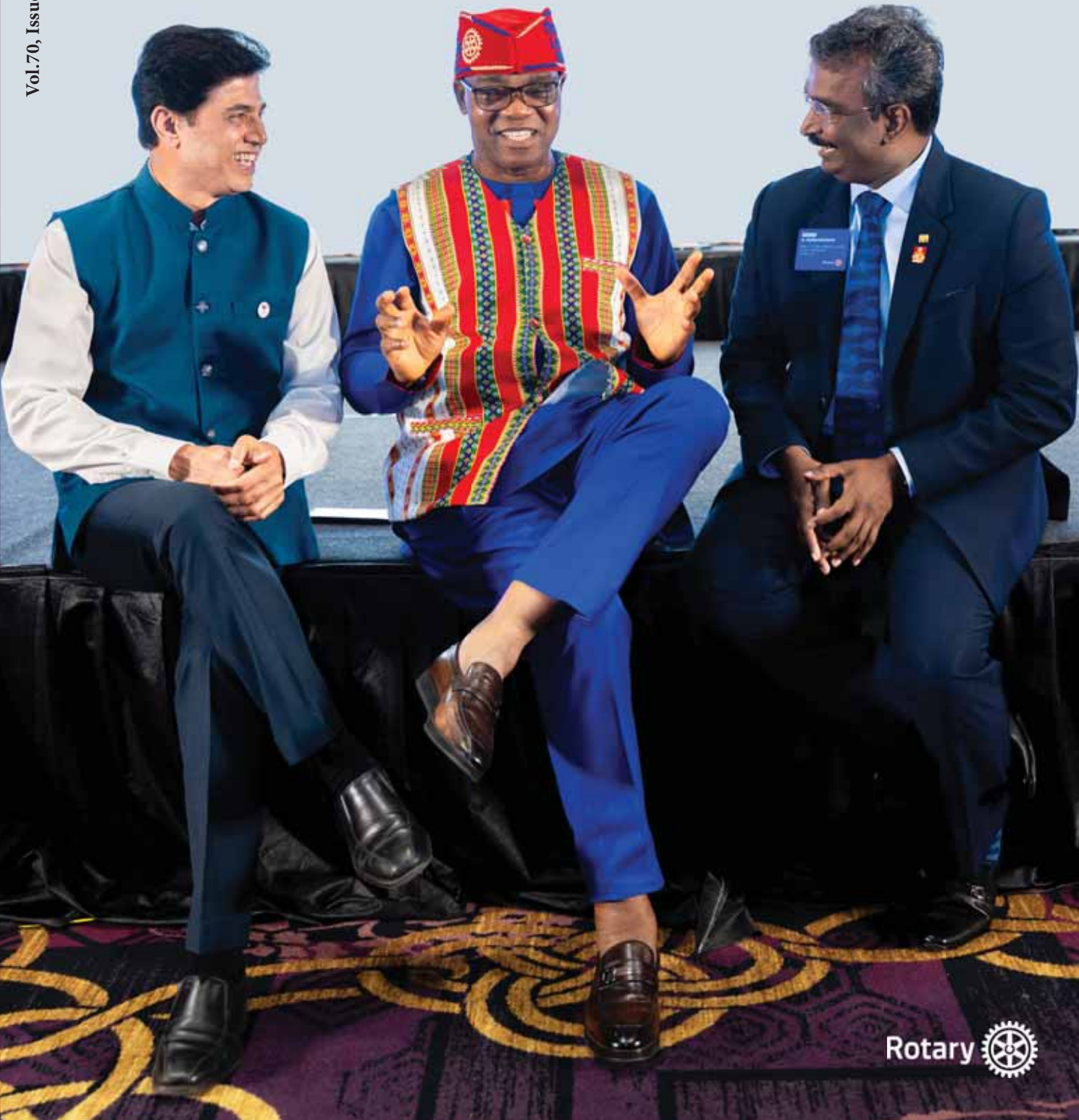


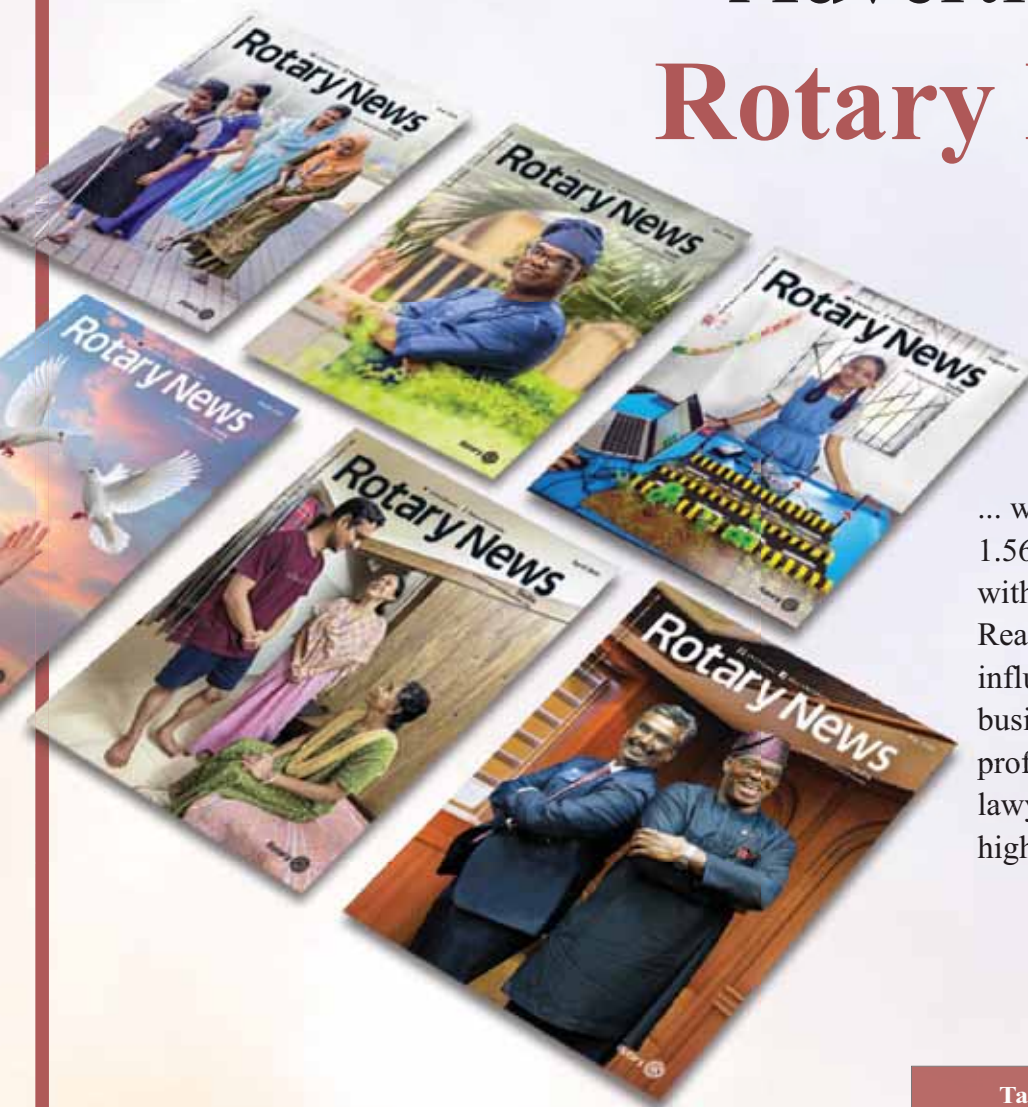
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Important Announcement Revision in Subscription Rates

Dear subscribers,

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

The new annual subscription rates are:

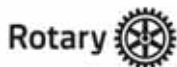
● Print edition: **₹600** ● e-version: **₹360**

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

We encourage Rotarians to choose the e-version.

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

Editor



A publication of Rotary
Global Media Network

A fitting message from RI President

I am overwhelmed by RI President Yinka Babalola's challenge to all Rotarians, where he focused on peacebuilding for a better world. His challenge is very relevant in the backdrop of terrible wars going on where thousands of innocent people including women and children are being killed across the world.

Babalola's message touches the core of humanity, for what is the use of all the painstaking efforts of Rotary in building hospitals, schools etc, as all of it can be destroyed and human lives can be snuffed out in a few minutes.

If only peace can go hand in hand with love and compassion, that will be the everlasting real service, where every human being is taught to respect one



another irrespective of colour, caste, religion or nationality.

*Suresh Gokuldas
RC Coimbatore Mid-Town — D 3206*

In the August issue, RI President Babalola says that peacebuilding is one of our areas of focus, and it must be pursued deliberately, built strategically, and intentionally into everything we do. This is the challenge he puts before us.

Hence whatever we do, be it a water project or a vocational training programme or a project in any other seven focus areas of service, let us ascertain whether these projects build peace and create lasting impact in our communities.

N Jagatheesan, RC Eluru — D 3020

The crucial role of Interactors

What happened at Jantar Mantar during the CJP protest in Delhi over the NEET examination has drawn significant public attention and sparked differing reactions, after videos circulated widely on social media. The language and behaviour of some young students have raised concerns on how public expression among the younger generation is evolving in today's times.

This Gen Zee protest offers an opportunity to reflect on the values of respect, responsibility, empathy, and constructive dialogue — values that are part of Indian culture.

It is during such challenging times that I feel encouraged by the work Rotary is doing through its Interactors. Nation-building is not only about serving people today; it is also about shaping the citizens of tomorrow. By encouraging young Interactors, Rotary is shaping India's future. When children grow with empathy, respect,

responsibility, and a spirit of service, they carry values that help create a better world.

Rotary is doing a wonderful work by grooming young Interactors, guiding them towards the right path, and helping them become compassionate, responsible, and socially-conscious citizens. This is true nation-building, shaping not just young minds, but the future of our society.

*Priyadarshinee Kanoria
RC Delhi Southex — D 3011*

It all begins at the club

You've brought a very nice August issue of Rotary News. In Director Speak, RI director KP Nagesh has summed it up very well: It all begins at the club.

Only at the club-level, ideas become projects, and strangers become family, where service starts with one member, and spreads to the world. Every lasting impact has its first meeting at the club.

One handshake, one project, one life changed. From our club hall to the community, this is where Rotary comes alive.

*S Natarajan
RC Koothapakkam — D 2981*

RI Nagesh's message in the August issue is a magical multipronged strategy to promote membership retention. He rightly says, "across the Rotary world, member retention remains one of our greatest challenges. People stay where they feel welcomed, respected, involved and appreciated."

Clubs that encourage participation, embrace new ideas, mentor emerging leaders, and create meaningful fellowship will always remain vibrant. Membership is therefore not the responsibility of a committee, it is the responsibility of every Rotarian.

*R Murali Krishna
RC Berhampur — D 3262*

LETTERS

Thank you for the wonderful article on Manasa Kuteera in the August issue.

We appreciate the manner in which the article captured the journey, efforts, and impact of this meaningful project. The feature beautifully conveys not only what the project has achieved, but also the spirit of service and the collective commitment behind it.

We are grateful for the effort taken to highlight the difference Manasa Kuteera is making in the lives of the community members. This article will bring greater visibility to the initiative and inspire more people to support its purpose.

We thank the *Rotary News* team for giving this project a wonderful platform by presenting the story with warmth and clarity. Your encouragement means a great deal to us as it motivates us to create a lasting impact.

Rakesh Babu K L

RC Mysore Mid-Town — D 3181

This letter is with reference to the article by your staff member Muthukumaran on our recent paediatric eye surgery mission at Tamale, Ghana, in the August issue.

Thank you very much for carrying the story; the best part is highlighting the tremendous need in Africa, mainly in the Sub-Saharan region. He did call quite a few times to get all the facts. It is hoped that many clubs, districts in Africa and the world connect with eye surgeons to fill the gap/void in the delivery of the much-needed medical services with the help of TRF.

We sincerely thank TRF, all partners around the globe and in Ghana for the fabulous cooperation and support.

Dr K V Ravishankar, Rotary E-Club of Bangalore — D 3191

June and July are the months for club installations. Many of these events are organised on a grand scale, often in star hotels, involving considerable expenses.

The Rotary programmes usually commence late in the evening and, in some cases, continue until midnight. Rotarians are encouraged to attend with their families.

While late evening events may sometimes be unavoidable, it is worth considering their impact on families: the following day is usually a working day. School and college students, working professionals, businesspersons, factory employees, and senior citizens are expected to resume their normal routine.

Late-night programmes cause inconvenience to many participants.

It is better to reflect on whether such lavish celebrations are justified. The huge expenditure on these events could instead be channelled towards meaningful projects for the underprivileged.

As Rotarians, we have to set an example by practising simplicity, prudence, and responsible use of scarce resources. I urge all Rotary clubs to hold their installations in a simple manner in future.

TD Vasu, RI District 3233

On the cover

RI President Yinka Babalola
in a relaxed moment with
RI Vice President M Muruganandam
and RI Director KP Nagesh
in Hyderabad.

Picture: Rasheeda Bhagat

We welcome your feedback Write to the Editor:

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Mail your project details, along with hi-res photos, to

rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by e-mail to the Editor at

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1.25 million is more than a number

Photograph: Andrew Esiebo



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Rotary has always been about people. Not projects. Not numbers. People.

Our goal of reaching 1.25 million Rotarians and 125,000 Rotaractors by our 125th anniversary in 2030 is also about people.

I bring up this goal again not because I expect the number itself to move you. Numbers rarely do. I bring it up because I worry that a goal this large can begin to feel abstract, distant from the everyday work of our clubs. I do not want that to happen. So let us talk, once more, about what is truly behind it.

I want to offer your club a simple exercise. Look back over the last five to seven years and find your best year. Maybe it was a year new members arrived and, more meaningfully, stayed. Maybe it was a year your meetings became something members looked forward to, rather than another obligation on a crowded calendar. Find that year. Then I ask you to do better than your best.

This is not a call to outpace the club across town or the district next door. It is never meant to be a competition between Rotary members. It is, instead, an invitation to hold ourselves to our own highest standard — and to rise to meet it again.

Why does this 2030 membership goal matter enough to me that I keep returning to it? Because behind every one of those numbers is a person whose

life could be changed by this organisation, just as mine and yours have been changed by it. Rotary has given me friendships that have lasted decades, a sense of purpose I did not know I was searching for, and something that, in time, came to feel like an extension of my family. I suspect many of you understand this in your own lives, in your own way.

That life-changing experience is what we offer when we invite someone to join us. There are people in your communities right now who would find real meaning here if only someone thought to ask them. So tell them your story. Tell them honestly how Rotary changed you, not just about the projects you led or the funds you raised but about the person you became along the way. Those stories have a way of reaching people when little else does.

If we hope to *Create Lasting Impact*, the kind that resounds for generations, we will need more people standing beside us to help carry our work forward. Let us come together, not only this month but every month of every year, to make Rotary stronger, more joyful, and more like the family it has always been to me.

Find your best year. Then let us be better than our best, together.

Yinka Babalola

President, Rotary International



A rush of adrenalin

In recent times we have seen huge upheavals in the lives of India's younger generation, particularly Gen Zee, as we have now got to know them so well, connected to some very real concerns about the state of our entire education system... the monetisation, the corruption and other hanky-panky... that veers the entire systems towards benefitting only a certain section of our society.

But just as the clouds of gloom, despair, and protests across the nation were darkening our skies, came the heartening and cheerful news of the Indian athletes' performance at the 2026 Glasgow Commonwealth Games. Surprisingly, India finished fourth at the games with 30 medals (13 gold, 17 silver, 9 bronze), despite the absence of traditional core sports like shooting and wrestling, where our sportspersons excel.

Indian boxers claimed a first time ever historic 10 medals, including seven golds, which incidentally is a record by any one nation getting so many golds in a single event at a single Games.

While we got our first ever gold in judo, our ace weightlifter Mirabai Chanu bagged her third successive CWG gold, and Gulveer Singh becoming the first Indian track and field athlete to win one silver and one bronze medal at a single event.

Nothing is more satisfying than lustily cheering for your country's sportspersons, seated in front of your TV. Well, India will host the 2030 Commonwealth Games in Ahmedabad and one hopes that in the coming years our athletes continue to make us proud.

The adrenalin rush that a sports victory gives the fans cannot be easily matched, but while cheering and clapping come easily to the audiences, let's think for a moment about the hard work, sleepless nights, relentless early morning workouts and practice sessions, the toil and sweat, the tears and frustration when an athlete or cricketer fails on the playfield.

And when we talk about adrenalin, just ask those Rotarians who are completely, passionately and empathetically involved in executing community service projects. And there is no dearth of such Rotarians in India. As senior leaders keep repeating at events, this is the highest level of talent and technical expertise that Rotarians invest in the projects they do... be it building homes restoring water bodies, doing intricate and complex surgeries in either Africa or India, or putting up digital learning facilities in schools. And these people cannot be hired to do all this work, because they are all successful businesspersons or professionals engaged in their own thriving ventures.

That is why service or expertise, which is not paid for, reaches a higher level of excellence and moves towards the realm of perfection. And what is the return for the volunteering Rotarians? Satisfaction, pride and a dose of adrenaline that can be compared with the best that emanates from a sports field where an athlete is celebrating her victory. While that is commendable too and triggers thousands of dreams, the best projects done by Rotarians transform lives and livelihoods in an unimaginable manner. They make a tangible impact which is immediate, measurable and sustainable. Ask a tribal villager who lived in a thatched hut but has now got a pucca home, or a Maharashtra student, son of a bus driver, trained in the best of IT Innovative lab, who gets instant employment, or women trained in tailoring, beauty care and other skills.

If changing the face of India, tiny bit by bit, one little corner after another, cannot generate a rush of adrenaline, what else can? More strength to such work!

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rasheeda Bhagat



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Keep growing

Grow the club. Hold it. Build its future.

We are living in an uncertain world — conflicts that continue, economies that fluctuate, communities facing climate challenges, and young people who are connected than ever, yet often feel disconnected from purpose.

In times like these, the world does not need more speeches. It needs more hands. Hands that serve, care and create hope.

I believe in the saying: the hands that serve are holier than the lips that pray. Rotary gives us the privilege of living that belief. Every project we undertake, every life we touch, every community we strengthen begins with a Rotarian who chose to serve. And that brings me to a simple truth we must never forget.

Rotary is a membership organisation. Fellowship, diversity and integrity are *of* the members. Service is *by* the members. Leadership is *for* the members. Take away the members, and there is no project, no club, no district, no Rotary. Strong members build strong clubs. Strong clubs build strong districts. Strong districts build a stronger Rotary.

There is encouraging news. Across Zones 4, 5, 6 and 7, we have welcomed 225 new clubs and over 6,400 new members. All four zones are recording positive membership growth, and Zone 5 ranks world No 1 in membership growth. Every new member represents a new pair of hands and a new opportunity to serve.

But growth is only half the story. Around the world, Rotary has added clubs while losing members. We are opening the door successfully — but we are not always ensuring people stay inside.

That is why our focus this year is simple: Grow the club and hold it.

The first step is honesty. Every club must conduct an RAG Analysis — Red, Amber and Green. Green — membership has grown above 51. Amber — membership is flat between 26 – 50. Red — membership has declined below 25. This is not about judgement; it is about awareness. If members leave, we must

ask why. Most members do not leave because Rotary lacks purpose. They leave because they were never truly engaged. Welcome them, involve them, give them responsibility, make them feel valued — and retention follows naturally.

The second step is to build beyond today. Every Rotary club must embrace the 1:2:3 Youth Service approach — one Rotary club nurturing at least two Rotaract clubs and three Interact clubs. An Interactor of today becomes a Rotaractor of tomorrow and subsequently, a Rotarian, sustaining Rotary across generations.

Rotary is also the world's greatest leadership factory. Every year, more than 400,000 leaders assume responsibilities at the club, district, zone and international levels. Rotary does not merely identify leaders — it develops them through service, responsibility and action. Every new member is not just a volunteer; he/she is a potential president, governor, director or trustee.

This is why Vision 2030 matters. As Rotary approaches its 125th anniversary, our global aspiration is bold — 1.25 million Rotarians and 125,000 Rotaractors. This vision will become a reality only when every club grows, every club retains, and every Rotarian says Yes to building Rotary's future.

Behind every membership number is a person. Behind every person is a family, a community and an opportunity to create lasting impact. So let us be 'possibility leaders.' Club presidents, hand over your clubs with positive growth. District Governors, hand over your districts stronger than you received them.

The world is asking for more hands. Let us answer with Yes to Rotary, and together, let us *Create Lasting Impact*.

M Muruganandam

RI Vice President, 2026-27

RI Director, 2025-27

Message from TRF Trustee Chair



Make polio history

This month, I want to have some fun and do a little preplanning exercise for World Polio Day on October 24. Are you with me?

Each year, World Polio Day gives us a moment to pause, reflect, and recommit to the promise Rotary made to the world that no child, anywhere, will ever again suffer the devastating effects of polio. This year, that moment feels especially powerful.

President Yinka has challenged all of us to “better our best,” and I want to echo that call with a challenge of my own. Look honestly at what your club has done to support polio eradication. If your efforts have been strong, stretch further. If your club has not yet engaged in our No 1 corporate priority, begin now by making a gift of at least \$1,500 at endpolio.org/donate.

That single act of generosity will do much more than you may realise. Thanks to the Gates Foundation’s 2-to-1 match, every dollar becomes three. Together, we can reach our annual goal of \$50 million and finish the job Rotary began.

Each step brings us closer to a world where polio exists only in history books.

But numbers alone do not tell the whole story. Above all, polio eradication is a human endeavour — built on courage, compassion, and the belief that service can reshape the future.

On World Polio Day, I will be spending time in a place that symbolises exactly that. It is a location unlike any I have ever visited, and I look forward to revealing it in real time on social media. I will be having a creative (and fun) time while using this as an opportunity to shine light on those whose work embodies Rotary’s highest ideals — health workers, volunteers, and community leaders who stand on the frontlines of disease prevention.

Later this year, President Yinka and I will be travelling to Pakistan to meet with many of these leaders to express our personal gratitude. They are the reason we have come so far and must finish what we started.

As you prepare for World Polio Day, I ask you to join me in spirit and in action. Host an event. Tell the story of Rotary’s leadership. Invite your community to participate. Make your club’s gift. And above all, help us build momentum that carries into the months ahead.

And for all my puzzle-loving friends, here is a clue to my personal location on October 24: “Polio with the _ E _ _ U _ _ S.”

Jennifer Jones
TRF Trustee Chair

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Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee



Let need lead the way

As I travel to various districts witnessing the projects carried out by clubs around our region, one thing that strikes me is the passion with which Rotarians talk about their projects. The sense of ownership and pride is evident. However, we seem to be satisfied with the outcome far too often, and not progress to creating a greater impact that we are capable of. This limits the extent of our reach.

Let us reassess where we start. Is it with a club fundraiser or a project idea? Our capacity is limitless if only we set our sights on what the community needs and not on what we can do. Need assessment should be the starting point for our community service projects. The need, which when fulfilled, creates an impact that will last and be beneficial in an irreversible manner. The Rotary Foundation always focuses on creating lasting changes in our communities that we together can bring about.

While every act of kindness and charity by an individual helps someone, it may not fully utilise our power of collective organised charity. I would therefore urge every Rotarian and every club to look around your community and identify a pressing need which, if addressed, would change lives. Large, seemingly insurmountable issues can be addressed if we collectively put our mind to it. Let us not look for projects that fit our budgets and instead look for impactful ideas that changes communities. We, collectively, are far bigger than the sum of what we are capable of, individually. Let us not lose sight of that.

Let us resolve to look for and identify needs in our communities that we can collectively resolve, to make a lasting impact. As Robert Browning famously wrote in his poem *Andrea del Sarto*: A man's reach should exceed his grasp, or what's a heaven for!

AS Venkatesh
TRF Trustee

RI Director KP Nagesh



Rasheeda Bhagat



Let's take Rotary to greater heights

Rasheeda Bhagat

Born in an agricultural family RI Director KP Nagesh grew up in a village in Kanakapura taluk, Karnataka. Till high school he studied in Kannada medium, with English and Hindi as subjects. “I had to walk around 8km to reach my high school, and then another 8km back... every day.” For his PUC, the family shifted to Kanakapura, “only because that involved a 23km-walk from my village which was impossible.”

Next came a mechanical engineering degree, followed by the challenge to find a job, which was hard to get.

The Indian Air Force came into his life almost by accident. “A batchmate saw an advertisement asking for young engineers to join the Indian Armed Forces. We thought even though we won’t get selected, let’s go; it’ll be a good outing. Everything was free... travel, accommodation, food.”

To his great surprise, he made it, clearing one round after another, joined as a pilot officer, went on to become a flight lieutenant, and spent six years in the Air Force.

The Air Force years

So why did he leave? It was the early '90s, many young Indian engineers were heading to the US, and most of his engineering classmates had decided to go there. “My wife Uma is a computer engineer, and I a mechanical engineer,

At a glance

Religion: I respect my religion and all religions. But pooja and other rituals are being taken care of by Uma... she is compensating for me, and I am grateful to her.

Favourite food: Our South Indian food, there is nothing like it. My favourite is dosa... of all varieties. And of course, biryani!

Cooking: I want to, I have some inclination for cooking for sure, but Uma is not allowing me inside the kitchen!

Fitness: I am fit, thanks to the Indian Air Force where we were out from 4 to 7am... three non-stop hours of running, games and other physical activity. Even today, fitness remains part of my routine. I play shuttle badminton from 6am for an hour and then spend another hour in the gym. My daughter Nidhi forces me to go to the gym!

Relaxation: Somebody told me just relax a little; you are running around too much. I said the moment I lie down, I will get tension! Talking to people and keeping busy is relaxation for me.

Music: I love music. It relaxes me. I love Hindi, Kannada songs.... any kind of Indian music.

Movies, favourite actors: Indian movies... Rajkumar in

the earlier days, then Rajinikanth and Kamal Haasan. Now I also like Hindi movies, but old ones, not the latest ones.

A people's person: I like doing things parallely. I work almost 18 hours a day; there are some

20 people... who have become family over the years. We meet once a month for a movie, picnic, an early morning walk in Lalbagh or Cubbon Park, or simply to eat somewhere. I just love being with people. Staying alone, I get tension and become restless.



Director Nagesh with his wife Uma, daughter Nidhi and son Tejas.

Favourite holiday destination:

I love places where there is a lot of nature and natural beauty. New Zealand is the ultimate in natural beauty, as also some European countries which are so beautiful. Recently we visited eight African countries and really enjoyed them.

Rotary in short: It is an unmatched, non-comparable organisation, which has got everything for everybody. I love it because it is a single window solution for anything... that's Rotary.

Good leader: A good leader should always lead by example, because Rotary is a leader's organisation. If you lead by example, people will follow and respect you. I learned a lot from the late PDG Yogananda from Bengaluru... he is my Rotary guru.

Dream for Rotary: I am not satisfied with where the organisation is today. Rotary is now doing good. But I want to see a Rotary that is great and at the top among NGOs. It has all the qualities and potential to be there. The problem is in the concept of leadership... not the leaders. We have great leaders.

TRF-giving: We might be No 2 in the world but even then, I am not happy. The potential is there to multiply it tenfold. At my acceptance speech in Bengaluru, I set another target — to get by 2030, 100 Rotary districts in India and take TRF giving to \$100 million. ■

The Indian Air Force taught me leadership, the ability to talk confidently and without fear, discipline of course, time management and dress code.

so we thought we would go to the US." But fate had other plans for him; another ad and his life took a new turn.

This time, the ad sought young defence officers for a security company. "Since I wanted to go to the US, I didn't give it much attention, but Uma applied for me, saying: 'Let's see what happens!'" On the third day he was called for an interview, was selected and stayed there for two years. But the Air Force had already made a deep impact on him.

Asked what the Air Force taught him, particularly about leadership, Nagesh says, "the selection itself was

rather tricky and challenging, and went on for almost five days... involving written tests, professional knowledge, group activities, discussions, physical fitness... running, rope climbing, jumping, etc! I came first in running."

All the walking during school days must have helped, I comment and he laughs. "Oh yes, thanks to all that walking, my physical fitness was great!"

But there was one area where he struggled — the group discussions. There were youngsters from IITs and other prestigious colleges. Nagesh had studied in Kannada medium and found it difficult to get into the conversation. "Everybody was talking and I could hardly get a word in."

That was when he remembered what he calls the "Kamal Haasan trick"

Rasheeda Bhagat



Rotary in India



On the strength of Rotary in India, growth in membership, TRF giving and service projects, RI Director Nagesh says confidently “I don’t think anybody can beat us. India is producing Rotary leaders for the world. I’d even say Rotary is a manufacturing factory... a leadership manufacturing factory.”

He marvels at the manner in which Rotary changes people; “it transforms people; so many women have told me: ‘Thank

you for making my husband president. Now he is a totally changed person.’”

Nagesh is not overly worried about politics within Rotary in India. “Some cases, maybe 5–10 per cent, go beyond the limit. But both Vice President M Muruganandam and I are handling them.”

The answer lies in leadership by example. He says complaints from India are reducing and he believes that creating more

I hesitated to become club president so soon because my principle is if I take up something, I want to do the best. Otherwise, I will not take it.

districts and therefore more leadership opportunities can also help. “That will reduce the fighting and the complaints.”

Support from family

Nagesh’s Rotary journey was possible because of his family’s support. He and Uma initially enjoyed Rotary together — family outings, meetings and other events. Uma herself has been a Rotarian for 25 years. But over the years, Nagesh’s involvement grew. “Earlier I would spend 20 per cent of my time on Rotary. Now it is almost 80 per cent.”

He admits that his family and friends, who now get much less of his time, are supportive.

“But they are also counting the days. They say, ‘After this, please don’t do anything and spend some time with us!’”

Their daughter Nidhi is a chartered accountant and a fitness enthusiast. Their son Tejas is a mechanical engineer and runs his own start-up company.

from a film he had seen. In the film, the actor is travelling in a bus, and can't get the driver to stop because of a language problem. After trying everything, he finally shouts loudly. The driver applies the brakes, and the passenger gets down and says 'Thank you'.

Nagesh decided to try something similar and suddenly shouted: *Friends*. Everyone stopped talking. He had their attention. "I said we are discussing everything that is happening outside India. Let's please come back to India". He saw the selection panel

Rotary is an unmatched,
non-comparable
organisation, with
everything for everybody;
it's a single window
solution for anything.

members make some notes and knew he had scored a positive point.

Looking back, he says the Air Force was the turning point in his life. "It taught me leadership, the ability to talk confidently and without fear, discipline of course, time management, dress code... so many plus points have come from the Air Force."

Enter Rotary

And then came Rotary!

He joined Rotary after one of his Air Force friends GC Jayaprakash

**With RI Vice President and Director M Muruganandam
at Rotary founder Paul Harris' home in Chicago, US.**



suggested that he should join a Rotary club. “I didn’t know anything about a Rotary club and said I am already a member of this club and that club. And he said, ‘No, no, this is totally different. It’s about networking, service, leadership, and a lot of fun, where families meet at events, go for picnics, etc.’”

In 1995 he joined Rotary Bangalore High Grounds as a charter member. He was immediately made the treasurer. “They said you come from a disciplined, defence background.” A couple of years later when they asked him to be president, he refused as in 1998 he was busy setting up his security services company. But the members didn’t give him a choice. After one meeting, a senior Rotarian — Ramesh Joshi — followed him to his car in pouring rain. “I was sitting inside and he was standing outside getting drenched asking me to accept the club’s presidency.” He finally gave in. “I was hesitating because my principle is if I take up something, I want to do the best. Otherwise, I will not take it.” That principle has stayed with him, he says.

A high-achieving DG

In 2015–16 Nagesh became governor of RID 3190, and achieved the

distinction of making his district the world’s topmost in TRF-giving. With huge satisfaction he recalls that he set out with the goal to make it the best in India, but ended up with the world No 1 position not only in TRF-giving, but also membership, Rotaract, Interact, and women members.

I remind him of our coverage in *Rotary News* about the then RID 3190 DG walking away with all the awards at the Dubai Institute and the headline I had given: *Then there was Nagesh*. He smiles and gives much of the credit to his team, but also to something he had learnt much earlier. “I applied whatever I had learnt in the Air Force.”

Coming to what Rotary had given and taught him, he says, “Rotary is a good friends network with very qualified and mature leaders with great leadership qualities. What we can learn in Rotary is not available anywhere else. You can look at the qualities very successful Rotarians have and adopt

Rasheeda Bhagat



Women are in the forefront
in all organisations, then
why aren’t we encouraging
women to be at the frontline
in Rotary? The gap exists in
leadership positions.



Clockwise from above: With his guru PDG Yogananda; (From L): PRIP K R Ravindran, Vanathy, Uma, Nagesh, Sharmishtha and PRID Manoj Desai at the Zone Institute in Dubai; Nagesh and Uma at their wedding; Director Nagesh and Uma at the Delhi Zone Institute.

I told my batchmates...
I've decided to be world
number one; catch me if
you can! And they gave me
this title.

them. Rotary polishes you, and teaches you how to present yourself.”

Rotary also gave him the opportunity to see the world, do service. Within a year of joining, he became the polio committee chairman of his club; “that was actually the turning point and I decided to continue in Rotary.”

He admits that during his governorship his business did suffer, but he



was completely involved in Rotary. “I told my batchmates... I’ve decided to be world number one; catch me if you can!” The title stayed.

He also set himself the challenge of starting 52 new clubs in 52 weeks — something he says was achieved for the first time in RI.

Bigger is not always bad!

On the debate about membership quality versus quantity, Nagesh takes a different view. “When you get somebody into Rotary, where is it written that this person has quality? Here I differ from others... first, get people into Rotary, explain Rotary to them, understand them, and shape those new members.



With PDGs Parag Sheth (3060), Sathish Madhavan (3191) and H R Ananth (3192).

Increasing women members

Nagesh is clear that Rotary needs many more women. “I am not at all happy with the current situation of women’s membership in Rotary in India. Look at the larger picture; whatever field you take, women are in the forefront. Then why are we not inviting or encouraging women to be at the frontline in our organisation? That gap is still there in leadership positions.”

But things are slowly changing, and “we are beginning to see more women club presidents and governors too. But we need to take our female membership from the present 18 per cent to at least 33 per cent.”

He supports the idea of using Inner Wheel to bring more women into the Rotary family.

“It is cheaper, easier and not too demanding. Let more women first join Inner Wheel

and later 10–20 per cent can come from there to Rotary.” He points to Brazil as an example and says we should apply it too because it is successful there.

In his experience, Nagesh adds, “women bring several strengths to Rotary. They are more focused, productive, effective, sincere, disciplined and committed. Clubs with more women members are flourishing and growing faster.”

There is already a drive to identify clubs without women members and encourage them to bring in at least 10 per cent women members. Another possibility, he says, is to bring spouses and female relatives into Inner Wheel and eventually offer dual membership in Inner Wheel and Rotary. The message is simple: “Rotary cannot afford to leave half the population on the sidelines.” ■

Whoever loves Rotary, will continue; one who doesn’t, for whatever reason, let him leave.”

He is equally ambitious about Rotaract. With 65 per cent of India’s population below 35, he believes India has an opportunity that may never come again. “At the RI Board when they put the target of Rotaractors at 1.25 lakh by 2030, I said India alone will achieve this target.”

Rotaractors in India have doubled from 24,000 last year to around 50,000 this year. “Now we want to double that to 1 lakh and make it 1.25 lakh before Muruganandam and I step down as directors. So India alone will achieve the world target of 2030 in 2027.”

President Yinka, he adds, has also made a commitment saying that “the moment you reach the 100,000-mark for Rotaractors, I will, wherever I am in the world, fly down within 48 hours to India to celebrate that moment. This is his commitment.”

Profile of RI VP M Muruganandam in October ’26 issue.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Pankaj Shah

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Tell your stories of transformation

Babalola

Rasheeda Bhagat

I've heard Rotarians say the pressure to bring in new members is diluting the strength of our membership, and we are focussing more on quantity and not quality. But Rotary is by invitation. Who amongst you is a poor-quality person? Right here in Hyderabad are good quality, very competent, highly skilled, highly resourceful people, who have every qualification to be Rotarians. But they do not have a pass yet. If you don't bring them in, in 15 years, this room will be empty, and when an RI President plans his programme, Hyderabad will not be on the list," said RI President Yinka Babalola.

Participating in the RI District 3150 membership seminar titled *Creating Lasting Impact* hosted by RC Hyderabad East and co-hosted by RCs Hyderabad Centennial and Aashray Warangal, he then sought a show of hands of people in the room who had become better persons because of Rotary, which had transformed them completely and changed their lives, their business, their family. While most hands were up, he said he could still see some hands not going up. "That's fine; it's possible that Rotary has not transformed you yet and we have a little more work to do."

On membership growth, he said that Rotary VP M Muruganandam and RI director KP Nagesh had told him that India was committed to a net gain of 10,000. Initially, he was impressed, as it was 40 per cent of the total target. "But having visited 10 cities in India, I've concluded that 10,000 is not strong enough. A new member is an asset, a new resource and a future leader for Rotary. Why should an organisation that is transformative and changing people's lives for good, have difficulty finding more members?"

This meant something was missing and there's a disconnect somewhere. And that was "as Rotarians, we do not



From L: RID 3150 PDG Ramesh Vangala, DG Uday S Pilani, RI Vice President M Muruganandam, RI Director K P Nagesh, District PHS chair Mopala Ravinder Reddy, RI President Yinka Babalola, his wife Precy, TRF Trustee A S Venkatesh and PDG Hanmanth Reddy.

tell our stories of transformation. Rotary's vision statement says together we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves."

Eradicating polio was creating lasting impact. Rotary Peace Centers, including the latest one in Pune's Symbiosis University, or the Makerere University, Kampala, did the same. In these Peace Centers "every single fellow participant is required to carry out a social change initiative in the community that improves or promotes peace. So in two years, 80 social change initiatives from these centres to create lasting change will take place because of you."

While Rotarians were creating lasting change in Rotary's focus areas, when he asked them how to create lasting change "in ourselves, the room goes quiet. Because each time we talk about Rotary, we talk about how we impact others. We don't think about how Rotary impacts us. So think about it."

The RI President said everybody desires lasting change in his or her life, whether it's a 30-year-old lawyer, 50-year-old engineer, or a 70-year-old retired business tycoon. "And when they come, you deliver the Rotary promise, welcome them, show them they can belong here and their thoughts will matter." Such members would get diversity and integrity as also the opportunity to use their vocation and talent to improve their communities and their own

leadership skills. They'd be promised an environment of friendship, fellowship and fun.

Urging Rotarians to tell their own special stories, Babalola related his own experience in California where he had gone while working for Shell in 2004. He suddenly developed a toothache, and called a Rotarian friend saying he needed to see a dentist. "He came to my hotel with his wife and she said it would take 5-6 days even to get an appointment. But the husband called a Rotary friend, a dentist who asked us to see him in an hour. As he attended on me, my heart was beating as I had no insurance in the US, wondering how many thousand dollars it would cost. But I was in pain and had no choice. He finished, and I was relieved. But as the pain subsided, the dollar fear increased."

When he asked the dentist about his fee, he told him that the American Rotarian had been talking about what Babalola was doing for Rotary in his country. "The treatment is free," he said! This was the value Rotary brought.

Another story he related was when, as a 27-year-old Rotaractor he wanted to join Rotary, he walked into a Rotary club meeting. The club president looked up and asked: 'What do you want this time?' When he said he had come to join Rotary, he said: What audacity! What's wrong with this young man? Don't you know Rotary is only by invitation? "I could have walked away, and joined Lions or something else. But somehow, I found the courage to respond: I never knew that a child requires an invitation to visit the home of the parents. At that moment, a Rotarian got up and said: 'Yinka, I will be your sponsor for this club.' And that's how I became a Rotarian."

Even though, from a Rotaractor he had risen to the rank of an RI President, "for me, this is not a reward; it is payback time for Rotary to recoup

Right here in Hyderabad
are good quality, very
competent, highly skilled,
highly resourceful people,
who have every qualification
to be Rotarians. But they do
not have a pass yet.

Yinka Babalola
RI President

its investment in me over the years," said Babalola, raising the query: "My fellow Rotarians, who are you mentoring? What are you doing with your Rotaractors who are the future leaders of this organisation."

He then quoted the Nigerian inspector general of police who had said at a Rotary conference that "every young person mentored by a Rotarian was one less person who'd need to be arrested in the future."

He congratulated RID 3150 for, as DG Uday Pilani announced, the first district in the world to give 100 per cent EREY (Every Rotarian Every Year) contribution of \$153,705, with 4,172 Rotarians in the district contributing ₹3,500 each to TRF.

On the two RI directors' mission of getting the Rotaract number in India from 50,000 to 100,000 before May 2027, Babalola said: "When this happens, send me an invitation. Even if I'm on my way to Argentina, I will meet you somewhere in India. It's a promise!"

Rotary International Vice President M Muruganandam said the community service that Rotarians were



able to do with TRF funds was nothing short of amazing and covered all of Rotary's focus areas from education, disease prevention, empowering local economies, protecting mothers and children, and providing clean water to promoting peace.

He disclosed that he had started giving to TRF right from the age of 15, and "till date, directly or indirectly, I have contributed or spent towards Rotary a minimum of ₹20 crore to a maximum of ₹40 crore in different projects, as an individual and through my company's CSR initiatives."

He disclosed that his organisation, the Excel group, was in the process of building a cancer care hospital spending ₹120 crore. The service provided would be on an 80:20 ratio, with the majority of the patients being the poor and underprivileged people. He gave credit for this hospital coming up to TRF.

Rotary in India was truly vibrant; "we are No 1 in membership, and No 2 in TRF contribution. And even in TRF contribution RID 3141 has emerged world No 1, and RID 3203, which includes the tier 2 city of Tirupur, has ranked world No 2. In the last five years, in TRF-giving we have grown from \$20 million to \$28, \$35, \$38 and \$45 million last year."

The way our zones were proceeding, they would eventually touch \$100 million, he added.

Each time we talk about
Rotary, we talk about
how we impact others.
We don't think about how
Rotary impacts us. So
think about it.

Muruganandam said that right from the age of 16, when he was a Rotaractor, he had been observing national immunisation days, which were so important to India's children.

Urging Rotarians to give to TRF, he said that not only was their money going towards cent per cent eradication of polio, it was doing so much of good in the world. In TRF, there was total accountability and strict stewardship for their money, so that every single dollar was accounted for.

Next year, or 5 or 10 years later, they would be able to take pride when "a child can walk and run freely, a girl receives an education, a village receives clean drinking water, a local community is empowered and an environment is cared for."



RI director KP Nagesh said that Rotarians in India had been doing projects for years with their own money, or what he called ISR... Individual Social Responsibility. But now with CSR entering the field, "big money" was available to do bigger and more sustainable projects. At present an estimated ₹48,000 crore were available each year through CSR. "But if the government decides tomorrow to increase the CSR spend from 2 to 3 per cent of the company's net profit, imagine the amount. And Rotarians are really well-equipped to do big service projects. Just as LIC had once come out with the slogan, 'We know India better!' We Rotarians know the community and its needs better."



From L: Trustee Venkatesh, Director Nagesh, President Babalola, Precy and RI VP Muruganandam.



President Babalola greets RC Coimbatore Aakruthi member Leema Rose Martin as (from L) Trustee Venkatesh, RI VP Muruganandam, Director Nagesh, RID 3206 DG R S Maruti and RID 3150 DG Pilani look on.

Nagesh said Rotarians were trying to access more CSR funds, and Covid had taught a lot of people to give more for the less privileged.

He was happy to note that TRF-giving has improved a lot in India, which is clocking many more AKS members. This year the target was a whopping 75 members. This number will be celebrated at a big event in Mumbai by the year-end when the trustee chair visits India.

He also announced that this year's TRF-giving target is \$60 million!

TRF trustee AS Venkatesh said at a gathering like the one before him, he did not need to say why “we should contribute to the Foundation, because that is like preaching to the converted. You are already aware of what our Foundation is and what it can do.”

But what he did want to emphasise was the value that “TRF brings to the cause of charity and improving lives of the people in the communities around us through the invaluable man hours of the Rotarian volunteers.” That is a very

significant portion; as DG Uday Pilani said his service cannot be bought as it was not affordable.

Every single project done by TRF included valuable man hours spent by Rotarians which could not be evaluated in dollar terms as they brought in exceptional talent and technical expertise of Rotarians from various fields and professions.

Armed with CSR funds, Rotarians could transform communities, Venkatesh added, because the maximum amount given went into the service project. Giving an example, he said that he had looked at the Red Cross balance sheet and found that 34 per cent of the funds given to the organisation for a project went to admin work. Whereas in Rotary, the figure was in single digits, which means what actually gets delivered to the beneficiaries is huge.

Another major difference was that while “most other NGOs which carry out charitable activities do them through paid employees, here Rotarians do the job because they believe in doing it. That makes all the difference.”

RID 3150 DG Uday Pilani said he was a third generation Rotarian, and his daughter was the fourth. They were in Rotary because “of the immense value it added to their lives and helped them become responsible citizens and better human beings. I keep saying it doesn't matter how many zeros you have in your bank account. What matters most is how many lives you are touching.”

He said RID 3150 was doing four impactful projects. In one, an MoU had been signed with the Telangana government to restore over 2,000 acres of degraded urban land. In another project, the Rotarians were upgrading the neonatal facilities at 14 government hospitals across Hyderabad, “so that no expectant mother who goes to any hospital will find anything lacking.”

In yet another project, across Telangana and Andhra, 8,000 bicycles are being given to girls in classes 8–10 in government secondary schools, so that “with confidence, they can go to their schools, attend their classes regularly, and build a future for themselves.”

The district's Rotarians were also actively looking forward to partner with both industry and the government to deliver services to the community, Pilani added.

While AKS member Leema Martin, a member of RC Coimbatore Aakruthi, RID 3206, announced a donation of ₹3 crore, Dandolu P Reddy and Jhansi Premanand, both members of RC Jubilee Hills donated \$25,000 each to TRF.

Pictures: Rasheeda Bhagat

Next issue: Babalola's cap fetches \$31,000!

RID 3240 Rotaractors' memorable trip to Bhutan

Rasheeda Bhagat

In a unique gesture of group bonding, around 80 Rotaractors from over 20 clubs in RI District 3240 recently undertook a one-day trip from Assam to the Gelephu area of Bhutan, taking advantage of special travel rules for Indians visiting Bhutan for a short spell.

RID 3240 IPDRR Kumar Shivam Das, who organised the trip, from Bongaigaon in Assam to Gelephu in Bhutan says the trip, barely a 45-minute drive, turned out to be a memorable experience for all the Rotaractors.

For Indian visitors, the Bhutan government allows travel to a 10km periphery in the Gelephu township, which is absolutely beautiful with mountains,

waterfalls, lots of greenery, hot springs etc. This region is on the border with Assam, and for a distance of about 8–10km Indian travellers can remain for 24 hours without permit for entering Bhutan. Just registration with ID cards at the Immigration point is required.

Gushing about “the first ever international trip for Rotaractors from District 3240,” Das said this trip was organised by the Rotaract District 3240 team (2025–26), with a lot of the groundwork done by the Rotaract Club of Bongaigaon, Assam. It was made possible, thanks to an awards ceremony for the Rotaractors of RID 3240 that was organised in Bhutan. Around 130 people participated in that event; the

district has a membership of around 850 Rotaractors. “It turned out to be an unforgettable trip and a journey filled with mountains, culture, spirituality and unforgettable companionship. The landscape of Gelephu is so serene and beautiful that we feel other Rotaractors should also experience this place by undertaking such a trip.”

The cost was next to nothing... just the registration fee of ₹749, but the experience was one to die for. “From the divine calm of Yagyaswar Shiv Mandir, where prayers echoed amidst peaceful hills, to the breathtaking beauty of Serzhong Gewog, every destination in Gelephu carried a story of simplicity and harmony. Crossing the scenic Passang Zam felt like walking through a bridge of memories, connecting hearts through laughter, conversations, and shared moments,” says Das.

Rotaractors at the Yagyaswar Mahadev Shivalaya Mandir in Gelephu.





Sherjong Gewok Bridge.



From L to R: Semanti Singha, IPDRR Kumar Shivam Das, Didhiti Singha, Anikpati Roy, Debarshi Paul and Tultul Chakraborty inside the Tali Monastery in Gelephu.

On their most memorable moments from this experience, Das, who works with the food safety department of the Assam government, adds that more than a trip, “it was a collection of moments that will forever remain close to our hearts. Of the 80, for more than 60 participants it was their first international trip. The whole experience was mesmerising. The vibrant lanes of Gelephu Market welcomed us with the warmth of Bhutanese culture, local smiles, and colourful traditions that made every moment feel alive. Beyond sightseeing, this tour became a celebration of friendship, unity, and the spirit of fellowship that Rotaract stands for.”

The group included a president nominee and general secretary from the South Asian MDIO (Multidistrict Information Organisation), which is a term for a regional group made up of two or more Rotary districts. Its main job is to help clubs share news and build communication. The cost was so nominal — barely ₹750 — as it only included the transportation and food; an everlasting memory will be breakfast by the riverside as soon as they reached their destination. Lunch was also planned there but the rains

spoiled that plan and they halted at a restaurant for lunch.

The outgoing DRR, who has already become a Rotarian joining the Rotary Club of Northeast Catalyst, is ecstatic about the beautiful opportunity this trip provided the different members of the 20-odd Rotaract clubs to connect, bond, have meaningful conversations and make beautiful memories. “I think that when we have such a beautiful destination so close to our country, we should definitely visit it. And I was very keen to plan this trip because this region, so close to our district, has never been explored over the years by our Rotaractors. After all, Bhutan is such a beautiful country.” The deciding factors, apart from its proximity, were the low cost and no need to get a permit or visa, which is often a hassle.

When he keeps saying this was a golden opportunity for the Rotaractors to have meaningful conversations and make connections, I ask if the young are indeed interested in serious conversations. “Oh yes, they are. For instance,

people generally think that the younger generation is not into visiting temples. But you’d be surprised to know that the group took much interest in visiting the Yagyaswar Shiv Mandir... because however young or old, at the end of the day we all need peace.”

On his takeaway from his year as DRR, this 28-year-old says philosophically, “My main intention was that as a DRR, through the 365-day journey, I did not want to just run and reach the finishing line. I wanted to walk with all my Rotaractors, my batchmates, my seniors, juniors, everyone. I felt we should just walk, meet people, and at the end come together at the finish line. Because no individual can achieve much alone. He/she needs to involve everyone.”

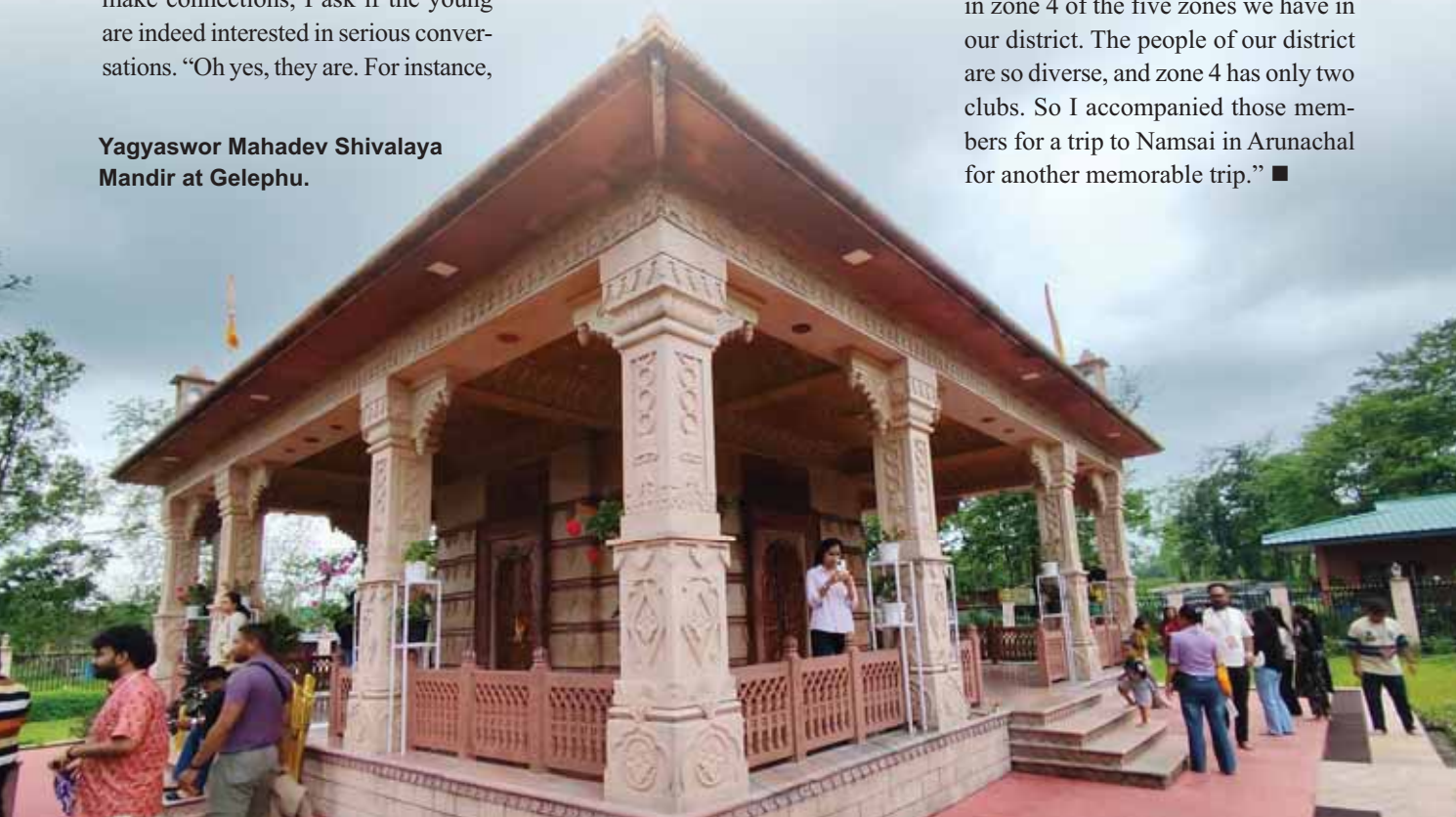
On how many from his district will eventually join Rotary, Das says that out of the 80 on the Bhutan trip, 25 had already joined Rotary. This district, he adds, has 56 Rotaract clubs, with most being community clubs and barely 5–6 university-based clubs. During his tenure as DRR, he says proudly, 17 new clubs were added.

On the kind of dialogues that Rotaractors have and if they talk seriously about their future, Das says, “Of course they are very serious about such issues.” The district leadership is already holding talks with companies about internship and job opportunities for these youngsters, as it is fully aware that only by giving such opportunities to their members, can they expect their membership to sustain or grow. A DPR (detailed project report) is being prepared on this aspect, he adds.

Asked if trips such as the one they undertook to Bhutan will be replicated, Das smiles and nods. Thanks to the South Asia MDIO representatives who participated in this trip, at a recent Rotaract awards event in Bengaluru, where 45 South Asian Rotaract districts participated, the MDIO president-elect shared his experience in Gelephu with the entire group, and said such beautiful trips provide a valuable bonding opportunities to the Rotaractors.

While the Bhutan trip was done in May, more recently, another group visited Arunachal Pradesh, “which falls in zone 4 of the five zones we have in our district. The people of our district are so diverse, and zone 4 has only two clubs. So I accompanied those members for a trip to Namsai in Arunachal for another memorable trip.” ■

**Yagyaswar Mahadev Shivalaya
Mandir at Gelephu.**



A Chandigarh school named after **PRIP Saboo**

Team Rotary News

On August 11, the 92nd birthday of PRIP Rajendra Saboo, the Bhavan Vidyalaya, New Chandigarh, was named Bhavan's R K Saboo Vidyalaya. Saboo is the chairman of the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan chain of schools, Chandigarh Kendra, since 1996. He has been associated with the educational institution since 1977.

The new school, with 1,350 students, is the third in the Bhavan group of schools in Chandigarh. It is spread across a beautifully landscaped five-acre campus, with modern facilities and equipment comparable with the best schools in India and abroad.

The Bhavan schools in Chandigarh have been acclaimed among India's best for decades. The first Bhavan school in the city was established in 1983, says its secretary, PDG



PRIP Rajendra Saboo interacting with students at Bhavan Vidyalaya on his 91st birthday.

Madhukar Malhotra, who has been associated with Saboo “for 48 years and with Bhavan Chandigarh for 14 years as secretary.”

A video released by the school on Saboo's birthday shows children

lovingly wishing him in chorus. It ends with a warm note: “We are grateful, Saboo Sir, for the vision you gave us, the values you entrusted to us. Thank you for giving us more than a school; you have given us a legacy.” ■



PRID Bharat Pandya nominated **RI President (2028–29)**

Bharat Pandya, a member of RC Borivli, RID 3141, is the selection of the nominating committee for RI president for 2028–29. He will officially become the president-nominee on September 15 if there is no challenge.

Pandya served as RI director for 2019–21, RI treasurer for 2020–21 and was TRF trustee during 2022–26. He is currently chair of the RI Programs Committee and vice-chair of TRF Programs Committee.

He served on the India PolioPlus Committee in 2011–15, during which time India was certified polio-free. During his year as DG in 2006–07, RID 3140 contributed over \$2 million to TRF and for the first time in the history of TRF an Indian district — D 3140 — became world number 1 in TRF contributions.

Pandya and his wife, Madhavi, a past district chair of Inner Wheel District 314, are Major Donors and Benefactors. Pandya is a general and laparoscopic surgeon, and Madhavi, a gynaecologist. ■

A Rotary Fellowship for healing

Rasheeda Bhagat

One of the heartwarming booths at the Taiwan Convention was put up by the initiators of the Rotary Fellowship of Hypnosis and Healing (RFHH), started by Rotarians in RID 3080. Dr Harsimran Singh Chowdhary, an allergist from Paonta Sahib, Himachal Pradesh (about 120km from Chandigarh), who started this

Harleen Kaur performing a tarot card reading for a visitor in the Rotary Fellowship of Hypnosis and Healing booth at the Taipei Convention.



Fellowship, says, “When we put up our Healing and Hypnosis booth at the House of Friendship at the Taipei Convention, walking into the hall on the first morning, I remember wondering whether anyone would stop at our booth.”

Fortunately, many Rotarians did, he recalls, smiling. “Over the next few days, Rotarians from every corner of the world came over — not only to

enquire about the fellowship but to talk about stress, emotional wellbeing, healing, and the challenges people are facing in their own communities.” What was heartening for him was that by the end of the convention, around 25 new members had joined RFHH. “For a newly formed fellowship taking its very first steps, that felt deeply encouraging, and meant more to us than I can express.”

Tracing the genesis and evolution of this Fellowship, Dr Singh, the founder and executive secretary of RFHH, who is a paediatrician, allergist and asthma specialist, says he has been doing private practice in his hometown for 12 years, and is married to Harleen Kaur, an alternative therapist with a double PhD, who has been running her own centre for the last 23 years.

She started practising alternative therapies from the young age of 18, and is a Reiki grandmaster and a well-known tarot card reader, who is often invited to TV channels to share her knowledge and expertise, and has trained some 5,000 students, including youngsters from foreign countries.

They are members of RC Chandigarh Royale, RID 3080, and he is also a TRF Cadre member for Global Health (2026–31). “When we joined Rotary, we thought, why don’t we give our skills to fellow Rotarians also and help them.” Though he is a paediatrician and allergy expert, Dr Singh has also been practising hypnotherapy during the last 2 to 3 years. “In hypnotherapy, we work with the subconscious mind. I visit de-addiction centres in my region along with Harleen and do hypnotherapy sessions for inmates there to cure them of their addiction.”

When they decided to share their knowledge with Rotarians, they

Rotarians from all over the world came to talk about stress, emotional wellbeing, healing, and the challenges people face in their own communities.

applied for the Fellowship. But, he admits, this was easier said than done. “It was a very difficult job for us. I worked very hard, and it took about six months to convince the person who heads RI Fellowships — there are around 100 Fellowships all across the world (this magazine featured one on motorcycle riders in the August issue) and we got the clearance after a lot of convincing.”

This is the first Fellowship in RID 3080, he says with pride, and it was approved only in Feb 2026. Now it has 70 members, having been boosted by the 25 new members they got at the Taiwan Convention. The members, who include healers and therapists from all over the world, meet online once a month. At these meetings, Harleen trains them how to use the subconscious mind. The couple’s plan is to train fellow Rotarians in alternative therapies, healing modalities and spiritual sciences.

A pilot project Dr Singh and Harleen are planning is related to treating the inmates at the Nahan Central Jail for depression and other mental health related maladies. “We need permission for this and have contacted Himachal Pradesh director general of



Prisons Abhishek Trivedi, and we will soon launch this pilot project to talk and counsel the prisoners.”

On why they chose a prison to launch this pilot project, he says that while the couple has been working with de-addiction centres, they found there aren’t many who pay any special attention to healing people who are undergoing different sentences in jails. “They don’t have people who are interested in talking to them, and due to their circumstances, these inmates face a lot of mental burden, suffer various mental illnesses, and are already depressed because they are inside a jail and virtually lost their families.”

He explains that as in the deaddiction centres, here too healing will be done, when the pilot begins, through

hypnotherapy, Reiki and all other alternative therapies, meditation, and methods like aura and chakra cleaning. “Because among jail inmates, we can programme their subconscious minds to induce them to leave addictions which are common in prisons.”

The idea is to visit the prisoners, “tell them positive things, teach them some of these methods to make them feel good.”

Returning to the Fellowship’s stall at the Taipei Convention, Dr Singh says, “some moments will stay with me for a long time. Such as RI President Francesco Arezzo and his wife Anna

Maria visiting our booth and spending a few moments with us. As a newly formed Fellowship, that gesture meant more to us than I can express.”

Another memorable visitor was Sylvia Whitlock, the woman who fought a court battle to join Rotary, and who was also the first woman to become the president of a Rotary club. “She came to our booth in a wheelchair. Harleen offered her a tarot reading, and during our conversation she smiled and told us that she also enjoys reading tarot cards herself. It wasn’t something we expected, but it turned into a warm and memorable exchange that reflected the friendships Rotary creates across cultures and generations.”

Another visitor to their booth who left a lasting impression was a



Harsimran Singh Chowdhary and Harleen, initiators of the Fellowship, with international visitors at the booth.

Rotarian who had suffered a spinal injury only a few weeks earlier; he came to the convention in an electric wheelchair. “Despite everything he had been through... he was not even able to walk, but he still made it to the convention and took time to visit our booth. And he was so cheerful; that meeting reminded me that Rotary is built on resilience as much as service,” he says.

Of the 25 new members this Fellowship got at the convention, 10 are from the US and the rest from Australia, Germany, Nigeria, Sri Lanka and Nepal. Of course there was no time for therapy sessions, but some tarot reading was done free of cost for all those who visited the booth.

On their end goal, Dr Singh says, “Most of the people who join Rotary are financially rich, but today so many people are suffering from mental illness; I would



Harleen with PRIP Francesco Arezzo.



Left: Dr Singh and Harleen with Sylvia Whitlock, the first woman president of a Rotary club.

even say that issues related to mental illness will explode. We talk to small children... nine or 10 years old, and they say we are depressed. Imagine children using these words... stress, depression, anxiety, etc.” Similarly Rotarians too, we know, despite being well settled in life, face many mental challenges, and the aim of this Fellowship, the first-of-its-kind, is to help such people. “At least, unlike before, when stigma was associated with anything to do with a mental illness, today people are more accepting of mental illnesses and so many are already seeking the help of different kinds of counsellors,” he says.

The couple believes that with awareness levels increasing, and along with them acceptance, they will be able to involve and eventually help a good many Rotarians who are struggling with mental health issues. “At the next convention in Barcelona, we aim to get over 100 more members in our Fellowship,” he says cheerfully. ■

The price they pay

V K Madhav Mohan

What four decades in Rotary have taught me about the people who lead it

I have been in Rotary for four decades. In that time I have watched a long line of RI presidents arrive, serve and step away. Some I observed from across a crowded hall. Some I came to know across a dinner table. What follows is simply what I have seen.

They give without counting

The first thing anyone notices is the investing. Time, energy and money, given freely. They have not ever shied away from investing in everything related to Rotary.

Watch where they are and you will understand them. They travel constantly during their year in office. What is less understood is that they travelled long before it, often for years, and often at their own cost. The presidency does not begin with the chain of office. It begins much earlier, in the quiet accumulation of journeys that nobody records.

They see the opening, and they know whom to call

They are not dreamers. They are doers and organisers.

Many have struggled to hold their professional lives and their Rotary lives in balance.

Rotary usually wins.

They have a particular eye. They can walk into a community and see quickly where a contribution can be made. They know exactly how to execute and whom to tap for resources.

That second half is the rarer skill. Anyone can hold a plan. Very few can pick up a telephone and know with certainty which three people will make it happen.

They listen, and they can tell the difference

They also listen well. That sounds like a modest virtue. It is not.

Any room is full of ideas. Some are good. Many are merely loud. The ability to sit through both and quietly separate one from the other is what marks these leaders stand out. They do not mistake enthusiasm for usefulness.

Reputation is built slowly

None of this can be bought. They have built their reputations over decades, by showing up, keeping promises and being authentic.

There is no shortcut hidden in that sentence. Do those three things for 30 years and people will trust you with anything. Fail at one of them and no title will repair the damage.

Now the part we speak of less

They have had to pay a price for their involvement in Rotary. I want to be honest about this, because admiration without honesty is only flattery.

The career dims

Many have struggled to hold their professional lives and their Rotary lives in balance. Rotary usually wins. Slowly the business, or the practice, or the career takes second place. It does not collapse. It dims. The person who might have built something larger elsewhere built Rotary instead.

The friendships thin

Some have lost friendships. Not through any quarrel, but through expectation. People they had counted as friends wanted something, a position or a favour or a recognition, and did not receive it. The friendship did not survive the disappointment. That is a lonely thing to discover late in life.

The body pays as well

Then there is the travelling itself. One RI president was so jet-lagged that he walked into a cupboard instead of the bathroom.

I tell that story because it makes people laugh, and then, a moment later, it makes them think. Behind the laugh is a man whose body no longer knew what hour it was. Years of broken sleep, unfamiliar food, shifting time zones, and constant adjustments leave a mark on the health. None of it comes free.



PRIP Nitish
Laharry



PRIP Rajendra
Saboo



PRIP Kalyan
Banerjee



PRIP K R
Ravindran



PRIP Sushil
Gupta



PRIP Shekhar
Mehta

The matchless contribution

There is one more account to settle, and it is by far the largest. Behind every president I have described stands a spouse. Their contribution is matchless. I use that word carefully and I mean it precisely.

They have put their own lives on the line. Their own bodies. Their own aspirations. Careers set aside at the height of them. Ambitions quietly folded away and never spoken of again. Health spent on the same punishing itineraries, in the same aircraft, at the same functions, smiling at the same late hour when the body wanted nothing but sleep.

And they did all of it so that two things could win. Their spouse, and Rotary.

The rest of the family has contributed in no small measure either. Children who grew up with a parent who was often elsewhere. Households run single-handed for months at a stretch. Family occasions marked without the one person everybody wanted in the room.

Inside those families the relationships have stretched, and they have frayed. I have watched it happen. But in the families, I have known most closely they have never broken. That is not luck. It is the result of a patience and a generosity that nobody ever honours from a podium.

We should be honest about the arithmetic. The chain of office is worn by one person. The price is paid by a whole household.

They outgrow the room

Something else happens along the way. They have grown so much that they have outgrown their own clubs and districts.

This is often mistaken for arrogance. I do not believe it is. Someone who has sat in 50 countries and heard 50 ways of solving the same problem

simply carries a wider frame. He is not looking down on anyone. He is looking from further back. But it is easily misread, and it can be lonely.

What carries them through

What sustains them is temperament. They are resilient, never say die, and resourceful. Setbacks do not settle on them for long.

They also come to understand power: how it moves, where it rests, how it can be used. The good ones turn that understanding outward, towards Rotary's work, rather than inward towards themselves.

The lesson they all learn

The last thing I have observed is the most important of all.

They suspend judgement on cultures and learn to embrace different thoughts. They stop assuming that their own way is the standard way, and start treating difference as information rather than as error.

And eventually they arrive at a single sentence that changes how they lead. It is not my idea or your idea but the best idea. That is easy to say and very hard to live. It asks you to let go of authorship, and to be genuinely pleased when somebody else turns out to be right.

The travelling, the giving, and the price quietly paid by them and by the families who carried them, all in service of one thing: finding the best idea, wherever it happens to come from, and then having the grace to get out of its way.

These reflections are my own, drawn from four decades of observation within Rotary. No individual or family is named, and no anecdote is attributed by design.

The writer is a former member of RI Strategic Planning Committee (2011–15), and a mentor to CEOs.

Mending little hearts

Rasheeda Bhagat

Mending one little heart at a time, patiently and lovingly, slowly but surely, the *Gift of Life* project of the Rotary Club of Bombay Airport, RID 3141, has managed to provide critical paediatric and life-saving heart surgeries to over 625 children born with congenital heart diseases at a total cost of over ₹10 crore. By the end of this Rotary year, the project would have helped a total of 825 children with congenital heart problems, through six

global grants, with the total funding reaching an astounding ₹14 crore.

This project has sustained over six years thanks mainly to the interest and dedication of two Rotarians — one from Mumbai (project director and past president of RC Bombay Airport Nitin Mehta, and a cancer specialist from Fort Wayne, Indiana, US, Dr Praveen Kollipara, who is a member of RC Fort Wayne, RI District 6540.

Recalling the genesis of the project, Mehta, who is an Arch Klumph Society member, said it all began during the Covid pandemic when he was approached by the Sri Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital at Navi Mumbai for help in doing heart operations on children with congenital problems. While the hospital approached him asking if he could raise some funds, he also came into contact with Dr Kollipara, “who



wanted to help conduct paediatric heart surgeries on underprivileged children. He had approached few prominent Rotary clubs in our district, but was told that such a project is not doable. Somebody asked him to speak to me and he got in touch and said will you be able to do this project?"

Mehta sought 24 hours' time to respond, did some intense homework, and reverted saying it could be done! This was in 2020–21, when he was the president of his club. "When I agreed, he said: 'Nitinbhai, after I make a commitment, you should not later say you won't be able to do it.' I assured him; we started and he was very happy with the first year's performance and said categorically: 'Until you stop, I will not stop with this project; meanwhile I will not support any other Rotary club either.'"

They never looked back; six years have gone by, six global grants and ₹10 crore spent already for over 600 children's heart surgeries. Even though the two Rotarians have not met in person, all the GGs have been done only through this single international partner and Dr Kollipara has remained actively engaged in this project.

Mehta is happy that his club's *Gift of Life* project "offers a new lease of life to children whose futures were once uncertain. Every child deserves a healthy heart and a chance to live his/her dreams. When I see a child smile after surgery, I know we've given more than care — we've given hope. This isn't charity; it's humanity."

He says last year the club members were thrilled when cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar visited the hospital and spent time with the children and their families. He said: "Meeting these

brave little ones is truly moving. Their courage and the dedication of the doctors and Rotary members are inspiring. They are the real heroes. It's amazing what timely action and a giving heart can accomplish."

The paediatric cardiac surgeries done at the Sanjeevani Hospital provide a lifeline for babies born with heart anomalies such as holes in the heart, valve defects, or abnormal vessels. Dr Prabhatha Rashmi, senior consultant and head of Paediatric Cardiac Surgery at this hospital, explains that without timely intervention, these conditions can lead to breathlessness, repeated infections, poor growth, or worse, early death.

"Babies with heart defects often appear weak, may turn blue, and struggle to breathe or feed. These signs are not to be taken lightly. Early screening and diagnosis are vital. If treated in time, these children can live full, active lives, just like other children. Delays, however, can have fatal consequences," she says.

A pivotal factor in the success of this initiative was the support received through GGs, "which truly embody the spirit of Rotary's global fellowship. The magic of a GG lies in its ability to magnify local action through international partnership and strategic funding. By combining the resources of TRF, club contributions and district designated funds, such large-scale, sustainable projects are possible. This unique partnership has transformed what might have been a



few individual acts of kindness into a high-impact humanitarian initiative with measurable, long-term results. It is commendable that this project was able to reach advanced cardiac care to economically disadvantaged communities."

On the success and sustainability of this project, despite club leadership changing over the last six years, Mehta says, "From the very first GG, I have never ignored my stakeholders, and always kept them in the loop about details of this project. Whether they have donated \$5,000 or \$50,000, all were given the same information and progress report that increased the transparency for every penny donated. Every week I'd send them a report on how much we received from the Foundation, how much has been disbursed and what is the remaining balance!"



By the end of this Rotary year around \$1.5 million would have been spent on “giving their childhood back to around 825 children,” as Mehta puts it. All the children are from BPL (below poverty line) families and are identified and carefully screened by the hospital. Then they are referred back to the project team which carefully scrutinises the parents’ documents, determines if they need financial help, and then gives the green signal to the hospital. Their youngest patient has been 36 hours old and the oldest 16.

This kind of surgery, Mehta adds, would cost between ₹3 and 5 lakh in a private hospital, but at Sanjeevani, the cost is between ₹1.5–2.5 lakh. Mehta gives credit to all the club presidents who succeeded him for this project running for six years without a hitch.





Parents with their children whose cardiac surgeries were supported by RC Bombay Airport.

By the end of this Rotary year around \$1.5 million would have been spent on giving their childhood back to around 825 children.

“Yes, you are right, when club leaders change, old projects are often forgotten or neglected. Let me give credit to my presidents, my donors, other club members who have been donating regularly. Even before or just as the year starts, they come and tell me: ‘Nitin, when should I deposit the money?’ They are so excited about contributing to this project.”

He adds that apart from his own club, he has approached other Rotary clubs which have helped, including RC Berlin International, RC Serbia, RC Montenegro, RC Singapore, RC Delhi South, and half a dozen clubs from his own district, RID 3141, which are now contributing regularly.

Some CSR funding is also coming in. “And we take some of the children and parents to the contributing company, and introduce them to the entire staff, who can ask them questions directly so that they also realise what is happening with the money that their company is depositing.”

Asked what next, and how soon can he take up the number of beneficiary children from 825 to 1,000, he says, “Ma’am, 1,000 is just an arm’s length away, it is not very far. Currently we are working on a single \$1million GG, which alone can help over 550 children’s operations.” ■



Milk for fragile infants

Jaishree

For a premature or low birth weight baby in a neonatal intensive care unit (NICU), breast milk can be as important as any medical intervention. But when a mother is unable to provide enough milk, access to screened and pasteurised donor human milk can make a crucial difference.

At the Cheluvamba Hospital for Women and Children in Mysuru, the Amrutha Varshini Rotary Milk Bank is providing this support to newborns who need it most.

Set up jointly by the Rotary Clubs of Mysore Metro, RID 3181, and Bangalore South Parade, RID 3191, the milk bank was inaugurated on December 1, 2025, by the then DGs PK Ramakrishna and BR Sridhar. It began functioning on Jan 2, 2026, after a month of trial runs and establishing protocols with the hospital's microbiology department.

"We started with very small quantities because we did not want to waste

milk while we were establishing the process," says Dr Hamsa, who is in charge of the facility. As awareness grew through intensive counselling, the response from mothers has been encouraging. From collecting about 1–1.5 litres a month initially, the bank collected 12 litres of donor breast milk in June. More than 250 mothers also visit the facility every month to express their own milk for their babies.

This facility is particularly important for mothers whose babies are in the NICU. A premature or low birth weight infant may initially require only a few millilitres of milk. If the mother does not express milk regularly, her body can gradually reduce milk production. The milk bank encourages such mothers to continue expressing and donating the milk temporarily. When their babies are ready to feed, the mothers can resume feeding them with their own milk.

The bank currently caters to babies admitted to Cheluvamba Hospital. The

This facility is important for mothers with babies in NICU, who initially require a few ml of milk. But if the mother doesn't express her milk regularly, her body will gradually reduce milk production.

hospital has four NICUs and receives around 300 – 400 admissions a month, according to Dr N Pradeep, head of the department. Many of these babies are from Mysuru and neighbouring districts such as Kodagu, Mandya and Chamarajanagar.

Donated milk goes through a carefully controlled process. The donor's medical history is recorded and she is screened for infections that can be transmitted through breast milk. After consent, the mother is given instructions on hygiene, and expresses the milk in a designated area. The milk is carefully stored in a deep freezer until it is ready for processing.

Under a laminar flow system, the milk is pooled in small batches and samples are sent to the microbiology department for testing before and after pasteurisation. This process takes about 60–90 minutes. The milk is released for use only after the post-pasteurisation culture report confirms its safety. Milk showing potentially harmful bacterial contamination is discarded.



(From L) RC Mysore Metro president (2025-26) M P Gopal Krishnan, D Srinivasan, RID 3170 Secretary (Admin) Padmaja Muralidhar, club secretary Mohan Gurmurthy (fourth from R) at the human milk bank in Cheluvamba Hospital, Mysuru. (From second from R): Dr Hamsa, facility-in-charge; and Dr N Pradeep, head of paediatric department, are also in the picture.



An infant being treated at the hospital's NICU.

The bank currently pasteurises milk once a week. As donations increase, the team hopes to conduct more pasteurisation cycles and reduce occasional shortages. Careful pooling of milk from a maximum of one or two donors at a time has also helped reduce wastage.

In June, 54 babies benefitted from donor milk, compared to 46 the previous month, says Dr Hamsa. The milk is prescribed by the NICU doctors according to each baby's requirement and is provided free of charge.

For the one-year-old RC Mysore Metro with 50 members, the milk bank is its first major project. "It has given our young club an opportunity to make a meaningful contribution for newborn care. It is one of the first such facilities in Mysuru," says club president MP Gopalakrishnan proudly.

The hospital has identified another urgent need. With the NICU having recently expanded from 36 to 66 beds, the hospital sometimes receives critically ill babies from neighbouring districts who require ventilator support.

"We may need two ventilators," says Dr Hamsa. A basic ventilator costs around ₹12 lakh, while more advanced models can cost considerably more. Supporting the hospital with ventilators is therefore an area the club will consider as it expands its partnership with the hospital. ■



Pasteurised breast milk being stored for use in a freezer.

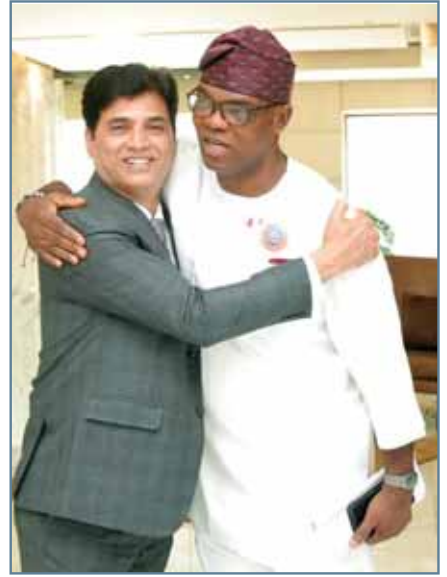
President Yinka Babalola: Moments in India



RI President Yinka Babalola, RI Vice President M Muruganandam (second from L) and RI Director KP Nagesh (second from R) at Delhi with district leaders from across India.



Right: From L: Roopal Pilani, Director Nagesh, Precy and President Babalola, RI VP Director Muruganandam, RID 3150 DG Uday S Pilani, PDG Ravi Vadlamani and District Public Image chairman Sesha Sai Kumar at Hyderabad.



President Babalola and his wife Precy, RI VP Muruganandam with RID 3291 DG Tapas Bhattacharya (third from R) at a wheel chair distribution event in Kolkata. President Babalola and Director Nagesh.



President Babalola and Precy give a wheel chair to a woman as Arindham Roychowdhury (L) and DG Bhattacharya (R) look on.



President Babalola, Precy, Director Nagesh, RID 3170 secretary Flory Fernandes and DG Lenny da Costa at Goa.



RI VP Muruganandam, President Babalola and his wife Precy at Delhi.

Jaishree

Right

President Babalola, RI VP Muruganandam and RID Nagesh with RISAO Head Rajesh Anand (R) and staff at the RI South Asia Office in Delhi.



RID 3132 DG Jayesh Patel presents a handwoven portrait of President Babalola to him. Director Nagesh, Precy and TRF Trustee A S Venkatesh are also present.



President Babalola with DG Pilani.



Precy and Sumathi with RID 3120 DG Poonam (third from R) and women Rotarians at Varanasi.



Left: RID 3120 DG Poonam Gulati (second from R) presents a memento to President Babalola and Precy. From L: RIDE Basu Dev Golyan, PDG Satpal Gulati, RI VP Muruganandam and his wife Sumathi are also present.



President Babalola and VP Muruganandam play African drums at a meet in Varanasi. Sumathi Muruganandam (L) and Precy Babalola (R) enjoy the moment.



Roopal Pilani and Precy Babalola at Hyderabad.



Left: RID Nagesh, Precy, President Babalola, RID 3170 DG da Costa and his wife Nita with Rotaract leaders at Goa. PDG Deepak Purohit is seen behind Precy Babalola.

Designed by
N Krishnamurthy



Climate action by TN women on wheels

V Muthukumaran

Spreeding Wings is an adventurous car odyssey of this daredevil team from an all-women's club, RC Chennai Meraki, RID 3233, and they have crisscrossed the length and breadth of the country, covering all the 42 RI districts over the last 10 years. "Our main aim is to create environmental awareness among people. The solo car rally, our signature event, is spreading the message to protect our Planet Earth by tree planting drives, and other proactive steps to conserve our biodiversity," says Sivabala Rajendran, charter president, and District Go Green permanent chair.

In their latest five-day rally (May 25–29), their ninth edition, the four-member crew led by Sivabala,

toured all the nine RI districts of Tamil Nadu to engage Rotarians, district collectors, forest officers (DFOs) and other bureaucrats on the issue of 'climate action' as part of their multipronged environmental action plan. After covering the whole of India, "we went on a 20-day trip to Nepal in Feb-March 2025 for our eighth rally and promoted our environmental cause among Nepali Rotarians and the public," she says. "We had planned to visit Sri Lanka, but changed our plan after we read a recent UN study and other reports from world meteorological sources, that pointed out India as the hottest place on earth in the April-May season." Hence, their focus shifted to Tamil Nadu, "our state,

as we wanted to make it a model for others states in taking up climate action in a proactive manner."

At each RI district hub, the rallyists briefed the DGs about their 'commitment letters,' which they gave to the district collectors accompanied by DGs, PDGs, and incoming leaders. "We also met DFOs and bureaucrats wherever possible to give the 'commitment letters,' which in a nutshell urged the state machinery to make use of Rotarians and Rotary clubs in their greening mission." As there are many schemes of state government and GoIs to shore up the green cover, "Rotary as a globally reputed NGO can be part of these missions to protect our earth," explains Sivabala. The rally team



RC Chennai Meraki charter president and project chair Sivabala Rajendran (3rd from L), Kothangi Suchitra, immediate past president Abbirahmi Senthil, AKS member K Srinivasan, Saravana Selvi and CommuniTree founder-CEO Hafiz Khan.

had met seven district collectors, five DFOs and nine district governors during their journey.

“We were accorded a warm reception at the district collectorate offices, and many civil servants wanted to involve themselves in tree planting drives taken up by Rotary clubs in their region.” The rally team also engaged around 350–400 Rotarians from 70 clubs across the state, “during our

temporary halts when we motivated them to become volunteers of climate action campaigns.”

While Sivabala mentored the all-women’s crew, it was the effortless skills of Kothangi Suchitra behind the wheel that “saw us through without major hassles during our car rallies in the last decade.” The team also consisted of club president Abbirahmi Senthil (2025–26) and Eswari Rajapriya.



RID 3206 IPDG Chella Raghavendran presents a ‘commitment letter’ to Coimbatore district collector Pavankumar G. Also seen are DG RS Maruti (centre) and car rally team — Eswari, Suchitra and Sivabala.

Sri Lanka will be the next destination of Chennai Meraki team. It will be a week-long tour from Jaffna in December 2026. They will take a ferry liner from Nagapattinam Port, and in collaboration with RID 3220, the rallyists will visit the clubs.

“God has been kind to us in all of our car rallies. It was a smooth sail so far, except for a flat tyre in one instant. I am blessed with good strength and stamina which enabled me to drive through some difficult terrains and inclement weather,” smiles Suchitra.

Rotary Dense Forest

On World Environment Day (June 5), the rallyists planted 3,233 saplings on a barren campus of Madras University, Taramani campus, in the presence of IPDG D Devendran, rally sponsor and textile baron Nalli Kuppaswami Chetti, CommuniTree founder-CEO Hafiz Khan, former civil servant V Iraiyanbu and varsity registrar Rita John. They aim to plant one lakh saplings to create a Rotary Dense Forest on the campus by the end of this Rotary year.

Sri Lanka will be the next destination of Chennai Meraki team. “It will be a week-long tour from Jaffna in December 2026. We will take a ferry liner from Nagapattinam Port, and in collaboration with RID 3220, we will visit the clubs, engage Rotarians and the public to spread our environmental message and the need to take climate action,” says Sivabala. ■

A lesson in boundaries, safety and speaking up

Kiran Zehra

The Rotary Club of Ulhasnagar, RID 3142, conducted *Sparsh Ek Ehsaas* (touch and awareness), a personal safety awareness programme for 495 students from Classes 1 to 5, using age-appropriate illustrations, demonstrations and interactive activities to open a difficult conversation with young children.

Three certified trainers from the Inner Wheel Club of Ulhasnagar — Rachna Dalal, Latha Ranka and Dimple Shah — led the sessions. Instead of relying on a conventional lecture, the trainers used illustrated situations to help children recognise uncomfortable or unsafe interactions and decide what they could do.

For Classes 1 and 2, “the demonstrations dealt with situations such

as being asked to play an unwanted game or being invited to keep an unsafe secret. The children were encouraged to understand that they could refuse, move away and seek help,” says Ruta Kolvekar, the club president. The teaching material also stressed that private body parts

are private and that children should speak to a helpful adult when something makes them uncomfortable.

For Classes 3 to 5, the discussions went a step further, covering body boundaries, private body parts, personal safety and speaking up. One of the sessions distilled

The trainers used illustrated situations to help children recognise uncomfortable or unsafe interactions and decide what to do.





Above: Ankush Kamlakant (L) and club president Ruta Kolvekar (second from R) along with the students.



Left: Ruta (L) and trainer Lata Ranka interacting with the students.

the lessons into eight simple rules: understand what is private, recognise safe and unsafe situations, say no, get away, “tell a trusted adult, keep telling until help comes — and remember that it is not the child’s fault,” says Ruta.

She is happy that “the programme appears to have struck a chord with the school as the administration has requested that the awareness session be conducted twice a year. We are planning a follow-up session later this year.”

PDG Chandrashekhar Kolvekar, the club president’s spouse and a club member who has been associated with the initiative, underlined the importance of taking the conversation beyond the classroom. “The number of child-abuse cases has increased over the years. Children

have to be made aware of the dangers of trusting people at home and outside, in their innocence. We have to give them the dos and don’ts so they are at least aware and can take action for their safety,” he says.

The collaboration between Rotary and Inner Wheel, says Ruta, “also gives *Sparsh Ek Ehsaas* a potentially sustainable model: trained volunteers equipped with age-specific material can take a sensitive but essential conversation into schools, giving children both the language to recognise unsafe situations and the confidence to seek help.”

The project was managed by Ruta, club secretary Muskan Shahdarpuri and project coordinator Ankush Kamlakant. ■

Neonatal, dialysis units at hospitals

This Rotary year (2026–27) is the last one for RID 3170, after which it will be split into two districts — RIDs 3171 and 3172. “As I want to create a strong foundation for the upcoming new districts, 30–40 new clubs will be formed across all formats to diversify membership,” says Dr Lenny da Costa. Rotaract clubs will be doubled to 200, he adds.

With 146 Rotary clubs having 6,750 members, “we will touch one million lives through service projects worth ₹100 crore across RI’s focus areas.” Apart from a neonatal ICU at a Nigerian hospital (GG: \$90,000), da Costa will be setting up 4–5 such NICUs (each GG: \$40,000–\$50,000) at various hospitals in RID 3170. “Our clubs will be doing around 30 GG projects, including 30 dialysis centres (\$50,000 each).”

Around 2,000 smart classrooms will be installed at government/aided schools (CSR grants: ₹1 lakh each); and 20 STEM Labs for students will be set up with two GGs: \$80,000. “We’ll be doing five Happy Schools through CSR grants, and are in the process of identifying the beneficiary schools,” says da Costa. For TRF-giving, his target is \$3 million.

He joined Rotary in 2008. “Rotary is a de-stressor for me, and through my Rotary membership, I can touch the lives of people across the world,” he smiles.



Lenny da Costa
Geriatric physician
RC Margao Midtown
RID 3170

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran



R S Maruti
Textbook publisher
RC Coimbatore Texcity
RID 3206

Focus on waste management

Instead of adding new clubs, “my focus is on increasing the number of Rotarians as there are a number of small clubs with 20–25 members, and they will be strengthened. My target is to induct around 1,000 new Rotarians in my tenure,” says Maruti. On July 1 there were 77 clubs with 3,500 Rotarians in the district.

A solid waste management plant (GG: ₹1 crore) will be set up at Thondamuthur, a village panchayat near Coimbatore. “After the project feedback, we will install a biochar plant near the same village, for which a survey is going on to determine its GG value,” he says. All the district clubs will be involved in organising a mega road safety awareness campaign across Tamil Nadu through rallies, seminars, events at schools, colleges, street plays, and leveraging the digital media to spread the message across the state. “The road safety campaign costing ₹1.5 crore will be funded by private sponsorships and donors.”

Environment-related projects and outreach initiatives will be done at 100 adopted villages through CSR grants (each village: ₹30 lakh). “We will sensitise the rural people on adopting an eco-friendly lifestyle that preserves our biodiversity through multiple events.” Maruti is confident of raising \$1.4 million for TRF.

He became a Rotarian in 2004. “I feel motivated seeing the smiles of the beneficiaries.” His long-term aim is to “be a grassroots Rotarian to serve the needy at all time,” he adds.

100 govt schools being adopted

Every Rotary club in the district will adopt a government school in eastern UP to do several educational projects. "We are working on a number of school projects which are in drafting stage. At least 100 government schools will have smart classes (CSR grants + club donations: ₹3-5 lakh each). Also, desk-benches are being given to schools, benefitting at least 5,000 children, at a cost of ₹25 lakh, funded by CSR grants and member contributions," says Poonam Gulati.

RID 3120 had 100 clubs with 4,265 Rotarians on July 1, and Poonam aims to form 10-12 new clubs and induct at least 1,000 new members during her tenure. A Rotary Blood Bank will be inaugurated (GG: ₹45 lakh) at a government hospital in Gorakhpur, while a mammography van flagged off by her home club (GG: ₹65 lakh) will be screening 20,000 rural women for breast and cervical cancer.

In the first week of July, push carts (₹9,000 each) were donated to 110 vegetable sellers in Prayagraj "which will enhance their retail business." During the district membership seminar in Varanasi in August, "we donated more than 1,000 bicycles to girls and boys from remote villages so that they don't drop out of schools." More than 10,000 saplings will be planted in major cities and small towns including Lucknow, Prayagraj, Varanasi, Ballia, Mirzapur and Jaunpur.

Poonam will raise \$600,000 for TRF. She joined Rotary in 2013 "as it inspires selfless service turning good intentions into organised, practical action," she smiles.



Poonam Gulati
Academician
RC Allahabad Royals
RID 3120

Govt schools will have smart
classes worth ₹3-5 lakh each.
Desk-benches will be given
to schools, benefitting 5,000
children, at a cost of ₹25 lakh,
funded by CSR grants and
member contributions.

DG Poonam Gulati
RID 3120



Amit Singla
Chartered accountant
RC Samana
RID 3090

A Rotary hospital in Samana

Ever since Amit Singla joined Rotary in 1996, "the networking with friends and like-minded professionals, and working hard to boost the public image of the organisation have been a rewarding experience for me," he says. He aims to start 25 new clubs with a net membership growth of 600, thus increasing the headcount to 3,600 by June next year. The district had 160 clubs on July 1.

A multispecialty hospital will be built in Samana in three years through a mix of GG (₹2-3 crore) and a combination of donors, global partners and CSR grants valued at ₹6 crore. "We are still working on the modalities of this mega project for which ₹4 crore will be invested during my tenure," says Singla. Next on the checklist is a dental hospital with a path lab (GG: ₹1 crore) in Sunam. "We will set up a dialysis centre with 4-5 machines (GG: ₹1 crore) at the Government Civil Hospital, Dhuri; and a solar plant will be installed at a school for the blind and the speech-impaired (GG: ₹50 lakh) in Sri Ganganagar, Rajasthan.

More than 100 medical camps will be held across Punjab, Rajasthan and Haryana to benefit 10,000 people. For TRF-giving, he aims to mobilise \$1.2 million from the clubs. On his three decades journey in Rotary so far, he says, "I am happy to strike new friendships across the state and beyond." ■

Beguiled in Barcelona

Diana Schoberg



To discover the 2027 Rotary International Convention host city, start by getting lost.

In just a few steps we've travelled through 2,000 years of Barcelona's history... the ruins of a Roman temple; a medieval church sheltering the relics of the city's martyred patron saint, and a mosaic-covered modernist concert hall. Every corner we turn there are more quaint buildings, more quiet courtyards filled with greenery, and fountains and artwork.

I know I'm jet-lagged, but that's not why my mind is spinning. Albert Torras, a journalist who moonlights as a tour guide and who has joined me for the afternoon, reassures me. "The best thing to do in Barcelona is to get lost here in the centre," he says.

I landed in Barcelona a few hours ago to experience for myself the charms that draw so many people to this city, which will host the 2027 RI Convention, June 26–30. Torras, a member of RC Barcelona Alba, and Montse Moral of RC Sant Cugat del Vallès had met me at the Gran Hotel Havana after I regrouped from my flight. The historic luxury hotel, built in 1882, is the home base of the Rotary Club of Barcelona and my home for the next few days.

As we walked toward the city's Gothic Quarter, Torras regaled me with the history of Barcelona and its region, Catalonia. Romans founded the city at the end of the 1st century BC, calling it *Barcino*. In the mid-12th century, Catalonia became part

of the Crown of Aragon, which went on to conquer parts of the Western Mediterranean, including Valencia, Sicily, Sardinia, Naples and Athens. "It was the most important country in the Mediterranean from 12–14th centuries," Torras says.

There's more to say, but that brings us to where we're standing right now, at the entry to the Gothic Quarter. The neighborhood was built up around the time that Barcelona was a Mediterranean powerhouse. As we wander around, we pass the ornate Barcelona Cathedral, dedicated to St Eulalia, martyred at the age of 13 during the 4th century persecution of Christians throughout the Roman Empire. And speaking of the Romans, the cathedral is inside the original Roman city. Torras points out the large stone blocks at the base of nearby structures. These are the original Roman walls; the smaller bricks farther up were placed later.

We continue down a narrow street next to the church, and the atmosphere is more subdued. We see the old royal palace with its crown-shaped tower and pass the Archives of the Crown of Aragon, which holds several UNESCO-recognised documents.

To explain those, it's time for more of that history lesson. In 1469, Ferdinand II of Aragon married Isabella of nearby Castile, setting the stage for the unification of Spain. In 1492, they sponsored Christopher Columbus' voyages to the New World, launching the country into its role as a global power. Historical documents related to Columbus' expeditions are housed at the Aragon archives.

The Catalan merchants who found their fortunes in the Americas are responsible for the architecture that Barcelona might be best known for — that of the Modernisme movement.

I get my first taste of the Catalan Modernist architecture just outside the Gothic Quarter in the Palau de la Música Catalana, perhaps the building that stands out most in my post-flight brain fog. The UNESCO World Heritage Site is adorned with mosaic pillars with floral motifs and busts of famous composers. If you don't have time for a tour of the inside, go around the corner and grab a coffee from the first-floor café, where you can admire the ceramic flowers and stained glass incorporating the natural themes typical of the movement.

My Rotary friends promise me a lot more Modernisme the next day, but for now, it's starting to rain, forcing us inside for a coffee break. As the rain slows, the city practically glows. I say goodbye to Torras and head out with Moral to walk down La Rambla, Barcelona's famous pedestrian boulevard. The street is known for its vibrant atmosphere, but it's quiet this evening as the weather keeps the crowds away.

We turn into Plaça Reial, and Moral spreads her arms wide. "Enjoy," she says. I can see why: The square is closed to vehicular traffic and filled with palm trees, giving it the feeling of an oasis in the city. It's lined with classical-style buildings that are home to restaurants and nightclubs.

Moral suggests a selfie by the fountain in the centre, but before we can snap our photo, she's stopped by a group of young people who ask her to take their picture. They're working for an international employer here in Barcelona, coming from Portugal, Brazil, Germany, and elsewhere. Moral happily obliges. "Barcelona is a very old town, has a lot of history, but it's also very modern," she says. "It has a lot of young people. It's innovating all the time."

Antoni Gaudí is practically synonymous with Barcelona. I only had a few hours to see a sampling of the architect's fantastical works, but you could easily dedicate all of your spare time in the city to viewing his masterpieces. Which you might need to do. Because no matter how long I observed his stunning creations, I could not find the language to describe the whimsical fairytale buildings and park that Gaudí designed. "You can stay there one hour looking at things and realise there are things you have not seen before," says Aleix Martorell, a member of the Rotaract Club del Vallès, as we take in Gaudí's architectural wonder, the Sagrada Família Basilica, the tallest church in the world.

Gaudí began work on the basilica in 1883, and it's been under construction ever since. On June 10 this year, the 100th anniversary of Gaudí's death, Pope Leo XIV blessed the church's recently completed spire, the tallest of the 14 that adorn the church. Want to step inside and view the basilica's giant tree-like columns and a ceiling that mimics a forest canopy? Best to prebook tickets, which I intend to do when I return for the convention next June.

As we walk around the enormous building, I chat with Tomàs Masucci of the Rotaract Club of Barcelona-Diagonal, whose parents met as Rotaractors. The 20-year-old has been a Rotaractor for two years, and he lives about a 15-minute walk from the basilica.

Barcelona is a very old town, has a lot of history, but it's also very modern.

"It's very important to know the city," he advises. "Walk around the streets, know how the people live here. We have buildings you can't find in other parts of the world, like the Sagrada Família, like other Modernisme buildings. It's a thing we only have here in Catalonia."

During the 19th century, Barcelona saw booming industry and growing wealth, while the rest of Spain fell on harder times. The conditions gave birth to a growing regional pride among Catalans still evident today, and Modernisme was an expression of this. Rich patrons hired Catalan architects to design even more extravagant buildings. Though the artistic movement began to fizzle in the early 1900s, today you can find hundreds of properties in the city with modernist

Right: A pan of paella in Sitges, a coastal town southwest of Barcelona.

Below: A scene from Park Guell.



Barcelona Beach





PRID Julio Sorjus (L) and convention host committee chair Serjo Aragon at the Reial Club Marítim de Barcelona.



A tableful of tapas.

elements, nine of which are on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

We head over to the elegant Passeig de Gràcia, the epicentre of Modernisme in the early 20th century. Here you will find two more Gaudí-designed buildings only a few blocks apart: the undulating Casa Milá and the magical Casa Batlló with its roof scaled like a dragon's back. While you're strolling, check out the street's ornate lampposts with their mosaic-tiled benches and the decorative sidewalk tiles called *panot*. And when you've had your fill of architecture, Passeig de Gràcia offers an array of luxury shops, including Cartier, Prada and Chanel.

After a full morning of sightseeing, I'm famished. Luckily, two new Rotary friends are about to show me what the Mediterranean way of life is all about.

Sergio Aragón and Julio Sorjús are sitting on the terrace of the Reial Club Marítim de Barcelona, beers in hand and a small dish of multicoloured olives on the table. Flags on the many sailboats in the century-old yacht club's marina waft in the gentle breeze. Cable cars soar above the sea, and in the distance, people amble across the Rambla de Mar, a wavy wooden bridge that extends Barcelona's famous pedestrian street across the water to historic Port Vell.

I take a seat on the terrace, and Aragón explains that although Barcelona is a coastal city, it lived for most of its existence with its back to the sea. The city had developed within the Gothic Quarter I'd seen earlier and later extended as the old walls were

knocked down in the 19th century (the name for this newer part of the city, 'L'Eixample,' means 'expansion' in Catalan). But the waterfront was used for heavy industry, and locals rarely visited.

All that changed with the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. "There was a great transformation in the city, and one of the things that transformed was the waterfront," says Aragón, chair of the convention's Host Organisation Committee. "All this area was restructured in order to make it much more attractive." Today, Port Olímpic is home to hotels, shopping, restaurants, nightlife and beaches. "It's fun to just walk and spend the day there," he says.

As we chat, waiters whisk out *tapas*, the small, shareable plates that Spain is famous for: fried artichokes, calamari,

mussels, a smoky eggplant dip, a lemony fish crudo. We drift from our conversation about the city to talk about everything from wild boars to coffee culture. (“I don’t mean to exaggerate,” Aragón says, “but the two places in the world you can get the best coffee are Italy and Spain.”) Sorjús, a past RI director and the HOC chair in 2002 (the last time the Rotary Convention was in Barcelona), quizzes me about Santiago Calatrava, the Spanish architect responsible for the most famous landmark in my hometown of Milwaukee: a breathtaking pavilion added to the city’s art museum. As we talk, I pause occasionally for a taste of food followed by a contented sigh. So good.

It’s all this — the food, the culture, the friendliness — that Barcelona Rotary members will share with convention attendees come June, says Aragón. “Barcelona is a very attractive city,” he adds. “It’s a cosmopolitan city. It’s friendly, it’s easygoing. The Mediterranean atmosphere and the surroundings make it a very attractive place.”

Aragón attended his first Rotary convention in Portland, Oregon, in 1990. He was drawn to the opportunity to see the magnitude of Rotary and the ease with which you can make connections. “You start friendships which then last many, many years,” he says.

The meal has left me stuffed and sleepy. After I’ve had a chance to indulge in another Spanish tradition — the afternoon siesta — I head back to the waterfront for an evening stroll on the promenade along Barceloneta Beach. Palm trees flank the path, and those people who aren’t admiring the view from a blanket on the beach are hitting a volleyball or engaging in a pickup game of soccer.

Hundreds of runners fly past, waving flags and blasting music on boomboxes they carry on their backs. I stand

and watch, tempted to join them, swept away by the energy of the city.

In Spain, bullfighting is a legally protected part of the country’s cultural heritage, though one that faces growing opposition. While the last bullfight in Barcelona took place in 2011, you can experience a part of that history with a visit to Las Arenas de Barcelona, only a few stops on the Barcelona Metro from the convention site. The bullring opened in 1900 and saw its last fight in 1977, standing empty for years before being restored as a shopping centre. Today, you will find dozens of shops, a cinema, and places to indulge in food and drinks.

“Maybe we don’t like nowadays the bullring, the bulls, and all of that,” says Laia Marín, a member of the Rotary Club of Barcelona and an architect who worked on the restoration project, “but it was our culture and our history.”

While bullfighting is in Barcelona’s past, Marín says that they are working to bring other traditions to the Rotary

The Passeig de Gracia was the epicentre of Modernisme in the early 20th century.

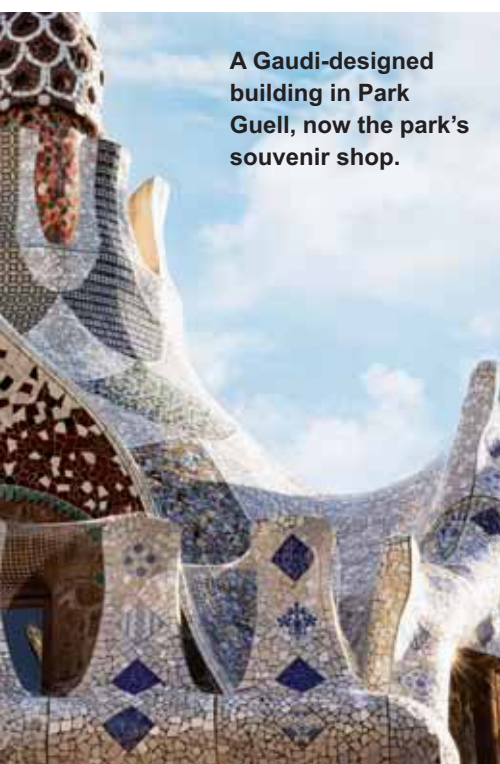


The Sagrada Familia Basilica.





Monk parakeets by the Arc de Triomf.



A Gaudi-designed building in Park Güell, now the park's souvenir shop.

convention come June. “We are planning a very cultural convention, where, if Rotarians come here, it’s easy to get the experience of the Catalan culture,” she says.

Marín, who joined the Rotary Club of Barcelona in 2013 after spending time as a Rotaractor, went to her first Rotary convention in 2019 when it was held in Hamburg, Germany. There, she enjoyed learning about everything going on in Rotary beyond her club. “When you are in an international convention,” she says, “you see what is working.”

Marín takes me up to the arena’s rooftop, where you will find 360-degree panoramas of the city, along with restaurants where you

Gaudí’s Sagrada Família is otherworldly as it rises out of the patchwork of buildings below.

can linger and savour the sights. It is, explains Marín, a favourite place to bring visiting Rotarians for dinner. “You can see the sunset, you can see Montjuïc, all of that,” she says.

That’s where we’re headed next: Montjuïc, or ‘Jewish Mountain,’ so named for a Jewish cemetery that stood on the hill in the medieval era. There’s also a massive forested urban park that was developed as the site of the 1929 International Exhibition and later renovated for the 1992 Olympics. Today, as you wind through its paths, you’ll find sports venues, museums, gardens, and Montjuïc Castle.

From Las Arenas, we walk from the roundabout at Plaça Espanya and along a street lined with fountains until we reach Font Màgica de Montjuïc, an enormous ‘magic fountain’ where you can see choreographed light shows on select evenings (check online for the current schedule). Even during the day, the mist and shade trees make a nice respite from the summer sun.

We hop on an escalator that takes us up past a series of waterfalls to the terrace of the Museu Nacional d’Art de Catalunya. You can join the crowds sitting on the steps in front of the art museum, originally the 1929 exhibition’s National Palace, for sweeping views of the city.

It’s here that I realise just how massive Gaudí’s Sagrada Família really is. It’s otherworldly as it rises out of the patchwork of buildings below. The

church was built to be slightly shorter than Montjuïc, and none of Barcelona's other buildings are taller than the church.

We continue meandering through the park until we reach the springboard diving pools from the Barcelona Olympics; at the time, the site was immortalised in numerous photos of Olympians diving here with the skyline in the background. Today, the space has been converted into an open-air restaurant, Salts Montjuïc, and from our table, we enjoy yet more spectacular views of this magnificent city.

Albert Torras, my Gothic Quarter tour guide, joins us, looking dapper

in preparation for the opening of a photography exhibit he helped organise. We're here to partake in another Spanish tradition, *la hora del vermut*: the pre-meal 'vermouth hour'. While my experience drinking vermouth, a fortified wine, is limited to a cocktail mixer, in Spain it's served as its own drink — on the rocks, white or red — as an aperitif along with something to nibble on. "It's typically before lunch, or before dinner, or when you wake up," Torras jokes. "When you want."

I pause to catch my breath at my hotel before meeting back up with

Aleix Martorell, one of my Rotaract friends from the previous day. This time, we're heading for Park Güell, a Gaudí-designed public space with more panoramic views of the city. Eusebi Güell, a longtime patron of Gaudí's, commissioned the artist to design a housing development for wealthy families. The venture proved to be unviable, however, and only two of the envisioned 60 houses were built. Gaudí lived in the show house with his father and niece, and after Güell died, the city purchased the park.

That's lucky for us, because what remains looks like it could come straight out of a Disney movie. The most photographed landmark in the park is a mosaic salamander known as El Drac ("the dragon" in Catalan), halfway up a double staircase at the main entrance. But my favourite part, on the terrace above, is a colorful mosaic-tiled bench in the shape of a sea serpent that snakes along the plaza's edge. Gaudí popularised this style of mosaic, made of broken ceramics or glass, known as *trencadis* (and the inspiration for the logo of the 2027 Rotary Convention).

As I ooh and ahh at every turn (fairytale-like stone viaducts! houses that look like they belong in Candy Land!), I ask Martorell how people in Barcelona feel about Gaudí: Do they like all of this, or are they sick of being known for him? He assures me that the art is a welcome part of the city's identity. "People are very proud," he says.

Dusk begins to fall, and we head to the rooftop bar Tope, ostensibly for sunset photos of the cityscape and the neighbouring pickle-shaped Torre Glòries, a skyscraper that lights up at night. Music thumps and a string of lights illuminates the tables. It's time for a toast, to another day in Barcelona, to a city that's both fantastic and fantastical.

Photography by Monika Lozinska



**Font Màgica de Montjuïc,
which lights up at night.**

Women on Wheels drive livelihoods

Four women from less privileged families in Bengaluru Rural district received e-autos under Women-On-Wheels (WoW), a CSR initiative of RC Bangalore Lakeside, RID 3191, and ITC Filtrona. The project, costing ₹16 lakh, aims to boost women's financial independence through sustainable livelihoods while breaking stereotypes in the male-dominated transport sector.



Rotarians and ITC Filtrona team with a woman after handing over an auto rickshaw to her.

Mobile dental care clinic

RC Agartala City, RID 3240, launched its first global grant project: a mobile dental clinic was handed over to the Ramakrishna Mission in Agartala. RC Biratnagar Downtown, RID 3292, Nepal, was the international partner. The clinic's first outreach at the Maharaja Bir Bikram University provided free dental screening to 65 people.



Club members handing over the mobile dental clinic to hospital authorities.

Revamping a school

RC Calcutta Kankurgachi, RID 3291, through its Rotary Club Calcutta Kankurgachi Welfare Trust, completed the first phase of *Gyanalok Agami* (Light of Knowledge) at Vivekananda Rotary Sishu Sikshaniketan, Bankura. The project renovated the school classrooms, gave new play equipment and took up campus beautification.



Club members in front of a newly installed swing at the school.

Vocational training for visually impaired

RC Pune Heritage, RID 3131, in collaboration with Samruddhi Development Trust, trained 35 visually-impaired people in professional therapeutic massage skills through a 15-day course and provided each participant with a starter kit. The total cost of the initiative was ₹1.5 lakh.



A training session in progress.

Bricks that stay: RID 3141

97 years of Rotary in Mumbai. Zero dedicated Rotary hospitals.

The year in numbers

Through TRF

\$10.5 million from district projects totalling \$35 million

CSR India grants

\$16 million plus \$6 million in cash contributions

The 4 hospitals

Nearly \$4 million — ₹36 to ₹37 crore

New corporate partners

Nearly 30, none had worked with Rotary before

The ask to every club

One CSR India grant of \$21,000, up from 14 or 15 participating clubs

One club, one family

\$1.61 million RC Bombay, driven by Vijay Jatia and his sons

One appeal, one donor

\$200,000 by Taizoon Khorakiwala, RC Bombay Worli

Arch Klumpp Society members

Over 18 from the district this year (2025–26)

Executed by one Rotarian

35 CSR India grants, 2 global grants — Suhit Jhaveri, RC Bombay Pier

Where the district finished

No 1 in the world top 30 TRF-giving districts, RY 2025–26

RIDs 3141, 3000 put India on top

Namrataa Srivastav

RID 3141 under Motwani's leadership shines a candle

IPDG Manish Motwani's RI District 3141 helped India to emerge second globally in TRF-giving with a contribution of \$45 million, making this (2025–26) a Rotary year India will remember with pride. His district built four dedicated Rotary hospitals, routed \$10.5 million through TRF, and finished first among the world's top 30 TRF-giving districts.

This became possible with RC Bombay Pier president Noopur Desai, Kushal Desai and Sunnil Mehra, who backed two hospitals and cardiac path labs. Motwani says that Suhit Jhaveri "operated like a one-man machine,"

executing 35 CSR India grants and two GGs. PDG Sandip Agarwalla and Vijay Jatia of RC Bombay, under president Bimal Mehta, followed; Jatia and his sons crossed \$1.61 million as AKS members.

He was able to achieve this feat, he adds, by "convincing our clubs to break out of their comfort zones." Only 14 or 15 clubs had ever touched a CSR India grant. Armed with templates such as pink autos, vocational centres, school renovations and *gaushalas*, clubs were coaxed higher. "You don't need to put money out of your own pocket. You just need the passion to ask."

What kept him going was not strategy, but his partner Dr Mahek Motwani,



his “constant sounding board.” The moments that mattered were first-timers crossing the line, his home club, RC Mulund Hill View under Kashmira Ganatra, completing two grants.

CSR India grants brought \$16 million, plus \$6 million in cash, one appeal alone drew \$200,000 from Taizoon Khorakiwala of RC Bombay Worli. Four flagship projects — two heart hospitals, a cancer hospital, an eye hospital, raised nearly \$4 million.

Motwani admits that his “guiding star was RI director KP Nagesh, who was clear in his vision, followed by TRF trustee Bharat Pandya, who believed and backed the model early, and his inner core team of K K Choudhary, Kishor Parekh, Saurabh Sonawala, Kanderp, Deepak Choudhary, Ravi Jaswani, Bhagwan Patil and Monica Grover.

But RC Bombay itself, under Bimal Mehta, became a throbbing engine. Nikunj Jhaveri moved the logistics and Yogesh Zaveri kept the pledges flowing. Meena Choudhary anchored

the details while Tehmina and Kanderp Khandwala worked at the ground level. Bina and Paresh Dattani, Bharat and Neelima Jhunjhunwala, and Smita Parekh didn’t just give, they turned pledges into permanent hospitals. Across Mumbai, other clubs caught the current, RC Bombay Worli under Dr Paula Goel, RC Bombay Bayview under Sonali Shah with Urvi Mody and Vidya Moorjani, RC Mumbai Royales under Deepika Sharda, RC Queen’s Necklace under Apoorva Shah with Sanjiv Mehta, RC Bombay Queen City where Sonal Agarwal backed CSR grants, RC Bombay Central where Fanny and Ashit Mehta gave further.

Motwani, who is a bariatric surgeon at Aastha Bariatrics, smiles and adds: I carry that operating-room discipline into everything, Rotary included.”

RID 3000 led by Karthik tops the world in membership

Forty-seven new Rotary clubs, 53 Rotaract clubs, 232 Interact clubs, a net gain of over 1,800 Rotarians and more than 5,000 Rotaractors in a single Rotary year. With all this, RID 3000 led by DG J Karthik, was named the world’s no 1 district for membership growth in 2025–26.

A third-generation Rotarian, Karthik traces the first spark to a *Rotary News* feature on RC Chennai Icons, which had been chartered with 225 members. He shared the idea with Rtn Vijayalayan, and together they aimed higher, chartering RC Tiruchirappalli Success with 415 members. “That challenged the conventional idea of what was possible,” says Karthik.

Explaining how the district achieved the global feat, he says, “We did not impose 1:2:3 (one new club, two Rota-

RID 3000: World’s #1 district for membership growth, 2025–26

- 47 new Rotary clubs
- Net gain 1,800+ Rotarians
- 53 new Rotaract clubs
- 5,000+ Rotaractors
- 232 new Interact clubs
- 200+ new Women Rotarians
- ₹85 crore in district projects

Largest charters

- Tiruchirappalli Success (415)
- Pudukkottai Perarasu (471)

racts, three Interacts from every existing club) as a mandate. We reframed it. We made the clubs architects, not assembly lines.” The emphasis was on breaking a large target into manageable steps. “When you look at a target of 50 or 100 new clubs, it can seem overwhelming. If every existing Rotary club sponsored one or two new clubs, the overall target became much more achievable.”

The approach also helped clubs that had lost momentum. RC Trichy Dynamic, for instance, had 24 members, but had dwindled to 12 active members. Those 12 members went on to sponsor a new club. “What changed was their mindset,” Karthik says. “Sometimes, a club begins to thrive not when it first adds members, but when it regains the confidence to lead.”

The district did not attempt to create an entirely new formula. “One Disha idea stayed with me — PRIP Shekhar Mehta’s ‘Each One, Bring One.’” It became central to the district’s membership approach.

The effort was also a collective one. Guided by RI directors KP Nagesh and M Muruganandam, the



IPDG Manish Motwani (seventh from L), along with PRIP Francesco Arezzo (on Motwani’s left) with Rotarians of RID 3141.



IPDG J Karthik (third from R) at the chartering of RC Pudukkottai Perarasu.

strategy took shape under district learning facilitator PDG P Gopalakrishnan, with membership chairman Shanmugavel and his team, regional coordinators and assistant governors. Karthik says the scale became possible because no single person was expected to carry the responsibility. Initiatives like ‘DREAM Dozen+’, ‘RAG Analysis’ and ‘1 AG — 1 new club — 25 new members’

turned ambitions into specific action. Women’s membership grew by over 200. Murugaraj led RC Pudukkottai Perarasu to charter 471 members.

But Karthik identifies retention as the biggest challenge. “The responsibility does not end with bringing people into Rotary; we also have to give them reasons to stay engaged.” The district ran projects worth ₹85 crore,

organised a ‘Business RYLA’ and several orientation programmes.

For his successor, he has a simple message: “Build something the next person wants to build on, not something they feel they have to beat.”

The writer is a past president of RC Hiranandani Estate, RID 3141

2027 Convention

Like nothing else

An RI Convention is unlike anything you’ve experienced. Where else can you enjoy Grammy-winning singers and Nobel laureates on the same stage? At the 26-30 June convention in Barcelona, Spain, you’ll find yet another impressive lineup, along with opportunities to connect with fellow people of action from around the globe.

Vinay Gandhi Billapati, a first-time attendee this year in Taipei, says: “The friendships you build, the ideas you discover, and the inspiration you gain will remain with you for a lifetime.” What made his experience unforgettable:

- A big welcome. From the moment we landed, we experienced exceptional hospitality. Volunteers welcomed us warmly and guided us. Their warmth and willingness to help left a lasting impression.
- Inspiration. The breakout sessions, general sessions, the House of Friendship, the Rotary Peace Park, and Rotary Action Group exhibits were beyond anything I had

imagined. Every corner offered opportunities to learn, connect, and be inspired.

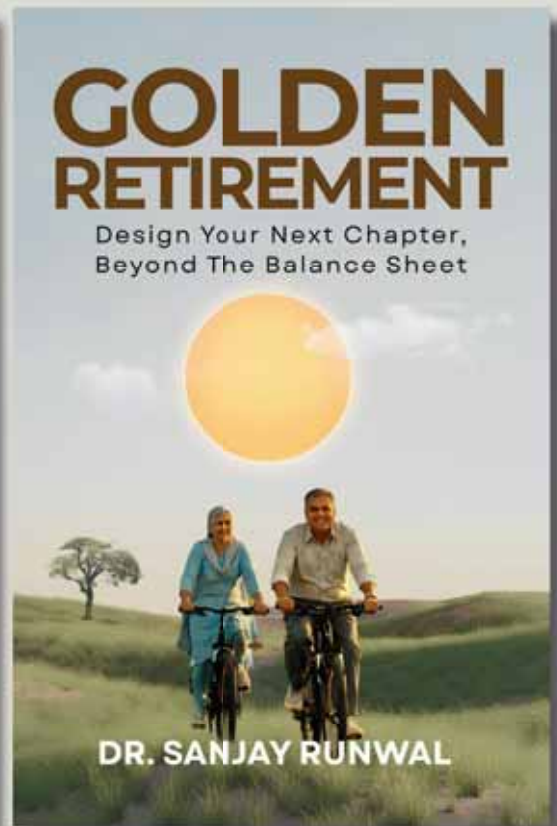
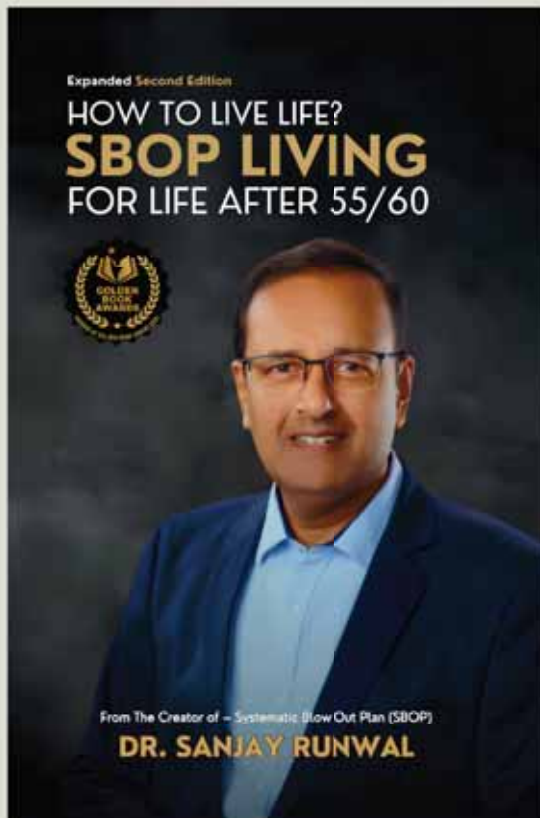
- Rotary VIPs. I fulfilled my dream of taking a photo with 2024-25 Rotary President Stephanie Urchick.
- Connection. The opening ceremony with its Parade of Flags reflected Rotary’s global spirit. Every Rotary member greeted one another with warmth. Rotary was the common language that united us.
- A new perspective. The convention was one of the most rewarding experiences of my Rotary journey. It strengthened my belief that Rotary is more than an organisation — it is a global family united by service and friendship. I am already looking forward to my next convention.



Registration starts September 17. Check our convention website: <https://convention.rotary.org/en-us/>

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The Rotary Foundation Trustees, 2026–27

The trustees manage the business of The Rotary Foundation, the charitable arm of Rotary that funds service activities. The RI president-elect nominates the trustees, who are elected by the RI Board to four-year terms. Four new trustees take office on July 1.



Jennifer Jones

Chair 2026–27

Trustee 2023–27

RC Windsor-Roseland, Ontario

Jennifer Jones served as RI President in 2022–23, becoming the first woman selected to hold the office since Rotary's founding 117 years earlier. A communications executive, Jones is the founder of Media Street Productions Inc, an award-winning media company in Windsor, Ontario.

She collaborates with world leaders and celebrities to raise millions of dollars to eradicate disease, elevate education, support peace, and provide clean water, sanitation and hygiene. As Rotary President, Jennifer embarked on the Imagine Impact Tour to showcase stories of sustainable, large-scale Rotary projects around the world. Messaging from the tour reached more than 1.3 billion people.

She is also a leader in cultivating fundraising opportunities, such as a golfing event with Jack Nicklaus in Jupiter, Florida, that raised more than \$5.25 million for polio eradication in one day. Jennifer has received RI's Service Above Self Award, TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service, and the Sylvia Whitlock Leadership Award. She holds a Doctor of Laws from the University of Windsor and one from Queens University.

She is married to Nick Krayacich, a family physician.



Gordon R McNally

Chair-elect 2026–27

Trustee 2024–28

RC South Queensferry, Scotland

Gordon McNally was educated at the Royal High School in Edinburgh and the University of Dundee, where he earned his graduate degree in dental surgery. He is a fellow of the International College of Dentists and had his own dental practice in Edinburgh until 2016.

McNally joined Rotary in 1984 at age 26. He served as RI President in 2023–24 and as president and vice-president of RIGBI.

McNally is a patron of the UK-based nonprofit Hope and Homes for Children and led a partnership between that organisation and RIGBI to support children in Rwanda orphaned by the 1994 genocide. He is a patron of Trade-Aid, an initiative of RC Grantham Kesteven, England, which provides humanitarian aid.

McNally enjoys rugby and stick dressing, the traditional Scottish craft of making walking sticks. He and his partner Heather are Paul Harris Fellows, Major Donors, Benefactors of TRF, and members of the Bequest Society.



Vicki Puliz

Vice Chair 2026–27

Trustee 2025–29

RC Sparks, Nevada

Vicki Puliz earned a bachelor's degree in marketing and an MBA from the University of Utah before becoming a partner in an electrical business in Nevada in 1984.

After joining Rotary in 1992, she served as RI director, learning facilitator and RIPC. She serves on the Rotary Peace Centers Committee and has participated in events at the peace centers in Bradford, England and Istanbul.

Vicki and her husband, Tim, who is also a Rotarian, live in Reno, Nevada. Their blended family includes seven children, 12 grandchildren, and three RYE daughters. They enjoy outdoor activities in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Both are members of the International Fellowship of Flying Rotarians. They are members of AKS, Paul Harris Society, the Bequest Society and the PolioPlus Society.



Francesco Arezzo

Trustee 2026–30

RC Ragusa, Italy

Francesco Arezzo is an orthodontist and owns an agricultural enterprise that produces virgin olive oil in Sicily.

Arezzo was RI President in 2025–26. A Rotary member since 1991, he has served as vice-chair of the Joint Strategic Planning Committee, RI director and learning facilitator. He served as president

of Fondazione Rotary Italia, making it easier for Italian citizens to support RI projects.

When his fellow members proposed that he become club president, Arezzo was reluctant. He had a stutter and was terrified of addressing his club. But he accepted the challenge. And then he accepted another in becoming DG. It all led to his profound personal transformation.

Arezzo's partner is Anna Maria Criscione, an entrepreneur in the tourism field. They have two daughters and two grandchildren. Francesco and Anna are Benefactors and Major Donors. Arezzo enjoys classical music, particularly that of Sicilian opera composer Vincenzo Bellini.



Ann-Britt Åsebol

Trustee 2024–28

RC Falun-Kopparvågen, Sweden

Ann-Britt Åsebol retired as a member of the Riksdag, Sweden's parliament, in 2022 after several terms as county councilor for Dalarna County. Before she entered politics, Ann worked as a teacher, principal, and trainer at the Teachers Training College in Falun, her alma mater. She later founded a private secondary school and served as its CEO. She holds a masters degree in Swedish and history from Uppsala University.

Ann joined Rotary in 1993 as the first female member of her club. She has served Rotary as learning facilitator and regional RI membership coordinator, apart from being an RI director and as vice-chair or chair of various RI committees. One of her first international projects was a children's home that helped young people living in the sewer tunnels of St Petersburg, Russia. She enjoys skiing, reading about history, gardening, and spending time with her five grandchildren. She is a TRF Benefactor, Major Donor, multiple Paul Harris Fellow, and member of the Paul Harris Society. She has received the Citation for Meritorious Service.



Cynthia W Covington

Trustee 2026–30

RC South Jacksonville, Florida

Cynthia Covington is CEO of Monument Leasing Corp, a family-owned real estate company. She joined Rotary in 1999. She has held top positions, including chair of the Strategic Planning Committee, Rotary representative to the CDC Foundation's Polio Eradication Heroes Fund, learning facilitator and End Polio Now coordinator.

In Nicaragua, she worked alongside locals digging trenches for water pipes, and she continues to advance clean water and sanitation initiatives as a founding board member of the Haiti National Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Initiative. She has received TRF's Distinguished Service Award, the Citation for Meritorious Service, and RI's Service Award for a Polio-Free World.

Cynthia and her husband, Barry, a third-generation Rotarian, enjoy travel and the outdoors. They have hosted several RYE students. The couple are Major Donors and members of the Paul Harris Society, PolioPlus Society, and Bequest Society.



Frank Ching-Huei Horng

Trustee 2024–28

RC Panchiao West, Taiwan

Frank Horng heads the Trojan Orthodontic Clinic which he founded in 1988.

He joined Rotary in 1993 as a charter member of his club, and worked to establish the Fulcrum Education Scholarship Project for New Taipei City Primary Schools.

As a member of TRF Cadre of Technical Advisers, he connected craniofacial surgeons in Bali and Taiwan and led a vocational training team in Mongolia in a GG initiative training 360 Mongolian health workers.

Horng enjoys hiking and golf. His partner, Shu-Yann Chuang, is also a member of the Panchiao West club. Horng and Chuang are AKS members. He has received the Service Above Self Award and TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service.



Chun-Wook Hyun

Trustee 2023–27

RC Seoul-Hansoo, Korea

Chun-Wook Hyun is senior partner at Seoul-based Kim & Chang, one of the largest law firms in Asia, where he has worked since 1981 as head of the labour and employment practice group.

He advises Korean companies; worked as commissioner of the Seoul Labor Relations Commission; legal counsel to the Ministry of Employment and Labour, South Korea, and professor at Korea University Law School.

A charter member of RC Seoul-Hansoo since 1991, Hyun has served as training leader, Host Organisation Committee member for the RI Convention in Seoul in 2016, and is currently director of Rotary Foundation Korea.

**Ijeoma Pearl Okoro***Trustee 2024–28**RC Port Harcourt, Nigeria*

Ijeoma Okoro has over 30 years of experience in the management of the insurance sector. She holds a bachelors in theatre arts and a PG degree in management and studied at the

Lagos Business School.

In memory of her late father, Ijeoma founded the Romanus Emeanuru Foundation for Empowerment and Education Development for women. She was charter president of her alumni chapter of the Lagos Business School's Advanced Management Program and a patron of the Egbu Women's Organisation.

Ijeoma joined Rotary in 1999. She has served as RI learning facilitator, assistant regional Rotary Foundation coordinator, endowment/major gifts adviser, End Polio Now coordinator, and member of the International PolioPlus Committee. She has received Rotary's Distinguished Service Award and the Regional Service Award for a Polio-Free World.

She is a charter member of the Paul Harris Society and a Benefactor. She and her husband, Kingsley, are both Major Donors and Bequest Society members. They and their two children are Paul Harris Fellows.

**Carlos Sandoval***Trustee 2023–27**RC San Nicolás de los Garza, Mexico*

Carlos Sandoval is CEO of Orsan Corp, a leading company in the energy sector in Mexico, with more than 270 service stations and over 3,000 employees. He graduated from

the National Autonomous University of Mexico's School of Architecture and earned his MBA from the Monterrey Institute of Technology and Higher Education.

Sandoval joined Rotary in 1975. He has served as regional TRF coordinator, member of the Fund Development and Rotary Peace Centers committees, and adviser to the Endowment and Major Gifts Initiative. In memory of Carlos, his late son, he made a donation to TRF for projects helping female entrepreneurs in Mexico, the Dominican Republic and Colombia. Sandoval has hosted six million-dollar dinners.

Sandoval's other work includes the creation of the Orsan Foundation, an organisation that promotes healthcare initiatives. He sponsors three addiction rehab centres in the Monterrey and serves on the boards of

the Monterrey branch of the Mexican Red Cross and the Foundation of the Autonomous University of Nuevo León. He enjoys watching car races and running to stay in shape for his three daughters, 15 grandchildren, and a great-granddaughter.

Sandoval has received TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his wife, Martha, are AKS members, Platinum Trustees Circle.

**Dennis J Shore***Trustee 2023–27**RC Hawthorn, Australia*

Dennis Shore is a chemical engineer with bachelors and masters from the University of New South Wales. After a career as a senior executive in Australian Paper Manufacturers

(later Amcor) in the US, Europe and Asia, he established his own consulting business before retiring in 2021.

Shore is a fellow of the Australasian Pulp and Paper Industry Technical Association and a recipient of its Distinguished Service Award. He served in several industrial groups, including the Australian Standards Association and the Business Council of Australia's Environment Committee.

Shore, who joined Rotary in 1980, has served as endowment/major gifts adviser and is vice-chair of Rotary Foundation Australia. He has served twice as CoL representative. He has supported projects including scholar-ships and water tank installations in the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, a hospital in Cambodia, and mental health initiatives in Australia. Shore also convened a million-dollar dinner in 2017 that raised over \$3.5 million for TRF.

Shore and his wife, Lynda, are Major Donors and Bequest Society members. He is a recipient of TRF's Distinguished Service Award and the Citation for Meritorious Service.

**Katsuhiko 'Kats' Tatsuno***Trustee 2025–29**RC Tokyo-West*

Katsuhiko Tatsuno is the CEO of Tatsuno Corp. He joined the company, founded by his father, after earning his law degree from the University of Tokyo in 1964.

He joined RC Tokyo-West in 1982 and has served as CoL representative and RI learning facilitator. He has been a member of the RI Membership

Committee and the Nominating Committee for RI President, among others. He was a member of the Japanese Rotary Committee that supported recovery efforts and survivors after the 2011 Tōhoku earthquake and tsunami. He served as RI director in 2020–22.

An unforgettable moment for him was at the 2011 district conference, when, as governor of District 2750, he invited all 95 club presidents to take the stage and briefly present their club activities, shifting the focus away from governors. He established the Tatsuno Environment Foundation, which provides scholarships to college students.

Tatsuno is a lifelong golfer and student of *shodō*, the art of Japanese calligraphy. He is an AKS member.



Francis F 'Tusu' Tusubira

Trustee 2026–30

RC Kampala-North, Uganda

Francis Tusubira is an engineer and senior founding partner of Knowledge Consulting Ltd. He holds a PhD in electronics from the University of Southampton, England.

His work focuses on information and communications technology.

In Uganda, Tusubira has chaired the National Information Technology Agency and served on boards including the Uganda Communications Commission and the Electricity Regulatory Authority. A Rotarian since 1988, Tusubira's defining project came through one of Rotary's global grant projects: Nkondo Adopt a Village. Over seven years, his club worked on capacity building, improvement of primary education, access to water and electricity, health services, micro-irrigation and microcredit.

As club president-elect, his district governor sent him on an advance site visit to Tanzania for a TRF grant application. He has received TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his spouse, Dorcas, a member of RC Sunrise-Kampala, are Major Donors.



Stephanie A Urchick

Trustee 2025–29

RC McMurray, Pennsylvania

Stephanie Urchick led Rotary as its President in 2024–25. She served as an RI director, TRF trustee and in numerous other roles, including training leader, Regional Rotary

Foundation coordinator, and RI president's repre-sentative.

She has served as chair of the Strategic Planning Committee and TRF's Centennial Celebration Committee, as well as a member of various Rotary committees, including the Election Review Committee and Operations Review Committee.

A Rotary member since 1991, Stephanie has participated in a variety global service projects, including NID camps in India and Nigeria. In Vietnam, she worked with clubs to help build a primary school, and she went to the Dominican Republic to help install water filters.

She has mentored new Rotary members in Ukraine and coordinated a TRF grant for mammography equipment and a biopsy unit for a hospital in Poland. She has also helped to pair clubs and districts in the US with Rotary clubs in Kosovo, Romania, and Ukraine for humanitarian and educational services.

In 2025, she hosted a peace conference in Istanbul with the theme 'Healing in a Divided World'.



Ananthanarayanan S 'Venky' Venkatesh

Trustee 2026–30

RC Chennai Mambalam, India

After earning an engineering degree from IIT-Madras and an MBA from IIM-Ahmedabad, S Venkatesh entered civil construction business at age 23.

He now leads a firm that employs over 1,400 people.

He joined Rotary in 1999 to network with friends. But during a service project donating benches to a school, a conversation with a girl transformed his perspective. "I asked her why she wouldn't budge, and she told me that this was the first time in her life she was sitting on a bench and not on the ground," he says. He has championed literacy and empowerment of girls and women.

Venkatesh played a key role in the India Literacy Mission as its joint secretary, supporting teacher training and literacy programmes over 2,900 schools. He served as RI director in 2021–23 and was a membership coordinator and learning facilitator. Venkatesh enjoys bridge and travelling to seaside destinations. His wife, Vinita, is a member of RC Chennai Anchorage. They are Major Donors.

John Hewko

General Secretary, RC Kyiv, Ukraine

See Board of Directors biography (Rotary News, August 2026)

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RID 2981

RC Pondicherry Marina

Vocational skills in tailoring and bag-making were imparted to 15 individuals with speech-hearing challenges and physical disabilities. After completion, they were offered regular employment ensuring financial security.



Club matters



RID 3030

RC Ballarpur

RO water purifier units were donated to Yashwantrao Chavan Primary School and Saibaba Primary School, both run by the local municipality. The project aims to promote hygiene among students with access to safe drinking water.



RID 3040

RC Ratlam Prime

Club members took part in the Forest Department's tree planting campaign in which 50,000 saplings are being planted over 50 hectares. The greening mission will continue till October with the support of Rotarians.





RID 3053

RC Jodhpur Midtown

Wheelchairs, stretchers and mattresses, and an air conditioner were donated to Mathura Das Mathur Hospital, Jodhpur, to enhance patient comfort, mobility, and overall care at the general ward.

RID 3000

RC Karur Young Gen

Free library membership was given to 150 students of CSI Girls HS School, Karur, to encourage reading habit among them. The initiative will improve their knowledge and enhance their academic and personal growth, says project chair V Vignesh.



RID 3070

RC Amritsar Civil Lines

More than 100 Interactors from the Wood Blossom School, Kairon; National Public School, Noshehra Pannu; and Government Girls School, Kairon, created Ecobricks by using plastic waste. In phase-2, a stool prototype was developed. Past secretary Nidhi Sindhwani was the mentor.



RID 3110

RC Baans Barcilly

Eleven saplings including jamun, amla and amalbas were planted on the premises of ISKCON Temple as part of 'One tree for mother' campaign. Rotarians took pledge to protect the fledgling trees.

Membership and TRF Summary 2026-27

Top 20 Districts in the world in membership

Rank	District	Zone	Country	Rotary Clubs	Members
1	3000	5	India	212	8,798
2	2981	5	India	162	6,981
3	3141	4	India	122	6,859
4	3170	7	India	142	6,432
5	3030	6	India	124	6,268
6	3203	5	India	120	6,042
7	3011	4	India	147	5,712
8	3292	6	Bhutan	165	5,489
9	3211	5	India	165	5,402
10	9213	22	Uganda	151	5,392
11	3060	4	India	105	5,244
12	1910	21	Austria	112	5,231
13	3630	11	Korea	118	5,219
14	3131	7	India	132	4,992
15	9214	22	Tanzania	150	4,810
16	1900	15	Germany	92	4,803
17	3212	5	India	124	4,782
18	3820	10	Philippines	159	4,778
19	9141	22	Nigeria	191	4,738
20	1810	15	Germany	89	4,736

Zonewise ranking - New member addition

Rank	Zone	Members
1	5	3,552
2	4	2,189
3	7	1,866
4	6	1,359
Total (Net Growth since 1July)		8,966
Rest of the World Total (Net Growth since 1July)		15,346
World Total (Net Growth since 1July)		24,312

Rotaract Interact membership as on July 2026

Zone	Rotaract		Interact	RCCs
	Clubs	Rotaractors	Clubs	
4	657	12,000	2,073	2,091
5	909	26,627	2,015	1,750
6	576	9,359	2,320	2,514
7	685	12,207	2,321	1,589

India Districts - New member addition ranking

Rank	District	Zone	NewMembers
1	3000	5	1,081
2	2981	5	689
3	3141	4	451
4	3080	4	424
5	3233	5	344
6	3191	7	327
7	3250	6	266
8	3011	4	263
9	3120	6	237
10	3231	5	227
11	3203	5	225
12	3150	7	224
13	3131	7	223
14	3030	6	217
15	3170	7	216
16	3132	7	213
17	3142	4	210
18	3192	7	204
19	3212	5	198
20	3234	5	194
21	3060	4	178
22	3292	6	157
23	3182	7	157
24	3012	4	142
25	3211	5	140
26	3020	7	140
27	3181	7	137
28	3206	5	126
29	3070	4	118
30	3204	5	115
31	3291	6	113
32	3040	4	108
33	3055	4	97
34	3240	6	95
35	3090	4	95
36	2982	5	86
37	3262	6	78
38	3100	6	71
39	3110	6	70
40	3220	5	65
41	3205	5	62
42	3056	4	62
43	3261	6	55
44	3053	4	41
45	3160	7	25
Total			8,966

Top 10 Districts - TRF Giving

Annual Fund

Rank	Zone	District	Annual Fund (\$)
1	7	3150	195,100
2	4	3142	93,090
3	7	3131	82,787
4	4	3141	81,060
5	6	3250	75,328
6	7	3132	69,435
7	6	3120	65,145
8	6	3291	51,349
9	6	3240	29,919
10	4	3060	24,395

PolioPlus Fund

Rank	Zone	District	PolioPlus Fund (\$)
1	5	3234	8,302
2	7	3020	6,965
3	7	3150	6,700
4	4	3141	6,233
5	7	3170	4,592
6	4	3142	3,931
7	6	3291	3,519
8	6	3240	3,094
9	5	2981	3,078
10	7	3181	2,165

Endowment Fund

Rank	Zone	District	Endowment Fund (\$)
1	4	3053	50,000
2	5	3233	38,706
3	7	3150	36,221
4	6	3120	34,425
5	6	3291	31,604
6	5	3212	30,000
7	4	3141	26,263
8	6	3250	18,798
9	7	3020	13,589
10	7	3131	13,263

Zone ranking in implementing 10:20:30 formula for adding new clubs

Rank	Zone	Rotary	Rotaract	Interact
1	5	28	10	20
2	4	15	15	13
3	6	9	21	24
4	7	3	30	21
Total		55	76	78
Target		500	1,000	1,500

Top 20 Giving Districts in India

Rank	District	Zone	Total Contributions (\$)
1	4	3141	495,857
2	7	3150	250,661
3	7	3131	129,295
4	7	3132	125,397
5	6	3120	101,622
6	4	3142	98,334
7	6	3250	95,835
8	6	3291	90,222
9	4	3011	82,906
10	4	3053	68,453
11	5	3205	62,395
12	5	3234	61,021
13	7	3020	56,557
14	5	3233	49,902
15	5	3203	47,946
16	5	3212	47,390
17	7	3170	40,874
18	4	3060	39,864
19	7	3191	36,282
20	5	2981	36,250

Leading Districts with CSR Credits in Zone 4,5,6 & 7

Rank	Zone	District	CSR (\$)
1	7	3141	288,931.34
2	4	3132	54,533.68
3	7	3191	23,750.00
4	4	3131	22,500.00

Making a difference

Team Rotary News

Skill development for women

Under its Women's Empowerment and Skill Development project, RC Mumbai-Bhandup, RID 3141, has trained 190 women in sewing and fashion ornamentation courses, equipping them with industry-specific skills to get them more gainful employment.

Eighty women have completed their training in two batches so far. "We are committed to ensuring a sustainable livelihood for the trainees, and garment industries have expressed their willingness to recruit our candidates. We are confident of 75 per cent placement for the first batch of 36 beneficiaries in the garment sector," said Seema Kshirsagar, project chair and immediate past president. ■



RC Mumbai-Bhandup IPP Seema Kshirsagar (centre) and other members present course completion certificate to a trainee.



IPDG Harsh Makol (R) and the project team with a beneficiary family.



Child heart surgeries at Mumbai hospital

RC Dombivli East, RID 3142, supported the heart surgeries of 64 children at the Sathya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital, Khargar, through a global grant project worth \$107,000. RC London, Ontario, RID 6330, is their main global partner. Local clubs — RCs Kalyan, Kalyan Riverside and Dombivli Winners — and global clubs, RCs St Clair, RID 5810, US, and Ajax, RID 7070, Canada, also participated. The GG team led by Arun Ashtikar included Ramesh Gupte and TRF director Abhay Kulkarni, and along with the then club president Sandeep Gharat strove hard for the success of the project. ■

Eye surgery camp in Mauritius

Over 100 patients were screened and 48 short-listed for surgery at the five-day vitreoretinal surgery camp held at the Subramani Bharati Eye Hospital, Moka, in Mauritius by RC Thane, RID 3142, in partnership with RC Phoenix, RID 9220, Mauritius.

Dr Karan Kumaraswamy and Dr Shubhank Khare, from India, did the surgeries with support of local doctors and paramedical staff. Mauritian health minister Anil Bachoo visited the hospital and interacted with the patients and the doctors. RC Thane immediate past president Girish Vartak was present at the hospital. ■



An eye surgery in progress.



Block panchayat president Seba Mohammedali inaugurates a hormone analyser at the Government Taluk Hospital, Puthenvelikkara. Also seen are RC Greater Cochin IPP Prasanna Radhakrishnan (4th from R), Rotarians and government officials.



High-tech equipment for Kerala hospital

A range of high-tech medical equipment was installed at the Government Taluk Hospital, Puthenvelikkara, by RC Greater Cochin, RID 3205, through a GG project worth ₹28 lakh, in partnership with RC Wolverhampton, RID 1210, UK.

Kerala Chief Minister VD Satheesan inaugurated the new equipment in the presence of government officials, healthcare professionals and Rotarians.

Earlier, the club, along with the same global partner, did a GG project worth ₹26 lakh to provide an ultrasound scanner, biochemistry analyser and physiotherapy equipment to the hospital in 2023–24. ■



Tackling heat in the city

Preeti Mehra

Microclimate zones determine the temperature
in your neighbourhood.

Have you wondered why the meteorological department's maximum and minimum temperatures seems to be at variance from one part of the city to another? Some places are noticeably hotter than what the weather reports indicate, while others are much cooler by a few degrees.

What explains this variation? Is it for real, or is it a matter of individual perception? An analysis of temperatures across Mumbai last year by Pune-based environment consultants Respirer Living Sciences (RLS) indicates that microclimate zones are forming within the city. According to the study this calls for a localised approach to mitigating heat stress. It cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach for Mumbai or, for that matter, any of the other metros.

The variations in temperature were quite remarkable. The RLS analysis observed that a suburb like Ghatkopar

with its dense population recorded a mean temperature of 33.3 degrees Celsius between March 1 and March 22 last year, while Powai which has fewer high rises, less population, and lot of greenery recorded an average temperature of 20.4 degrees during the same period. That is a difference of 13 degrees Celsius!

Environmentalists are agreed that such temperature variations are linked to microclimate zones being formed within a city. These are small, localised areas differing in climate conditions from the broader region. Such microclimate zones are formed due to various factors including density of population and vehicular transport, prevalence or absence of vegetation, number of concrete buildings and industrial units.

Ronak Sutaria, CEO of RLS was quoted in the media as saying that microclimate zones forming within cities like Mumbai is a reality that cannot be ignored because it has considerable health impact on the residents of a particular area. This local variation in the temperature may not be reflected in the average temperature recorded in a city.

As citizens what can we do to ensure that our cities do not turn into urban heat islands (UHI) — or urban areas that exhibit markedly higher temperatures than their surrounding rural zones. At the local level, how can we influence the microclimate in our workplaces and in the residential areas we live in.

Drawing up urban development plans, understandably, is a macro activity that is beyond our control. The most

we can do is pressurise town planners and government agencies to keep the urban heat factor in mind while clearing mega constructions and industrial units. We can also push for and support environment-friendly actions like saving the mangroves along the coast and protecting our forests.

But at the micro level we can do our bit to keep our environment green, healthy and cool. Of course, there is no magic formula that will usher in change overnight. But here are a few suggestions from experts on specialised websites:

Plant as much greenery as possible: It would be a good idea to plant resilient native trees which provide shade near windows and paved areas to block the heat.

Those living in apartments can grow potted plants, shrubs, or small bushes on their balconies and porches. They could encourage others to do so as well.

It would be great if residents could persuade their Resident Welfare Associations to create rooftop gardens or green roofs that absorb heat to bring down temperatures in buildings in the community. They could even install vertical green walls on building surfaces that catch the sunshine.

There are a few ways to cool surfaces and homes. The most popular is by painting roofs and exterior walls with reflective white or light-coloured paint. At the same time, it would be a sound idea to replace concrete or dark asphalt yards with either of the three — grass, gravel, or permeable pavers. Another layer of coolness can

Plant as much greenery as possible; plant resilient native trees which provide shade near windows and paved areas to block the heat.

be achieved by keeping the soil damp by watering plants during the early morning or evening hours.

It is not very difficult to do your bit to reduce the local heat and the pollution. Environmentalists suggest that you walk, cycle, or use public transport instead of driving cars to cut waste heat. Within the household, turn off unused electrical appliances and air conditioners that vent hot air outside.

And if you take the trouble to support neighbourhood parks and community tree-planting programmes, you will win many hearts. In Chennai, where I live, there are several community initiatives of citizens coming together to green the commons, water roadside shrubs or clear the parks and pavements. These have got considerable recognition and all for the right reasons.

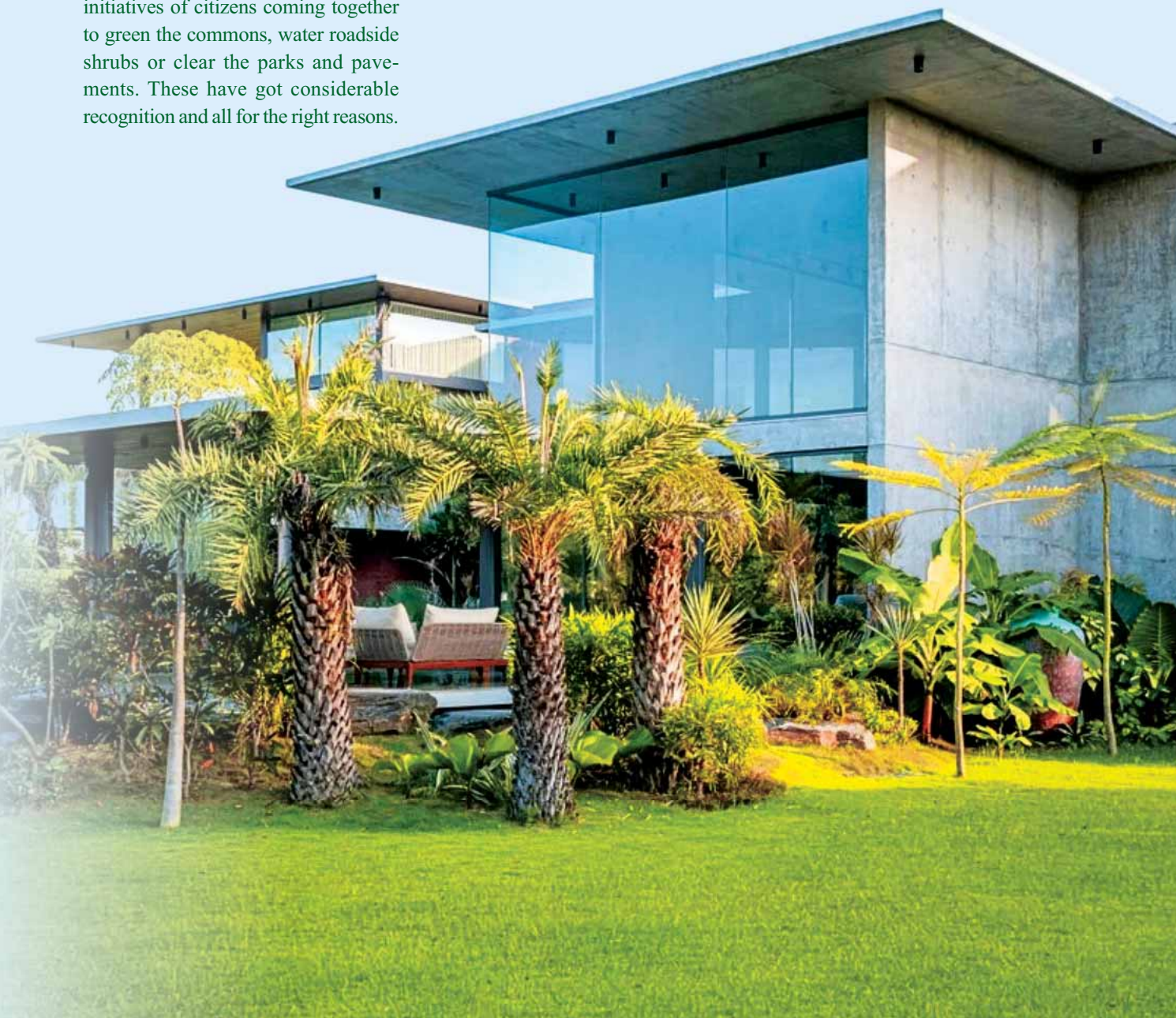
But, if we go one step further, and also take a look at the shanties and clusters around our colonies, we would be furthering our effort to cool the city. In the not so well to do quarters, the population lives in low-roofed dwellings often made of tin or asbestos. These packed structures have a ventilation deficit, and the cooling effect of trees and vegetation is virtually absent. Studies across Mumbai's slums show that the average temperature here is six degrees warmer than in the neighbouring housing societies.

We could help to mitigate the situation by pushing the administration

to replace the roofs with more environment-friendly material and paint them a reflective white. Clean and green commons could be created in spaces that are currently strewn with garbage.

All in all, it is the approach to climate change that must transform. Urban heat islands and microclimate zones are realities that can no longer be ignored. How we handle them will determine how healthy, clean and green our cities are. Like they say, think global, act local.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues





RID **3132**

Rotary E-Club Solapur Elite

Around 300 students of Hirachand Nemchand College of Commerce attended a RYLA led by Anish Sahasrabuddhe, an IPL cricket umpire. He spoke on leadership traits, teamwork, discipline, communication and decision-making under pressure.



Club matters



RID **3181**

RC Mangalore Central

Fourteen clubs took part in the 20th edition of Rotary Awareness Quiz conducted by PDG Devdas Rai. H M Harish from RC Vijayanagar Mysore won the mobile app-based quiz, while R K Ranjan and Sumith Rao from RC Mangalore City were the second winners.

RID **3182**

RC Chikmagalur-Coffee Land

Umbrellas were distributed to street food vendors, vegetable sellers; face shields were given to 160 conservancy workers; helmets for two-wheeler riders; a water filter unit was installed at a police training centre; and conservancy workers were served meals.





RID **3192**

RC Bangalore Brigades

The Vocational Excellence Award was given to Sagar Kumatagi, a young security officer, and his team for protecting a multistorey building from an armed intruder. He was disarmed after a chase, and identified as part of a drug syndicate.

RID **3170**

RC Vaibhavwadi

In a joint project with RC Kharepatan, sewing machines were distributed to 10 women during the visit of DG Arun Bhandare. Bhagirath Gramvikas Pratishthan was the co-partner. Club presidents Sachin Raorane and Dayanand Kokate were present.



RID **3203**

RC Ammapettai Cauvery

Around 100 pregnant women are being given supplements and nutrition kits every Tuesday for the last 200 weeks as part of its healthcare programme. Club president JS Vijayaraj is leading the initiative.



RID **3233**

RC Chennai East R. A. Puram

Self-defence training was given to 1,100 girls, aged 10-20 years, from schools and colleges under the guidance of past president P Vasu, a martial arts expert, at special seminars. Different clubs took part in the training programme.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran

Managing arthritis

Gita Mathai

How often have you, like many others, woken up in the morning with stiff joints and aches all over? Sometimes this follows an unusually strenuous day. At other times, no obvious precipitating cause can be found. If the symptoms do not disappear after three or four days, or several episodes occur in a month, or if morning stiffness persists for more than 30 minutes, or the skin over a joint is red and warm, you may have arthritis.

Any joint discomfort that prevents you from comfortably performing your daily activities for three or more days should be taken seriously and evaluated. On the other hand, if the pain is mild, infrequent and disappears after a few days, it may simply be due to temporary overuse.

Arthritis is a generic term encompassing more than 100 related conditions that affect the joints, surrounding tissues and connective tissues. Some types require prompt treatment, while others develop slowly and can be evaluated without urgency. If you have an inflammatory arthritis that can permanently damage the joints, early treatment can preserve joint function and prevent other serious health problems.

As people age, wear and tear can damage the cushioning cartilage that reduces friction between the ends of bones. Osteoarthritis may then develop, often asymmetrically in weight-bearing



joints such as the lower back, hips, knees and ankles. It is characterised by morning stiffness or after the joint has been rested, gradually increasing pain during movement with crackling or grating sounds. The risk increases with age, obesity, repetitive joint movements, and previous injuries, fractures or surgery.

In some families, members may have high levels of uric acid in the blood. Needle-shaped urate crystals can then accumulate in the joints, causing gout. Attacks produce sudden, severe pain, redness and swelling. Although the big toe is typically affected, gout can involve the ankles, knees, elbows, wrists or fingers. Repeated, untreated attacks can eventually cause permanent joint damage.

Viral infections can also cause joint pain. Mosquito-borne infections such as chikungunya and dengue, and infections such as parvovirus B19, Covid-19, and hepatitis B and C may produce fever, rashes and pain in several joints. These symptoms are often temporary, although joint pain following chikungunya may persist for months or even years.

Rheumatoid arthritis mainly affects middle-aged women but can occur in either gender and at any age. It is an autoimmune disease in which the immune system attacks the lining of the joints, commonly affecting the small joints of the hands and feet symmetrically. Without treatment, it can cause persistent pain and deformity. It may also affect the eyes, lungs, heart, blood vessels and nerves.

Arthritis may be part of other autoimmune diseases, including systemic lupus erythematosus and psoriatic arthritis. Ageing

athletes, especially those who play contact sports, and people with physically demanding occupations may also be more likely to develop joint damage.

Joint pain and stiffness may occur in older people without an obvious cause. Arthritis is more common in people who are overweight, physically inactive, exposed to cigarette smoke or chew tobacco, or have a family history of the condition.

Diagnosing the cause of joint pain requires a detailed history, physical examination, blood tests and appropriate imaging. In osteoarthritis, x-rays may show narrowing of the joint space, bone spurs called osteophytes and changes in the underlying bone. Rheumatoid arthritis may produce symmetrical joint-space narrowing and erosions, although early x-rays can appear normal. Ultrasound or MRI can detect inflammation and early damage.

Blood tests may include the erythrocyte sedimentation rate (ESR) and C-reactive protein to assess inflammation. Uric acid levels may support a diagnosis of gout, but examining fluid drawn from the joint for urate crystals provides stronger confirmation. Rheumatoid factor and anti-CCP antibodies can support the diagnosis of rheumatoid arthritis. Antibody tests, antigen tests or ELISA or PCR may be required when an infection is suspected.

Specific treatment can begin once a diagnosis is reached. Medication can lower uric acid and prevent gout attacks. Treatment for rheumatoid arthritis has advanced considerably. In addition to analgesics and anti-inflammatory medicines, disease-modifying antirheumatic drugs such as methotrexate, leflunomide, hydroxychloroquine and sulfasalazine can slow disease progression. Biologics and Janus kinase inhibitors are also available. These treatments require supervision by a specialist.

Arthritis is characterised by morning stiffness or after the joint has been rested, gradually increasing pain during movement with crackling or grating sounds.

Osteoarthritis can be managed with medication, weight control, exercise and physiotherapy. If pain is no longer controlled and daily functioning becomes difficult, surgical options may be considered. These include osteotomy, joint fusion and partial or total joint replacement. Injections may provide temporary relief for selected patients but cannot rebuild worn-out cartilage.

Painful joints require an accurate diagnosis and specific treatment. Arthritis is not a condition in which one treatment suits everyone.

To reduce the risk and impact of arthritis:

- Maintain an ideal body weight.
- Do not smoke or chew tobacco.
- Exercise aerobically for about 40 minutes on most days. If weight-bearing exercise is painful, swim or use a stationary cycle.
- Include strength training so that stronger muscles can support and stabilise affected joints.
- Seek physiotherapy for pain relief, flexibility, balance and muscle-strengthening exercises.

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



Delving the depths of London's underbelly

This is the story of innocence fatally lured by and enmeshed in an intricate web of duplicity spawned by overweening ambition and false gods.

London *Falling*. I saw this recommendation in the entertainment section on a British Airways' flight recently. The name of the author, Patrick Radden Keefe, sounded sort-of familiar. What aroused curiosity, though, was the descriptive blurb. When I finally got to a bookshop — Topping and Company Booksellers in Bath, as mentioned in last month's column — the book was sold out. In fact, Keefe had had an event at the store. It was only much

London Falling makes you think of the millions of young people who make their way to big cities with hope in their hearts and dreams in their eyes. It is easy to be led astray, and be exploited.



Sandhya Rao

later, upon returning to Chennai, that the penny dropped: Keefe had won the Baillie Gifford prize for non-fiction back in 2021 for a book on the Sackler dynasty called *Empire of Pain* (which finds mention in Wordsworld of February 2022 in connection with another Baillie Gifford winner, 2016, *This is London* by Ben Judah). Anyway, I finally managed to get hold of the book at Heathrow.

The front (and back) cover of this edition — another edition features the Thames — has an especially dull look with something like black and yellowy stripes running horizontally across. You look closer and you see, emerging from the dull background, the words: A mysterious death in a gilded city...and a family's search

for truth. Immediately, a chill runs up the spine.

In November 2019, the 19-year-old son of Rachelle and Matthew Brettler goes missing. Zac is the younger of their two boys, a bright, 'jokey' sort of fellow in his younger days especially, and endowed with a great memory. Fun-loving, athletic and smart, like most other children. The Brettlers are a loving family, the parents are encouraging of their boys, and they live a fairly good life in a decent part of London. But somewhere along the way, when Zac is about 16 or 17, things begin to change because he begins to change. The parents, his older brother Joe and friends don't notice right away, but when they finally do, they discover that he has become an extremely aspirational young man, craving a far better life, the rich life. The parents are troubled by this, but rationalise it as being normal, given his teenage, and in many ways, it is.

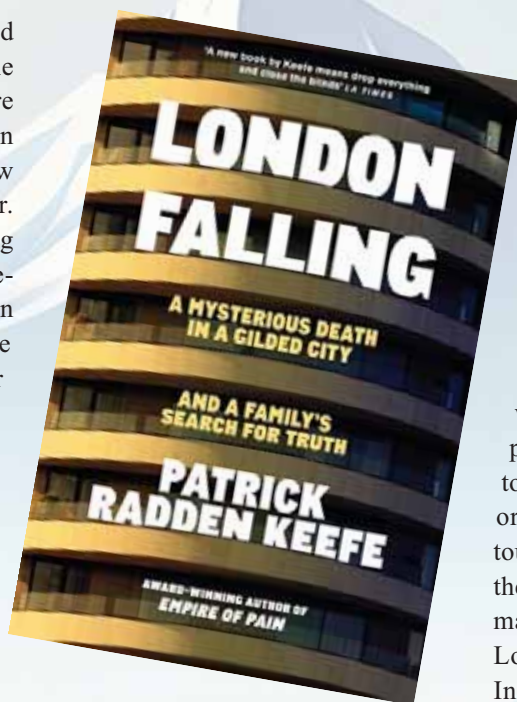
Gradually, though, they see that their son seems to have acquired strange friends, many much older than himself. He also gives the impression that he's coming into large sums of money and is living the high life. That's when they begin to worry. For instance, he tells them that he stays for long periods of time in a high-end apartment called Riverwalk overlooking the Thames River, and they wonder how it's possible for a teenager to get access to such an upmarket address. In fact, the final paragraph of the book provides a telling image related to this fact.

In the summer of 2019, after the whole family has attended a birthday party and where Zac seemed to be his old, younger self, he leaves "the party early to return to Riverwalk, where he was staying that summer. But he knew that when his parents drove

home to Maida Vale, they would head north across the river, and he told them to call him when they were approaching Vauxhall Bridge. When the party was over, Rachele, Matthew and Joe piled into the family car. As they drove past the MI6 building and onto the bridge, Rachele telephoned Zac, as instructed, and then they all looked up and saw him there in the distance on the fifth-floor balcony, a tiny figure, waving.”

Note the location of Riverwalk: on the Thames, across from the MI6 headquarters, adjacent to Vauxhall bridge. Clearly, an address not exactly accessible to a normal, middle-class student. Yet, that’s where Zac was standing, waving: on the balcony of apartment 504 from where Zac jumped or fell, fatally, into the river before the year was out. On the way, his hip hit the embankment. He was found by a young man called Baxter Willis who happened to be passing by. Curiously, Willis himself had been questioned some years ago in connection with the death of a teenager whose body was later found floating in the Thames. After endless harassment, Willis’s name had been cleared. The body he found now was shirtless, wearing sweatpants, and one side of his face had taken a severe blow, like that from a boxer. When the police and investigators arrived, they assumed the body had been carried to the spot by the river; they never once considered looking up at Riverwalk, at the possibility of a fall. It took them a few days to finally go into the building to make inquiries. Did Zac fall? Was he pushed? Or did he leap out towards the river in order to escape?

London Falling explores all these and more possibilities by making a thorough and detailed investigation into the time, the circumstances, the



personal histories of those involved, and joining the dots in a complex web of ordinary as well as influential people. The author follows the connections assiduously, recording statements, recollections, facts and opinions, taking note of conjectures and deductions, as well as evidence, and listening intently to what the distraught parents have to say.

Keefe came upon the story by chance, through a friend who was a rabbi and who had, coincidentally, conducted the *bar mitzvah* of Zac. She told him about how the parents were desperately seeking answers. As Keefe began to dig into the story, he discovered a growing cast of dramatic personae representing various sections of the deep, dark underbelly of London. They included drug lords, murderers, football club owners, businessmen and women, men about town and many others. Above all of them hung the presence and influence of Russian oligarchs, newly rich and minting. And overhanging all of this

was the metropolitan police that often seemed to have behaved in a distinctly non-proactive manner. What was most shocking to the Brettlers was the discovery that their son had been posing as a wealthy investor, Zac Ismailov, the orphaned son of a Russian oligarch. They did not have an inkling of this.

Curiouser still, to me as a reader, was the close involvement of two people of Indian origin who seemed to have either taken an interest in Zac or were interested in what he was touting as his wealth: Akbar Shamji, the son of a Ugandan Indian who had made a dubiously successful life in London, and Verinder Sharma aka Indian Dave, supposedly a rubber baron who was likely a drug lord who had never served time himself although he was linked to rings of unsavoury characters, and whom the Brettlers suspected of being a police informant. How did Zac get close to them? How did Zac convince them that he was a Russian heir? The case was wrapped up as suicide; the Brettlers were/are convinced it was murder.

London Falling is convincing, gripping and unsettling. It makes you think of the millions of young people who make their way to big cities with hope in their hearts and dreams in their eyes. It is easy to be led astray. It is easy to be exploited. It is easy to disappear. Incidentally, the image on the cover is of Riverwalk, the apartment, situated exactly opposite the MI6 headquarters whose camera caught the image of a figure falling into the Thames from the balcony of flat number 504.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist



The language conundrum

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



Language and dress can be highly interlinked. This came home to me many years ago when I took the short flight from Chennai to Coimbatore. I was wearing a dhoti because my trousers were all unwearable, being dirty because I had been travelling for nearly 10 days. My plan was to get the trousers dry cleaned in Coimbatore. So to tide over the problem, I bought a dhoti. I could have worn one of my pajamas but they, too, were dirty. Anyway, there I was in a dhoti and bush shirt, and everyone I met was speaking to me either in Hindi or Tamil. Hindi, because of my face and Tamil, because of my appearance. But there was a problem: no one could understand either my Tamil or my Hindi. I had grown up entirely in the North, in Madhya Pradesh and Delhi, so my Tamil, though quite all right, was stuck in the 1950s. I spoke it very differently from the way people in Tamil Nadu do. Their language had been evolving. As to Hindi, they simply didn't know it, not adequately anyway. But we all knew English which they assumed I didn't know. It wasn't till the next day when I got my trousers back that life and language reverted to normal.

This was the opposite of what happened to me in Bihar once, and the only time I have been there half a century ago. I got off a train at 6am and went looking for a rickshaw to take me to my uncle's house. All the rickshaw wallahs were asleep and refused to take me. Finally, one guy showed up looking for customers and agreed to take me. But he insisted on speaking in English, of which he had absolutely no knowledge. But he thought he was speaking it. It was the strangest experience I have ever had. I still wonder, after 50 years, what was going on in his head.

Then there was my super-nationalist, ultra-chauvinist uncle. He would never wear Western clothes but spoke impeccable English, in what is called a *pucca* accent. When we asked him about this, he said he was a follower of Gandhiji who could speak English perfectly — except when talking to the Viceroy. Then it was always Hindi. This infuriated some of the *Burra Sahibs* but Gandhiji was adamant. That was one reason why that serial violator of human rights, Winston Churchill, called him a 'naked faqir'.

Language and dress seem entwined via some peculiar trick played by the brain. My wife also discovered that in, of all places, Korea in the late 1970s. A true pioneer, she had gone there to study, and found that whenever the locals saw her in a sari, they would break out into English, which they didn't know at all. This happened even when she was speaking to them in Korean. Foreigners were rare in Korea those days and the few who were there were white and in Western clothes. A brown woman in a sari was completely out of their experience.

This led to some hilarious situations, including one when a couple of schoolboys on a bus started speculating about her. She heard them jabbering away for several minutes and then when her stop came, she turned around and told them in Korean that she was from India and they should look it up in their geography textbook when they got home. Those boys nearly died of shock.

The reverse also happens. My parents were travelling by train and on the opposite berth there was a *pugree*-wearing man in traditional Pathan clothes. From time-to-time, my mother would say something about him in Tamil to my father. Several hours later, as he was getting off the train, he bade my parents goodbye and told them to visit him if they were ever in that town. Unforgettably, he spoke in chaste Tamil. ■



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