K V Ravishankar of RI District 3190 to plan an eye camp in the Gambia, they grabbed the opportunity.

This was because in a country with two million people, one percent suffer from eye-related problems, but there are only three ophthalmologists. So

there is a huge backlog of patients — mainly children — waiting for surgical intervention, says Dr Ravikumar, who spearheads the Avoidable Blindness project in the District since 2002.

Dr Ravishankar had visited the Gambia twice earlier on invitation from the Government to perform paediatric eye surgery. He has also volunteered in ten VTT programmes and was onboard the Mercy Ships to Africa

in 2013 as part of the then D 3140's VTT to Guinea. Both the ophthalmologists have been working together since 2001. "That was when Frank J Devlyn was RI President (2000–2001) and TRF would directly fund the project," recalls Dr Ravikumar. His club raised \$1,000 which was matched by TRF. "We performed 100 cataract surgeries then and that's when I first met Ravishankar," he adds.



From R: Dr K V Ravishankar, Dr M V Ravikumar, Dr Arnab Biswas, Abhijit Ramprasad and Dr Vasantha Kumar with Anaesthesia Assistant Mbin and Ophthalmologist Dr Oke of Sheik Zayed hospital in Banjul, the Gambia.

Following the Gambian government's request, the two Rotarians established connections with the Rotary Clubs of Banjul, Fajira and Brusibi, D 9101, to organise an eye camp in Banjul, capital of the Gambian Republic. Forty-two patients, of which 35 were children, were surgically treated for various eye-related issues during the six-day camp in September at the Sheik Zayed Regional Eye Care Centre.

"There are skilled paramedics and technicians but no anaesthetists. Since general anaesthesia is given to every patient for surgery, it leaves us surgeons worried if the patient has been given the right amount," says Ravishankar, the Mission leader. When he put together his team for this camp he ensured inclusion of Dr Vasantha Kumar, an anaesthetist from Mysore, "to guarantee anxiety-free surgery." Other members of the team were ophthalmologists Pradip



Ophthalmologists M V Ravikumar (standing third from left) and KV Ravishankar (seated) with the Gambian children.



Mohanty and Arnab Biswas from Kolkata. Abhijit Ramprasad, a second-year medical student from the University of Chicago, joined the four-member team to provide logistics support. "Abhijit travelled at his own expenses to Gambia," he adds.

The project cost \$14,000 including travel, equipment and other medical supplies. Rotary Clubs of Esposende from Portugal, Guildford from the UK and Statsville from the US, three clubs from D 3190 — E Club of Bangalore, Bangalore East and Koramangala, and the Combat Blindness International of USA, a foundation affiliated to the International Association for Prevention of Blindness, pitched in with their support for the project.

The local Rotarians organised media coverage of the camp which was aired on the Gambian radio and television channels. "Children were our focus and 35 of them were operated for rheumatic cataract, cornea issues and squint eyes," says Dr Ravikumar. He interacted with the host club members, including DGE Aki Allen of RC

When the camp drew to a close, there were 100 children awaiting their turn. This sight still flashes in my mind.

Dr KV Ravishankar,
Ophthalmologist

Banjul and explained how, by doing service projects, they can increase Rotary's public image and membership. DGE Allen will be the first governor from the Gambia.

When the camp drew to a close, "there were 100 children awaiting their turn. But we could complete only 42 surgeries. Although we have left behind material and equipment for 200 more surgeries, the sight of the waiting children still flashes in my mind," says Dr Ravishankar. ■

Meet your **Governors**

Jaishree

Inducting quality members is his mantra

Ravi Choudhary

Advertising, RC Delhi West, D 3011

He feels the limelight should be on the club presidents and members for they are the people who work at the ground level. “In most cases the governors steal the show. That’s not right. Our job is only to monitor, assist and strengthen clubs. Members are the backbone of Rotary. If clubs are not performing, the governor loses significance,” says Ravi Choudhary.

He recalls a polio summit when he presented a video on Rotary’s polio eradication work, where the focus was on the Rotary volunteers. He was rewarded with

compliments from the then RI President and chief guest Glen Estess who requested him for 200 copies to be circulated worldwide. “I showcased the cause, our collective effort. There was no promoting any individual.”

According to him, 80 per cent of the Rotarians are good but take a backseat, while the remaining 20 per cent will do anything to destroy the good Rotarians. “People who have made a life out of Rotary are only contesting for every position,” he says.

On membership, Choudhary is not interested in targets or the ‘number game’. “We are still hovering over the stagnant number ‘1.2 million Rotarians’. I believe in inducting quality members; those having fair knowledge of Rotary and an inclination to do good in the community. Otherwise, our attrition rate will be high,” he says. He has chartered five young generation clubs but discouraged new clubs springing out of break-away members. “That will ruin the organisation. Instead I’ve told them to join a club which has like-minded members. If I have to achieve a target, I can do it in two days, asking my presidents to bring two members each. But that will be an artificial growth.” He is disheartened with clubs with less than ten members which, he says, are started “to serve some vote-bank politics; they do not promote any Rotary activity”.

He joined Rotary in 1996 because “I wanted to be a Rotarian; but today we want people to become Rotarians...that’s the difference,” he says, adding, “If we can’t make our children Rotarians, how can we convince others to join Rotary?”

His priority is to improve communities with WinS and Literacy projects, create cancer awareness in the district and rope in CSR funds. His mantra is summed up in 3Ts — Time management, Transparency and Technology — meetings and projects sticking to time, accounts budgeted and audited and communications done through the electronic media.



Reviving Rotaract is his vision

His excitement is palpable even after two weeks after RI Director C Basker had visited the district to inaugurate a cath lab in the Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital in Naya Raipur. “His visit has given us all a big boost to do meaningful service projects,” says Harjit Singh Hura. His focus is to enhance the hospital’s capacity as it provides free heart surgery for several children, even from neighbouring countries such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Building/renovating toilets in schools is also on his agenda. “I am left with \$80,000 DDF from last year. But we have worked out a partnership with Mahanadhi Coalfields, a PSU which has agreed to fund our WinS projects,” he says.

On membership, Hura wants to add five more clubs. He has already overshot his target of 200 new members, having inducted 250 Rotarians, and chartered an all-women’s club in Bilaspur. Having been a Rotaractor himself and a DRR too, he is passionate about strengthening Rotaract clubs. “While Rotaract was very vibrant earlier, the district has not had a DRR for the past three years! Only this year we have one,” he says, adding that he wants to increase the number of Rotaract clubs, now around 10, to 35.

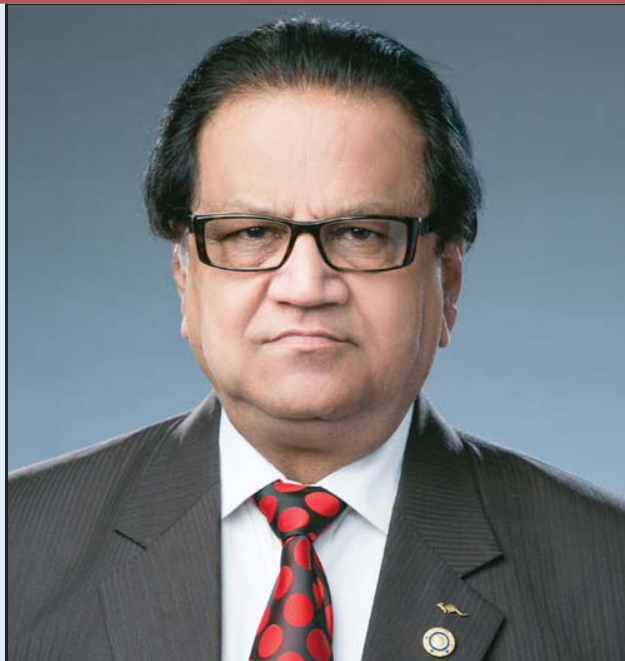
He is working towards raising \$100,000 for TRF.

He became a Rotarian in 1991, soon after his term as DRR. He is proud to say that all the members who formed his club were past Rotaractors and shares a view that Rotaract is not given the required emphasis for the members to be motivated.

Harjit Singh Hura

Hotelier

RC Sambalpur Central, D 3261



Brojo Gopal Kundu

Interior designer

RC Calcutta Old City, D 3291

Congenital heart diseases is his concern

He is concerned about children suffering from heart disorders and the sight of helpless parents who cannot afford medical treatment to save their children. “We’ve helped surgical treatment for 17 such children and two more will be operated upon this week. It hurts my heart to see infants and small children gasping for breath,” says Brojo Kundu.

Developing a vocational training centre in the Sunderbans is also top on his wish list. He says that the people in this region are backward and lack employable skills. He wants to concentrate his energy on helping to skill such people so that they have a decent livelihood. He will also work hard towards the goal of making India totally literate.

On membership growth, his goal is to increase the district’s strength by 20 per cent and raise \$400,000 for TRF.

Non-functional clubs worry him

Non-functional clubs worry him the most. He says that there are eight such clubs, chartered during the fag end of the last Rotary year, which do not perform at all. “They are absolutely non-functional and not installed for Rotary purpose; I will either make them vibrant or close them,” says Rajkumar Bhutoria, adding that 80 per cent of the clubs do not contribute anything to TRF. “All these are big challenges, apart from the fact that the district is vast, stretching to 1,200 km, encompassing Bikaner, Jodhpur and parts of MP too.”

His target for TRF contribution is \$200,000 and for membership, a 15 per cent growth. He is confident of achieving the goals, despite his worry that he would have to close down five clubs that do not even pay their dues. “Someone else is paying for them,” he says.

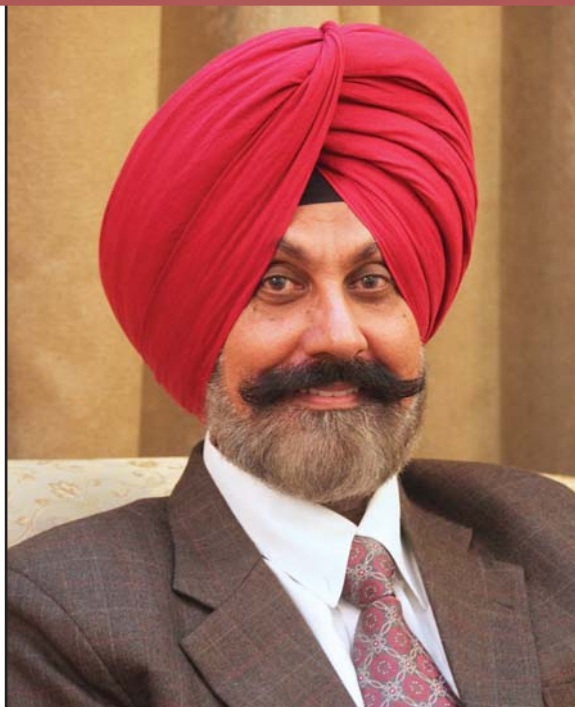
Talking about projects, Bhutoria is excited that he has three global grants that will be used to transform seven schools into ‘Happy Schools’ in Jodhpur, help perform cataract surgeries in an eye hospital in Bikaner and set up a blood bank in Jodhpur. He wants to establish a blood bank in Alwar too with his team funding the project.

With Rajasthan’s history of female foeticide, Bhutoria is concentrating on creating awareness towards saving girl children. He is happy that the *Neki ki diva* project initiated by him has become popular in the district; people donate all kinds of articles and food items too, which are taken by the poor. He highlights a project of RC Guna, started three years ago, where pregnant women are provided free medical checkup and nutritious diet. “The government is now replicating it for the State.”

He is a Rotarian since 1985, and cherishes the moment when a 22-year-old youngster recently met and thanked him profusely. “I could not recognise him but he said that he was a student in a computer centre which I helped establish when I was the club president. Today he says that he is working in an IT firm. I am so happy that Rotary could give livelihood for the needy. That is more important,” says Bhutoria.

Rajkumar Bhutoria

Paper board manufacturing
RC Alwar Greater, D 3053



Parvinder Jit Singh

Automobile financing
RC Jalandhar Central, D 3070

Safe water, his concern

He joined Rotary in 1995 on an invitation from his friends and initially loved the fellowship and fun. “Later when I got involved in the service activities, I felt whole, and more a Rotarian,” says Parvinder Jit Singh.

He plans to add 6–7 more clubs to the existing 107 clubs, having recently chartered two clubs, including an all-women’s club.

His focus projects include developing the Rotary cancer hospital in Jalandhar with better facilities and extend free treatment to more people and provide proper sanitation and water facilities in government schools. He strongly believes that schools should be equipped with safe drinking water to protect children from falling sick and therefore, he is concentrating on providing RO plants in schools.

He is confident of exceeding his district’s goal for TRF contributions.

Singh’s spouse Savrina has served as president of the Inner Wheel Club of Jalandhar Central. ■



4-Way Test Award for Bunkar Roy

Team Rotary News



DGN Ajay Agarwal (second from left) presents a citation to Sanjit Bunkar Roy, Founder of the Barefoot College, in the presence of (from L) DG Brojo Gopal Kundu, PRID Shekhar Mehta, 4-Way Test Chairman G S Sarda and PDG Ravindra P Sehgal.

Rotary Club of Belur, in partnership with RI District 3291, felicitated veteran activist, educator and social worker Sanjit Bunkar Roy, founder of the Barefoot College, with the *4-Way Test Man of the Year Award 2017* recently in Kolkata.

In 2010, Roy had made it to the list of *Time* magazine's 100 most influential persons for his work in educating illiterate and semi-literate rural Indians. He attended The Doon School from 1956 to 1962, and St Stephen's College, Delhi from 1962 to 1967. Roy was the National runner-up in squash in 1964, and participated in three world squash championships representing India. In 1970, he married Aruna Roy.

Barefoot College

After conducting a survey of water availability in 100 drought-prone areas, Roy established the Social Work and

Research Centre in 1972. Its mission soon changed from focusing on water and irrigation to empowerment and sustainability. The programme focused on putting up water pumps near villages and training the local population to maintain them without dependence on outside mechanics, providing training as paramedics for local medical treatment, and on solar power to decrease dependence and time spent on kerosene lighting.

Time recognised him for training more than three million people in skills including solar engineers, teachers, midwives, weavers, architects and doctors.

Roy was appointed by Rajiv Gandhi to the Planning Commission. He recommended that legislation be created that would apply a "code of conduct" for non-governmental organisations. He also proposed that a national council be created that would recommend "legitimate" organisations to the government and monitor their

activities. Both these recommendations were fiercely opposed as mechanisms that could be used to promote patronage of favoured groups and quell organisations that were not supportive of a particular government or party.

In 1983, he was the plaintiff in *Roy v State of Rajasthan* in which the Supreme Court struck down an emergency policy which had allowed women famine relief workers to be paid less than male workers. Roy has spoken at TED conference, in which he talked about how the Barefoot College "helps rural communities become self-sufficient".

The 4-Way Test Award consists of a cash prize of Rs 1 lakh and a citation. PRID Shekhar Mehta was the chief guest at this event.

Earlier recipients of this prize are Kiran Bedi, Medha Patkar, Ramanand Sagar, V Kurien, Maneka Gandhi, N R Narayan Murthy, Pandit Birju Maharaj and Dr Devi Prasad Shetty. ■



A gift of digital literacy

Jaishree

RC Delhi South West
President Lokesh Gupta
at the club's digital
literacy centre in Delhi.



At a Rotary vocational centre in Delhi, learners — Nikita (14), Mohit (10) and Abhishek Rawat (20) — are thrilled to present a mock marketing assignment through Power point. A couple of weeks back they experienced similar excitement as they filed short essays and letters in MS Word. Such accomplishments matter most to them as they are first generation learners, studying in government schools. They are actually touching a computer for the first time, thanks to the endeavour of the Rotarians of RC Delhi South West, D 3011. The children, whose parents are mostly construction workers, dream to excel in computers and get placements that will get them a decent salary... decent enough to pull their families out of poverty.

The club has recently inaugurated the digital literacy and vocational centre at Humayunpur, Safdarjung Enclave, in Delhi, to provide computer education especially for underprivileged children from the neighbouring slums. Three-month courses in MS-Office, DBMS,

C Language and the accounting software, Tally, are taught here. Pushpa Agarwal, spouse of Rtn Ashok Agarwal, is the administrator. Nearly 30 students have enrolled in the first batch. The course fee is Rs 350 a month; "it is totally free for those who cannot afford even this," says Club President Lokesh Gupta.

Members of the club-sponsored Rotaract club teach Tally. "I am able to prepare my accounts accurately and faster now," says Shweta Goyal, a graduate from the Maitri College. She runs a retail shop.

The centre is housed in a building owned by the NGO Streebal, working for women's empowerment. The club raised the project cost of Rs 4 lakh from its members.

The centre is put to maximum use, benefitting several people.

It transforms into a tuition centre in the evenings when 45 schoolchildren receive tuitions after school. Rtn Sunita Verma is in charge of the tuition centre. On weekends, it converts to a tailoring class for 25 women. Singer, a partner, has installed sewing machines at this centre. ■



Handwash Day puts focus on hygiene

V Muthukumaran



Students hold placards depicting hygiene habits in the presence of (standing from L) Club President G Sundaresan, DG R Srinivasan, WinS Vice Chair P T Prabhakar, DGN G Chandramohan, District WinS Chair Ram N Ramamurthy, R Tamilselvan, G Gopal and District WinS Additional Chair G Gunavathy.

Smiling children with placards in their hands greeted the Rotarians of District 3232 at Pathipaga Chemmal K Ganapathy Government HS School in Chennai during an awareness event to mark Global Handwashing Day. Over 2,000 students participated in a talk on handwashing techniques and how to adopt best hygiene practices for healthy living. RC Madras Mount joined hands with the Interact club of the school to sensitise students on the health benefits of handwashing. “We are maintaining the four toilet blocks — two each for boys and girls — by spending Rs 10,000 a month. Two years ago, we renovated the blocks through a

global grant,” says Club Secretary Padma Ramamurthy.

The club has installed a smart classroom and an overhead projector which are being put to good use. In 2014 and 2015, cash incentives were given to the top three rankers in Classes 10 and 12 exams.

S Ilaikya (Class 7), holding a placard along with her friends, nodded her head vigorously when asked if she was following the rudiments of handwashing at home. They are taught how to wash their hands and ward off harmful germs by their teachers.

Addressing the students, WinS Vice Chair PT Prabhakar said WASH in Schools was one of the flagship projects of Rotary that instilled civic sense and best hygiene

practices among students across India. “I am happy to see that the Interact club is active and creating the right impact on the students.” He recalled Gandhiji saying how cleanliness was more important to him than Independence.

The gender-segregated toilets on each floor were being maintained well, he noted. G Gunavathy, District WinS Additional Chair, gave a demo on handwashing techniques. In the last two years, nearly 30 handwash stations were installed in D 3232 through global grants, said the District WinS Chair Ram N Ramamurthy. “This year we have so far organised handwash demo-cum-lectures in 85 government and aided schools,” he added.

Picture by V Muthukumaran



Involving semi-rural youth

Team Rotary News



RC Madras Midtown President Usha Kumar flags off the Rotary Rural Run.

At the crack of dawn, groups of young students from the schools in and around Gummidipoondi Taluk, started arriving at the gates of the RMK College of Engineering and Technology, near Chennai. They had assembled to take part in a mini marathon titled the *Rotary Rural Run* organised by RC Madras Midtown, D 3232, and all over the place the logo 'End Polio Now' was visible. This was the second year the club had organised such a run in the 3, 5 and 10 km categories, with the support of philanthropist

and founder of the RMK Group of Institutions.

Almost 1,000 participants and volunteers who had assembled at the venue were given a delicious breakfast, and Usha Kumar, president of the club, flagged off the 3 km category. She said the

The objective was to sensitise rural youth the need for physical fitness, and create a general awareness about Rotary among them.

objective was to organise such a mini marathon in a semi-rural area so that rural youth can also be made aware of the need for physical fitness, and create a general awareness about Rotary among the young.

R Srinivasan, DG 3232, Assistant Governor Vikas Chandra, management of the RMK Group of Institutions and local community leaders participated.

Winners from each of the three categories were recognised with medals and certificates and participants wore the End Polio Now tee shirt, in a bid to enhance the public image of Rotary. ■



Cath lab to **save children**

Jaishree

The Rotary Club of Raipur Greater, D 3261, recently installed a paediatric heart catheterisation lab at the Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital in Naya Raipur, Chhattisgarh. The equipment, imported from Indonesia and the Philippines, are worth Rs 3 crore and the club took support of a global grant from RC Fort Wayne, D 6540, the USA and TRF.

The cardiac cath machine will evaluate heart defects in children with congenital heart disease, check blood flow in the coronary arteries and blood pressure in the heart's chambers. Often, a cardiac catheterisation can make open-heart surgery unnecessary, saving fatalities in children.

The hospital provides free treatment for all children with cardiac disorders. "There is no cash counter in the hospital," says Club President Vivek Ranjan Gupta. But where a cath test was required, the child was referred to other hospitals which charge "anything between Rs 10,000–20,000 for the test."



RID C Basker inaugurates the Cath lab in the presence of (from L) Rotarians Dr Praveen Kollipara and Holli Seabury from RC Fort Wayne, DG Harjit Singh Hura, PDG Vivek K Tankha and Programme Chair Munish Sagar.

RI Director C Basker, who inaugurated the lab, appreciated the team for bringing quality healthcare within reach for the underprivileged and recognised the club's efforts in giving the community what it needed the most.

"The facility is totally free for the poor. Poverty should not be a reason for not providing proper medical care for ailing children," says Assistant Governor and IPP of the club, Raj Dubey. District Governor Harjit Singh Hura, Hospital Chairman C Sreenivas, PDG Vivek K Tankha, DRFC Rakesh Chaturvedi and ARRFC Vinod Bansal, were present at the inaugural event, along with past governors, and Rotarians from the international partner club.

The major donors for the project were Dr Praveen Kollipara, an oncologist from Fort Wayne and Vital Paper Industries, Bengaluru. The project, conceived in 2015, was coordinated by club member SK Agrawal. "RID Basker has suggested us to provide more facilities, whatever is lacking, for the hospital and we are working on it now," says Gupta. ■



The new Cath lab in the Sathya Sai Hospital.



Solar power brightens hamlet

V Muthukumaran



Veloshi, a tribal hamlet on the lap of the Sahyadri mountains in Maharashtra's Thane district, now sports a bright, resplendent look at night, thanks to solar street lamps and home bulbs installed by RC Mumbai Bandra Kurla Complex, D 3141, in partnership with The Green I Initiative Foundation which is ushering in alternative energy for rural households.

For 375 villagers staying in 75 mud houses, living in darkness has been a constant nightmare and many of the elders have not experienced any form of electricity at all. While agriculture is their main occupation, a 10-member team of Rotarians found out in August 2016, the villagers were barely able to sustain themselves as poverty was rampant. "After interacting with them, we realised

the first priority was lighting the hamlet with durable, easy-to-maintain power supply and we decided on solar PV systems," recalls Sachin Shigwan, the club's past president and Avenue Chair, Renewable Energy.

Prakash Rane, a club member and CEO of ABM Knowledgeware, gave Rs 9.5 lakh from his CSR funds for installing and commissioning the 3 kWp (kilowatt peak) system that delivered three solar bulbs to each household and 20 street lamps in the village. Twelve solar panels with the necessary accessories were set up on three rooftops. "We chose houses of responsible people like village headman for installing the rooftop panels," says Shigwan.

The battery-enabled solar bulbs emit light from 7 pm to midnight, while street lamps glow from 6 pm to 6 am. During monsoon, the home

bulbs work three hours a day. The street lamps have auto sensors with in-built battery as a precaution. The installation and monitoring of the PV system are taken care of by The Green I Initiative.

Now the villagers venture out freely in the evening without fear, says Kamal Raghunath Shivari, Sarpanch, Veloshi Gram Panchayat. "Use of kerosene lamps has reduced drastically, lowering the rate of fire accidents and eye problems." A corpus has been established with a monthly contribution of Rs 50 from each household for the maintenance of the PV system.

Deepak Ladku Deshmukh, Principal of the village school, Chaitanya Vidyalaya, is happy that the project has brought a "continuous source of light which will help my students to study for more hours in the evening". ■



CSR funds Rotary's vocational unit

Team Rotary News

RC Pune Gandhibhavan, D 3131, has set up a vocational centre on the premises of Gram Prabodhini Vidyalaya, a school at Salumbre village, 45 km from Pune, with the help of CSR funds from Oerlikon Balzers, a Swiss manufacturer of surface coating solutions.

The first batch of 20 students in the age 16–18 years are being trained as electrical technicians and another course on welding technology will begin soon. “We want to target boys and girls who had either passed or failed Class 10 but unable to pursue higher studies,” says the club’s past president Keshav Tamhankar. A monthly fee of Rs 1,000 is charged from the students.

The building with an area of 2,500 sq ft has one classroom and three workshops. A CSR fund of Rs 65 lakh was spent to raise the building; Rs 10 lakh was invested in the first stage for setting up training



L to R: Gram Prabodhini Secretary Subhashrao Deshpande, Oerlikon Balzers Coating MD Pravin Shirse, IPDG Prashant Deshmukh, Balzers Chairman Commander Badve, Balzers Industrial Solutions Head Marc Desrayaud, RC Pune Gandhi Bhavan’s IPP Keshav Tamhankar, Rtn Shashank Sapre and Gram Prabodhini President Girish Bapat.

facilities, machinery and equipment for vocational classes. While the club supervised the construction and establishment of the centre, it will be administered by the Gramprabodhini institute whose faculty will teach the students. The club has plans to offer training in soft skills like personality development, communication

and body language which will be taught at the centre in due course. “We want rural youth to become self-reliant with vocational skills,” says Vyankatrao Bhatane, Principal, Gramprabodhini. The building was inaugurated by Balzers Global Head Marc Desrayaud and the then DG Prashant Deshmukh in March. ■

Convention

Dining Out

Randi Druzin

As one of the most multicultural cities in the world, Toronto has almost as many cuisines as it does languages. You’ll want to sample some of them when you’re in town for the 2018 Rotary International Convention from June 23 to 27.

There are great options for those who love Italian food (Little Italy), Greek cuisine (Greektown), Indian fare (Little India) and Chinese food (Chinatown). In the Little Portugal neighbourhood, diners go to Alex Rei dos Leitões for *churrasco* (grilled meat) or to Nova Era Bakery for *pastel de nata* (egg custard tart). In Koreatown, try Buk Chang Dong Soon Tofu, which serves dishes based on the traditional Korean

staple *sundubu jjigae* (tofu stew). In Kensington Market, Jumbo Empanadas has Chilean *empanadas* and *humitas* (corn, onion and basil wrapped in corn leaves and steamed).

Even the hamburger is getting creative makeovers in Toronto. At Richmond Station, the Station Burger comes in a milk bun with beet chutney. At the Burger’s Priest, the Vatican City is a double cheeseburger between two grilled cheese sandwiches.

And if you like your meal with a view, nothing beats 360 Restaurant, a revolving dining room that sits 1,151 feet above street level in the CN Tower.

@ The Rotarian



**Register for the convention
by December 15 for the best rate.
Go to riconvention.org.**

Finding an oasis in the desert

Bharat & Shalan Savur



Here are two illuminating stories:

Destiny's author: In a long queue at the doctor's waiting room sat an elderly gentleman. He had recovered from cancer and was here for his regular check-up to ensure that the cancer was out of his system for good. As time ticked by, he rose from his seat and courteously addressed the receptionist, "Ma'am, my appointment was for 10 and it is already 11 now. I cannot wait any longer. Would you kindly schedule me for another day?"

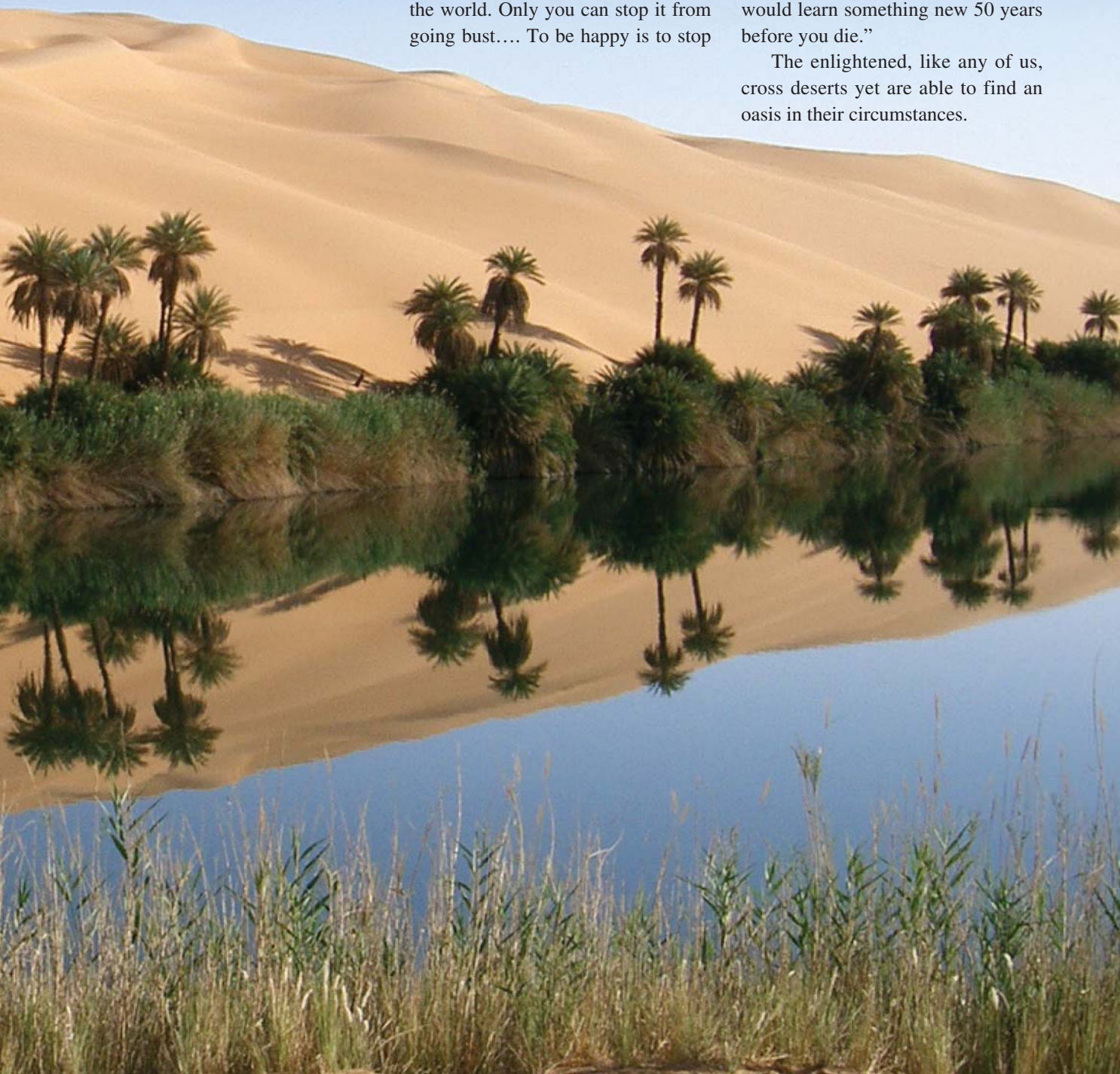
A woman in the queue remarked caustically to another, "Hah! He must be 80 years old. What urgent business can *he* have that he cannot afford to wait?" Overhearing her observation, the gentleman inclined his head politely towards her and answered, "I am 88 years old, ma'am. That's precisely why I cannot afford to waste a single minute of the precious time I have left."

The enlightened don't fall into the pits of self-pity because, as Pope Francis points out, "Do not forget your life is the greatest enterprise in the world. Only you can stop it from going bust.... To be happy is to stop

feeling like a victim and become your destiny's author."

Keep learning. This story is about Socrates. While on death row, the great philosopher heard a fellow prisoner singing a difficult song written by the poet, Stesichoros. Socrates begged him to teach him the lyrics. "Why?" asked the singer. Socrates replied, "So that I can die knowing one thing more." The singer asked, "Why learn something new one week before you die?" and Socrates said, "For exactly the same reason that you would learn something new 50 years before you die."

The enlightened, like any of us, cross deserts yet are able to find an oasis in their circumstances.



Where's the oasis? This is what this article is about. You may have gone through a rough phase in the past 12 months. Maybe you faced turbulence in your finances, a broken relationship, a job snatched away from you, an unexpected illness that hospitalised you, a loved one departed... But, remember, the oasis is in you. Take heart and give yourself full credit for riding out the crisis, for being here, still standing. Yes, there was pain and maybe some residue of it remains, but, along the way, you've dropped a load of fear you were carrying around all these years. You've emerged with a new inner boldness. Due to the ordeal, hidden restraints have relaxed, a deeper understanding has unfolded. And that's why the new year will be infinitely superior to the old one.

You are new. Yes, it's true, you are not who you were yesterday, you are much more today. More experienced, more seasoned, more mature and, above all, more *you*. And you are most God when you are yourself. You are clear-headed like you never were prior to the misfortune. You are awake because the ego, having received a battering during the trauma, is in abeyance. It doesn't dictate anymore, so you rise to your full stature. The mind slows to a measured pace — from the scurry of worry to the solid stability of acceptance. There's healing. There's living in newness. There's a new sparkle.

Yes, it's good to return to the old routine you followed before the

turbulence threw you off balance. At the same time, don't treat what happened as a setback. I've learnt that such 'setbacks' force us to pause to actually give us an opportunity to notice important things that we were overlooking. Temporarily sitting on the sidelines also enables us to see everything from a visitor's perspective — something new even in all that's familiar, described by a Master as, "an unbroken peace in the smile of the sun and the dance of the twilight."

Initially, you may wish for things to be as they were, but as acceptance sets in, what the Masters say makes immense sense: "Don't be afraid to take an unfamiliar path. They take you to the best places." You learn about your own powers cumulating in a realisation that whatever happens you'll be fine. That's reassuring. And when you know things are not in your control, you pick up little gems like trust in a greater process, faith in human kindness and the ability to yield gracefully to circumstances. Most important, your body and mind that have borne your excesses for years now teach you that to rest is not a crime!

Thrive in the oasis. For sure, you're done with the desert, now, discover the oasis in you and thrive in it. Put yourself and your life in a whole new working order. Have a personal motto, something simple like: *lessen suffering, increase well-being*. Go for it.

*Eat nutritious meals to pep up the tired brain. Choose familiar foods with less sugar, salt and grease in them. *Tip:* Warm khichdi — a mix of rice, dal, vegetables lightly spiced and steamed is a great comforter and pick-me-up. Sip water all day long — hydrated cells are energised cells. Eat and drink from an uncomplaining attitude, an accepting, calm mind — the food tastes great and the body achieves maximum nourishment.

*Exercise meditatively and in comfort. As I pedal on my stationary cycle from my armchair, I count

Your life is the greatest
enterprise in the world.

Only you can stop it
from going bust....

to harness the mind. Result: as my body cycles into fitness and health, my racing brain and mind slow down lulled by the rhythmic rotation of my feet and chanting of numbers. Sometimes there's utter peace, sometimes, solutions and ideas pop up. I've even had an out-of-body experience while cycling — when you stand outside yourself, you harp less on *me, my* and *mine*, and this new perspective makes you more forgiving, objective, serene. These, in turn, have a terrific effect on your relationships, the quality of your sleep and level of your happiness. It is as if you are followed everywhere by the pleasant fragrance of invisible-to-the-eye flowers.

All these marvellous happenings embolden you. You tackle your finances and realise you have more than you thought. You are able to think about your departed beloved once more peacefully, where your personal loss becomes part of the universal human experience and the pain recedes... Your own illness seems eons away...

Believe me, having an undisturbed mind is like owning a vein of pure gold that never stops shining. Keep mining. A whole brave new world abundant in health, wealth and love, gradually reveals itself.

*The writers are authors of the book
Fitness for Life and teachers of the
Fitness for Life programme.*

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

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Rotary at a glance

Rotarians : 12,27,314

Clubs : 35,774

Districts : 539

Rotaractors : 2,46,146*

Clubs : 10,702*

Interactors : 5,09,243*

Clubs : 22,141*

RCC members: 2,21,674*

RCC : 9,638*

* As on November 1, 2017

Membership Summary

As on November 1, 2017

RI Zone	RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians	Rotaract	Interact	RCC
5	2981	112	4,621	216	59	225	173
5	2982	67	3,017	97	59	111	43
5	3000	126	5,328	428	289	646	195
4	3011	72	3,196	620	52	104	24
4	3012	87	3,547	706	66	125	55
5	3020	102	4,427	213	116	461	351
4	3030	94	5,022	612	73	306	164
4	3040	97	2,184	237	53	114	135
4	3053	77	2,923	468	16	36	93
4	3054	128	6,085	947	91	291	472
4	3060	97	4,022	418	62	116	129
4	3070	108	3,023	275	67	153	54
4	3080	78	3,366	223	69	215	106
4	3090	79	2,083	80	32	36	122
4	3100*	74	1,684	76	10	73	146
6	3110	115	3,948	284	51	49	104
6	3120	75	3,276	345	37	54	50
4	3131	134	5,439	1,062	102	274	79
4	3132	110	4,442	485	63	193	138
4	3141	91	5,400	1,130	114	251	86
4	3142	79	2,905	413	63	184	69
5	3150	100	3,681	352	93	227	109
5	3160	69	2,407	111	21	45	81
5	3170	128	5,502	380	58	300	160
5	3181	73	3,167	220	31	172	104
5	3182	79	3,278	244	28	271	90
5	3190	132	5,294	612	139	346	50
5	3201	139	5,210	306	95	124	47
5	3202	132	4,927	246	97	425	44
5	3211	137	4,419	260	12	88	123
5	3212	96	3,877	212	108	266	126
5	3231	68	2,864	99	55	192	236
5	3232	98	3,943	524	135	302	82
6	3240	88	3,053	347	60	146	151
6	3250	99	3,877	703	44	205	176
6	3261	70	2,510	221	16	102	42
6	3262	97	3,348	387	43	68	75
6	3291	149	3,927	757	71	130	586
India Total		3,756	1,45,222	15,316	2,650	7,426	5,070
5	3220	73	1,968	244	81	198	77
6	3271	80	1,503	242	46	16	13
6	3272	155	2,925	448	39	36	36
6	3281	203	5,753	782	227	84	186
6	3282	138	3,900	317	133	40	41
6	3292	116	4,487	681	120	106	109
S Asia Total		4,521	1,65,758	18,030	3,296	7,906	5,532

*Non-districted.

Source: RI South Asia Office



RC Salem Young Town — D 2982

The club provided nutritious meals for visually-impaired students and members of Agavizhi Charitable Trust as part of Annapurna Day celebrations. The project cost was Rs 10,000.

RC Godavari Palakol — D 3020

As part of Happy Schools project, the club painted a government rural school at a cost of Rs 50,000. The Rotarians have adopted the school and plan to provide better facilities for the students in the coming months.

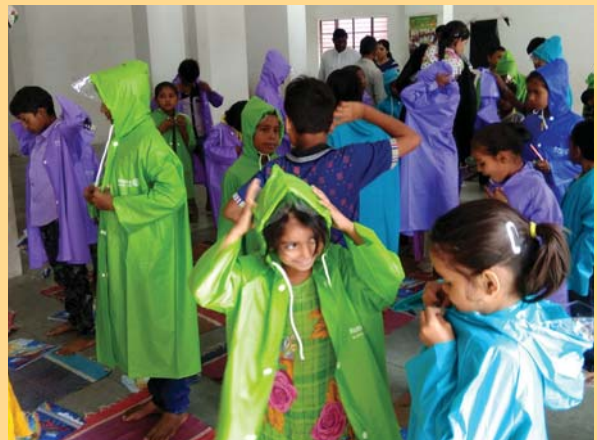


RC Moga Greater — D 3090

Teachers were felicitated by the club with Nation Builder awards for their efforts in various literacy projects. DG Bagh Singh Panu distributed the citations and shawls to the recipients.

RC Senoras Jamnagar — D 3060

Raincoats were distributed to 100 school-going children hailing from two slums of Jamnagar. This will help them combat the monsoon and prevent them from falling sick.



Matters

RC Mumbai Malabar Hills — D 3141

More than 600 snack boxes with Rotary wheel were distributed to students of three schools as part of the Annapurna Meal project. The children reciprocated with a loud ‘thank you’ to express their gratitude at this gesture from the club.



RC Mysore North — D 3181

The students of a Rotary school in Vajamangala village took out a rally to create awareness on dengue and chikungunya among the people. Pamphlets with instructions to keep the surroundings clean were distributed among the villagers.



RC New Century Bidar — D 3160

Sewing machines were donated to the underprivileged and skilled women in the locality to enable them to enhance their family income by pursuing tailoring as a vocation. PDG G S Mansoor participated in the event.



RC Narasimharajapura — D 3182

The club gifted track suits to around 100 government school students who were selected for district and state-level sports meet. “We want to encourage children to participate actively in sports too, besides excelling in academics,” says the Club Secretary Prabhakar.

RC Bicholim — D 3170

Sanitary napkin dispensers and incinerators were installed in three schools in the city. Each unit costs Rs 30,000 and the project was much appreciated by the beneficiaries and the community.



RC Bangalore Indiranagar — D 3190

Twenty-four people were trained as retail sales associate by the club in partnership with the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan and Jeevika Skills. In an earlier batch, 25 women were trained as retail cashiers.



RC Pathanamthitta South — D 3211

The club distributed cots, beds, pillows and bedsheets to the inmates of Balabhavan, an orphanage at Keerukuzhy. The Rotarians have been providing support to the orphanage as part of their ongoing project.



RC Cochin West — D 3201

Project Samaritan was launched to spread awareness on trauma and emergency care, besides training youth on skill sets required to save victims from traumatic and stressful events. The project is a joint initiative between the

club, VPS Lakeshore Hospital and Kochi City Police.



RC Sivakasi Central — D 3212

Twenty sanitation staff of the Sivakasi Government Hospital were honoured by the club for their hard work in keeping the premises clean. This token of appreciation earned the goodwill of the hospital staff for Rotary.

RC Pollachi — D 3202

Nation Builder Awards were presented to outstanding teachers of government schools in and around Pollachi. The awards were presented by P Appukutty, Chairman of the PA Educational Institutions and a member of the club.



Matters



RC Kanchipuram — D 3231

A mortuary van costing Rs 8.20 lakh was donated to the Motcha Jothi Crematorium Trust from a district grant of Rs 3.75 lakh. While the club contributed Rs 2.50 lakh, Rtn Padmini Sharma from RC Lake Speievey, D 6990, Georgia, donated Rs 1.50 lakh for the project.



RC Chennai Towers — D 3232

As part of the Rally for Rivers programme, the club organised a clean-up of Porur lake near the city in association with seven other clubs of the district. Rotaractors and volunteers from the Isha Foundation pitched in contributing their labour. DG R Srinivasan and City Police Commissioner AK Vishwanath flagged off the drive.



RC Gangtok South — D 3240

Six teachers were given Nation Builder Awards at an event titled *Crossroads: 21st Century Teachers* held with the support of the Shridevi Group of Institutes, Bengaluru. Eminent faculty members shared their experience and views on the challenges facing teachers.



RC Darbhanga — D 3250

The Rotarians donated buckets, mugs, dustbins and other utility items in three schools to improve hygiene. They also installed a handwash unit in one of the schools to create awareness on the need to wash hands.



RC Kabitirtha Calcutta — D 3291

A tutorial centre was inaugurated in the Santoshpur locality in Kolkata to teach underprivileged children. The Rotarians distributed educational kits to the children and planted saplings in the area.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran
Designed by L Gunasekaran



Rotaractors rock and roll in the Maldives

Kiran Zehra

Clean beaches, clear blue water and no hawkers bothering us. I wish we could make India this beautiful,” says Abhishek Bandodkar, a Rotaractor from the Rotaract Club of Bombay Juhu Beach, D 3141, recalling his “fun, no-nonsense, affordable and memorable” six-day International RYLA at the Maldives. The IRYLA was co-hosted by RC Mulund, D 3141, and RC Male, D 3220, in association with 22 clubs from Districts 3142, 2982, 3000, 3080, 3190, 3211, 3231, 3240, 3250, 3261, State Bank of India, Mumbai and KRYFS Power Components Ltd.



From staying in the Hotel Champa Central, Male to The Paradise Island Resorts in North Male Atoll, “all the arrangements were done well. Being a hardcore vegetarian, I was worried about the food. But we got good veg food at both the hotels,” says Aishwarya Maheshwari Modi from Jodhpur. Convener and District 3141 RYLA Chair PP CA Deepak Lala says that he is grateful to the Rotarians and Rotaractors of RC Male, D 3220, for taking care of minute details and making all the 49 Rotaractors and 24 Rotarians from various parts of India, “feel at home, away from home.”



District RYLA Chair Deepak Lala and PDG Lata Subraidu with the Indian Ambassador to the Maldives Akhilesh Mishra (centre).



Between September 8–13, 2017, “I was in a world of my own,” says Deep Jyoti Das, a Rotaractor from the Rotaract Club of Rongali Guahati, D 3240. “A seaplane ride over the crystal-clear lagoons, sitting inside the Whale Submarine and witnessing the beauty of marine life, snorkelling in the sea... I sure have ticked a lot of boxes on my travel bucket list.” He also adds that all this was possible for him at such a young age because of Rotaract. “The initial reaction of my friends who saw the Maldives pictures on my Facebook page was ‘Wow’ and now my club has added five new members and five more are all set to join because they think Rotaract is so much fun,” adds Das.

“RYLA is an experience and everything a participant learns here in the form of travel or training sessions enhances their intrapersonal skills,” says Lala who had planned eight “interesting and progressive sessions to harness the leadership skills in them.” Talking about the sessions PDG (D 3141) Lata Subraidu, who conducted a session on team building, says, “Nothing changes with a single session. We just sow a seed of thinking and that

grows with time helping them evolve as young leaders.”

Dr Rahul Joshi’s Music Clinic was one of the best sessions, according to Bandodkar. For Manisha who had no clue what *Amygdala Hijack* meant says, “It was mind blowing to know how this part of your brain that’s the size of a peanut can trick you.” Rtn Jhankar Gadkari of RC Deonar, D 3141, who chaired this session says, “Mindfulness is the only awareness technique that can help terminate a conflict — whether it’s at work or home. The purpose of the session was to create a balance between emotion and intellect and help them make more aware choices.” The Indian Ambassador to the Maldives Akhilesh Mishra chaired a session enumerating the economic and social relationship between India and the Maldives.

Other highlights were *Dhivehi Bodu Beru* — a Maldivian cultural show, Bollywood Nite, live music band and a talent show. All participants were given an IRYLA kit that included a sling bag, an umbrella, a T-shirt and a Maldivian souvenir.

Designed by L Gunasekaran



Lutyens on my mind

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

Old men (like me) should stay away from things like Twitter and Facebook. Most do, but some (again like me), find these platforms fascinating.

Twitter, as Ogden Nash might have said, is better, but FB is not. If you 'friend' someone, you are likely to be inundated with the most repulsive details of their private lives; and if you 'unfriend' them, they start hating you.

So I am on Twitter but not on FB. I find the challenge of saying something utterly profound in just 140 characters irresistible. I do it often.

One day a very old friend, and not merely aged, asked me to follow the Lutyens — pronounced as Luiyens and not Loot-yenj — Twitter 'handles'. I did so and found them all full of the most utterly delightful gossip. Having spent my life in Delhi's underbelly of journalism, I felt like Ali Baba in front of the cave after saying 'Open Sesame'.

Lutyens Delhi is where the *gora* sahibs used to live before 1947 in massive plots of land in which stood huge but dark and drafty bungalows. These 1,000-odd or so bungalows occupy around 400 acres in the heart of Delhi.

On FB if you 'friend' someone, you are likely to be inundated with the most repulsive details of their private lives; and if you 'unfriend' them, they start hating you.

After 1947, when the British left, the most boring Indians — politicians, bureaucrats and *faujis* — moved into Lutyens. By the 1980s they had started fighting over it. From being a mere government servant habitat, it became a status symbol.

Lutyens Delhi, for those who don't know, comes in two parts: pre-1947 and post-1947. The latter is Lutyens Lite, so to speak. It has thousands of very ugly flats for the ever-expanding bureaucracy. They are all falling down now.

The original Lutyens Delhi used to be around a quarter of Delhi — new and old. Now it is down to around 0.001 per cent.

In a rare flash of humour, given the kind of people who live there now, the government has classified it as a forest. In Hindi that would be jungle or *jangal*.

Most people only know about the main roads of Lutyens Delhi, but having grown up there and around there, I know the innermost lanes and service roads. In the old days, love birds would converge in those ill-lit lanes for a quick hug and a furtive kiss.

But today, thanks to security, they are full of police constables. I think they should all be issued free phones with 4G so that they may desist from the very private but publicly exhibited pleasure of constantly scratching in unseemly places.

Anyway, although the gossip on Twitter about this small 'forest' is salacious, it is mostly rubbish. Bar a couple of dozen or so of the houses, the rest are occupied by very boring people and there is nothing to gossip about them.

The social character of Lutyens Delhi has changed thrice in the last 25

In a rare flash of humour, given the kind of people who live in Lutyens's Delhi now, the government has classified it as a forest. In Hindi that would be jungle or *jangal*.

years. The first time was in 1990 when the first large coalition government was formed under V P Singh. The non-anglicised Indians of the regional parties moved into the bungalows in large numbers. Some even brought cows with them.

Then in 1999, when Atal Behari Vajpayee was able to form and lead a stable government, a whole lot of BJP people moved in. But their sojourn was short-lived. That BJP was different from the current one. Most of its members in those days could speak good English and even write it properly.

In 2004, the anglicised Congress Indians moved back in. They behaved as if they had reclaimed a disputed patrimony. Their arrogant strutting was what eventually made Modi ji so popular.

Ten years later, in 2014, the new-look BJP sort has moved in. It is they who have turned Lutyens into a pejorative term exactly as they did with secular. They renamed 7RCR as Lok Kalyan Marg.

I am waiting for the day when some sociologist writes a book about these 400 acres. I could, but I have... I guess, better things to do. ■

In Brief



From dropout to a champion businesswoman

Asha Khemka (65), the Principal and CEO of the West Nottinghamshire College, England, recently won the Asian Businesswoman of the Year Award in Birmingham. Asha hails from Bihar and dropped out of

school at 13. Married when very young, she left for England at 25 and without any knowledge of English. She learnt the language by watching TV serials and interacting with her neighbours and got a business degree from the Cardiff University. She joined the West Nottinghamshire College as a lecturer. Asha, a mother of three, has been honoured with the Dame Commander of the Order of the British Empire, a top civilian award, and the female equivalent of knighthood, and the Order of the British Empire by the Queen herself.



Sari-clad marathoner

Jayanthi Sampathkumar (44) stood out from the 20,000-odd runners at the Airtel Marathon held recently in Hyderabad. Instead of the usual tracksuit, Jayanthi ran the marathon in a purple cotton sari, her ensemble complete with a bindi and sandals, reaching the finish line at 42 km in less than five hours. Her aim was to promote handloom and what better way to get noticed! Her feat could earn her a place in the Guinness Book of World Records as 'the fastest marathoner clad in a sari'. She had a follower in Uday Bhaskar Dhandamudi (27) who too ran the marathon clad in a dhoti. He completed the run in five hours and fifteen minutes.

Tug for a Tag

West Bengal recently got the GI tag from the Indian Patent Office for its rosogolla. There was an ongoing tussle between Odisha and Bengal on the origin of the sweet. While Bengal credited its origin to confectioner Nobin Chandra Das in the 1860s, Odisha claimed that the sweet, referred to as Pahala Rasgulla, was part of the religious ritual of the Jagannath temple in Puri since the 13th century. Expressing delight, West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, tweeted: "Sweet news for us all. We are very happy and proud that *#Bengal* has been granted GI... status for Rosogolla." Odisha, on the other hand, has filed an application for GI tag for its own brand of rasgulla.



Cellphones can cause cancer

In an interview with the *CNN*, Elizabeth Cohen, Medical Correspondent of WHO, said that there are scientific findings that support cellphones being "possibly carcinogenic" and may cause cancer, similar to lead, engine exhaust and chloroform. "It is the kind of carcinogen that builds up over time. One phone call will not get you cancer," says Elizabeth. The radiation is more if the cellphone is held close to the head. She recommends use of earphones or any other device that leaves the phone at a distance. Also, carrying them close to the body or in pockets should be avoided. "There is a possibility that companies will go back to their drawing boards and design phones with lesser radiation," she adds.



Blessed and delivered

Pope Francis, who received a Lamborghini Huracan from the luxury carmaker, has sent it for auction. The money got from the car will be used for charitable causes such as helping Christians in Iraq to rebuild their homes destroyed by the ISIS militants, rehabilitating victims of human trafficking and two Italian groups that provide medical services in Central Africa. The Huracan, valued at \$200,000, is expected to sell for more, with the Pope blessing it with his signature on the hood. Last year, the pontiff gave away three cars he had used in Poland to aid Syrian refugees and in 2013, donated a Harley-Davidson motorbike to help the homeless in Rome.



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