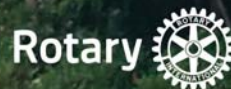


March 2018

ROTARY NEWS



Greening Kerala

Blue splendour

Juxtaposed against the deep blue sky, this Indian Roller or Neelkanth, so named because of its sparking blue hues, was perched on the dry stump of a tree in the Kanha National Reserve. Though famous for its tiger population, for bird lovers, the expansive Kanha forest has a rich variety on offer. So even while you go in quest of the big cat, do remember to take your binoculars. I found this Neelkanth in a resting mood; perhaps it was waiting to spot its food — insects, small reptiles, cricket, etc — in the

open grasslands below. This is one of the easiest birds to spot in Kanha, and is small in size, with the length of an adult being 25–35 cm and weight a mere 70 to 100 gm.

While its crown and vent are blue, the breast is not colourful, being brown. The bird has a large head and a short neck, but its true beauty unfolds not when it is resting, but during flight. That is when the flash of its bright blue wings will catch the eye and delight any bird lover.

Text and Picture by Pervez Bhagat





12 Making green Kerala greener

Read about D 3211's path-breaking REAP project, where Rotarians are growing traditional varieties of healthy rice.



22 Three women on an adventure unlimited

Meenakshi Arvind, Mookambiga Rathinam and Priya Rajpal braved various terrains and temperatures driving across 24 countries and promoted literacy.



32 From blackboard to digital board

Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar launches Rotary's e-Siksha Mission at an event in Pune.

Inside

28 Two past RI Presidents enthrall DGEs

Past RI Presidents John Germ and K R Ravindran give a pep talk to the DGEs at the International Assembly in San Diego.

39 Where Rotary is more than a preferred partner

Tata Technologies' Corporate Head Anubhav Kapoor describes his partnership with Rotary in providing e-learning in Maharashtra.

42 A helping hand

D 3141 partners with St Jude Centre to provide better care for cancer patients.

73 What millennials want...

RI General Secretary John Hewko's address at the World Economic Forum in Switzerland.



76 Carnival time for children

RC Madras T Nagar, D 3232, cheers schoolchildren through their Rota Talent programme.



60 Swapping corporate jobs for a jungle experience

Harshita and Aditya Shakalya, with their son Kaizen, enjoy an unconventional jungle life.

On the cover: The rice growing project of D 3211 through natural farming in Kerala.

Picture by: Rasheeda Bhagat



Fabulous Feb issue!



I don't have the patience to wait till I get the hard copy of *Rotary News* and hence access the magazine online. The February issue is amazing as usual with many comprehensive articles, the editorial and messages from RI President and RID. Regular reading of the magazine has broadened our perspective on Rotary and articles of general nature are interesting too. Kudos to the Editorial team for the excellent content in each issue.

*R Srinivasan, RC Madurai
Midtown — D 3000*

Greetings from Rotary Bangalore Indiranagar and congratulations on yet another fabulous issue. A video link to the cover story *The fashion guru and the ideawale baba* would have enhanced this interesting article.

*Gopinath N, RC Bangalore
Indiranagar — D 3190*

Congrats for bringing out *Rotary News* with content rich in quality and quantity. The articles and reports are impressive

and motivating. I congratulate PDG Kishor Kedia, D3030 and RC Amravati Midtown for its mobile mammography project.

N Sarat Chandra Menon, Kollam

Each and every page of this issue is so colourful that it has turned out to be a masterpiece in all respects. The peppy and frank conversation the two stalwarts, fashion guru Yuvraj Singh and 'ideawale baba' Zaheer Khan of Indian cricket, had with Vikram Sathaye are inspiring. The trauma and pain, grit and the silent suffering hidden in a celebrity, as highlighted by you, in the *Editor's*

Note, is an eye opener. You have educated us on all events of the month, though *Colours at IA* has stolen the show. Congrats to Editor and her team for coming out with such a fantastic issue.

*Col Gopinathan
RC Wadakanchery — D 3201*

The article *Ensure continuity of leadership* has many important suggestions, and RI Director John Matthews says that while serving others, "what really happens is an improved and better you". He says we should ensure continuity between IPDG, DG, DGE and DGN, but similar continuity is required at the club-level too as many projects go haywire due to leadership change. Permanent club committees having senior leaders should be formed for important projects having a long-term impact on society. In our club we start all meetings with an informative talk being given by a senior member.

*V K Bansal
RC Delhi Uptown — D 3012*

Hampi's glory

In the article on Hampi, the writer states this was the second richest city in the world after Vatican in the 15th century AD. Well, who were the Western historians who visited both Hampi and Vatican in that era and came to such a conclusion? If someone does research on the most prosperous region in the world in that era, it is possible to find that that Vijayanagara was richer than Vatican in that period.

Dr K Prasanna (non-Rotarian)

A collector of Rotary News!

I have been a Rotarian for the last 20 years and a past president of

RC Puttur East. I'm obsessed with collecting *Rotary News* for the last 20 years. I always read your Editorials and like them very much.

*Pramila Rao
RC Puttur East — D 3181*

Right mattress matters

The article on the quality of mattresses opened new vistas in this untouched subject and threw light on the need to select the right mattress and cot for our wellbeing and to awake fresh the next morning. I look forward to more such valuable, scientific and educative articles.

*Ashok Jindal
RC Nabha Greater — D 3090*

The article on mattresses was very interesting. In India soft spring mattresses are good to sleep on but natural latex mattresses are more preferred as people not only use them for sleeping, but also working, reading, watching TV and even eating! Plus, natural latex gives the body optimum support. Big hotels prefer soft spring mattresses but foam mattresses are not advisable in the Indian tropical climate.

The January issue had amazing content right from its Editorial, which says solutions for problems lie within you and the 4-Way Test is not to be just put up on a wall. While RI Director C Basker says "make others speak well

LETTERS

about you,” and wants a complaint-free Rotary, the lead article stresses on team work.

Usha Saboo’s excellent proposition to cut out extravaganza, lavish food and costly gifts at Rotary events is noteworthy. And finally, PRIP Raja Saboo’s well-thought out 10-point leadership message... all this has made this issue a collector’s item.

*Piyush Doshi
RC Belur — D 3291*

Great article on Paul Netzel

The article *Money was never my priority* (Feb issue) was excellent. It’s always great to get the inside story of a great humanitarian. Paul Netzel and his lovely wife are amazing people.

*Shirley Downie, RC Eclub of
Southern Africa — D 9400*

A true gem

I welcome Usha Saboo’s views on cutting out extravaganza in Rotary, as this sends the wrong message and spoils its image. She says recognise only those who render extraordinary service, and sent Diwali sweets to jawans in freezing Himalayas. I don’t exaggerate when I call this lady a gem and say: ‘Hats off to her!’

*G V Sayagavi, RC Davanagere
Vidyanagara — D 3160*

Indian Rotarians will agree with PRIP Kalyan Banerjee’s view of appointing TRF Trustees, instead of electing them as Paul Netzel wants. The successful conduct of the KL Institute was another feather in the cap of PDG R Theenachandran. Mala Basker “was delighted by the enthusiasm and commitment of the partners.” The RID’s dream of achieving 1.25 million members in our zones and a target of \$50 million in TRF collections by 2025 will be

pursued by Indian Rotarians with dedication. It is commendable that Usha Saboo sent Diwali sweets to our jawans in Siachen. She should extend this gesture to jawans during Ramzan and Christmas too. Raja Saboo’s 10-point message to Rotary leadership offers valuable tips.

Happy to read about the tour by Anns and Annets from the Rotary Club of Kanpur to Amritsar.

*S Muniandi
RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000*

The December issue is excellent and full of educative articles. The cover photo *In Tagore’s footsteps* is beautiful. The column *Meet your Governors* is useful; the attitude of DG Ravi Choudhary towards membership is an eye-opener. Once again, congrats to Editor in editing and despatching this colorful magazine every month on time.

*N Dhanapala Panicker
RC Kundara Central — D 3211*

Disheartening

In the January issue, many pages were devoted to photographs of RI officials, PDGs, etc in different attires and moods at Kuala Lumpur. Every month 7–8 pages are used to publish “glamour” in Rotary rather than service projects. In the last two years despite reporting good, innovative projects from my club, not a single event has been published in this elite magazine. If glamour is reduced, then service activities of more clubs can be accommodated. I understand that the final decision is yours, but sometimes this is disheartening.

*Dr Bindu Shirsath
RC Ahmednagar
Priyadarshini — D 3132*

The December issue was attractive and meaningful. The Editor’s decision to visit small clubs and highlight their projects/events such as the small Agartala club hosting an international seminar with 800 delegate is welcome. This will motivate smaller clubs to work in the areas of health, education and environment.

While Foundation Trustee Chair Paul Netzel charts out a well-defined partnership in PPP models, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee tells parents of students in exchange programmes that losing a school year is okay vis-à-vis the unique experience they get.

*PC Sanghi, RC Jaipur
Bapu Nagar — D 3054*

Rotaract News

Congratulate you and your team for bringing out *Rotaract News*. Often, we don’t notice the wonderful projects being done by these future Rotarians. By proper grooming they can achieve wonderful things in Rotary in the future.

*Subhasish Chatterjee
3240 District Webmaster*

An extensive and nice coverage of the KL Institute. I felt as if I was at the KL event.

*V G Deodhar
RC Nashik — D 3030*

The message of having conversations with non-Rotarians instead of speeches as stated by the two gurus in the article *Straight talk... with philosophical sprinkling* (Jan issue) was good. Swami Sukhabodhananda’s message was apt and extremely inspiring.

Saboo’s 10-point message on leadership gave me a new insight and knowledge about Rotary.

*Dineshchand Mehta
RC Pali — D 3054*

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

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ROTARY NEWS / ROTARY SAMACHAR

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Mega scams put focus back on integrity

The recent spate of mega frauds carried out against our banking system, and running into thousands of crores of rupees — diamond jeweller Nirav Modi is alleged to have stacked up a fraud of ₹11,400 crore against the Punjab National Bank, and Rotamac Pens' Vikram Kothari another ₹8,500 crore — have left the nation stunned. And ordinary mortals, to which category I guess most Rotarians belong, are stupefied, if not totally stunned. Till now, we in India would quote, both with awe and contempt, the figure of ₹9,000 crore, the amount by which the so-called king of good times, Vijay Mallya, cheated the banks and scooted. But then, come 2018, and we've made progress indeed, with our fraudsters crossing the 10k crore-mark!

Predictably, the social media is having fun... what to do, when you are too stunned to cry, laugh, seems to be its credo. Tweets ranging from "finding NiMo" to "Gujjus looting Sardars (PNB)" are trending. But what is mind-boggling is the impunity with which our dishonest businessmen and industrialists innovate ways to cheat the system, and dupe our regulators. The political clout, irrespective of the government in power, and big business/industry nexus they have, ensure that the bankers, who would give you and I the run-around for most modest loans, roll out the red carpet for them. Each time such a scam erupts, in the midst of all the political mudslinging and blame-game that follows, we, the hapless taxpayers, are left holding the baby, who is growing heavier scam after scam.

The sheer dishonesty and web of lies that come to the fore when such frauds are hoisted on the country and the unsuspecting middle class citizens can put to shame Hollywood or Bollywood potboilers. But in more

ways than one, such rank dishonesty, corruption and effortless manoeuvring of the system to plunder PSU banks and send their NPAs to dizzy heights, even as the Government refinances these banks with our tax rupees, is linked to the core message that Rotary has inbuilt into its ideology. And that is honesty, truth, integrity. Once again, RI President Ian Riseley's strong words at the Kuala Lumpur Institute come to mind: "The Four-Way Test is not something that you just hang on the wall."

Absolutely. Because being a member of Rotary means you are a person of integrity and honour, not only in your business or chosen profession, but in personal life too. Such mega scams should be used as opportunities for each of us to pause, reflect and take stock of our day-to-day life ethics and business/workplace dealings. As the seniormost leader of Rotary in India, Past RI President Rajendra Saboo keeps reiterating from various platforms, when you wear your Rotary pin, be extremely conscious about the way you talk, behave or conduct your day-to-day affairs. Particularly, how you behave in public. At the *Vanakkam Chennai* Institute, he had related the extremely disturbing story of a Rotarian he had chanced upon from the balcony of his room in a five-star hotel spitting out *paan*-juice into a decorative vase! "This is not the behaviour I expect from a Rotarian," he had said.

This is revolting behaviour, but worse is lack of integrity and misuse of trust. As President Riseley and incoming President Barry Rassin said at the International Assembly, the public image of Rotary is made by "you and me". So let's use the recent scams to turn the searchlight on ourselves and ensure that we remain what Rotary is supposed to make us — better human beings with great values.

Rasheeda Bhagat



Rotaractors - a bridge to Rotary's future

Dear Fellow Rotarians,

This month marks 50 years since the first Rotaract club was chartered in 1968. In this special Rotaract issue, you'll meet some impressive Rotaractors from around the world and see some of the incredible ways they are *Making a Difference*.

In the half-century since Rotaract began, the world has seen profound changes, and young people have felt the greatest impact of those changes: the rise of technology and the information economy, the spread of education, and the tremendous influence of the internet. When Rotaract was founded, it would have been almost unthinkable for a teen or 20-something to have been an entrepreneur or a CEO. Today, young people have an unprecedented capacity to achieve — and Rotary needs their ideas and enthusiasm as never before.

For many years, Rotary has done Rotaract a disservice by looking at our youth and young adult programmes as mere precursors to Rotary membership, and not as valuable and productive programmes in their own right. But Rotaractors are truly partners in Rotary service.

Today, an estimated quarter of a million Rotaractors serve in over 10,000 clubs in nearly every country where Rotary clubs exist. The impact of their service is particularly impressive when contrasted with their resources. Rotaractors achieve an amazing amount with far less money at their disposal than the average Rotary club. Their energy and vision bring something wonderful to our Rotary family and to our communities, and we value that very much.

Yet only 27 per cent of Rotary clubs sponsor a Rotaract club, a figure that has remained fairly stable over time. And far too few Rotaractors ultimately do move on to Rotary membership. As we celebrate this anniversary with Rotaract, I encourage all Rotary clubs to consider sponsoring a Rotaract club or to strengthen their ties with the clubs they already sponsor. Schedule regular joint meetings, run joint service projects, and reach out to Rotaractors — not only to ask if you can help, but to find out how you can work together. Know your Rotaract clubs and their members — and make sure that every Rotaractor knows that a Rotary club is waiting to welcome them.

For half a century, Rotaract has given young people a way to find the same connections with their communities, and the same value in service, that Rotarians find in Rotary. Rotaractors are connecting us to the Rotary of our future, while helping us build the Rotary of today.



Ian H S Riseley
President, Rotary International

Message from the RI Director



Clean water and sanitation

Dear Rotarians,

Unfettered access to safe and clean drinking water is fundamental to human development and wellbeing. It is one of the most important requirements in promoting health, hygiene and sanitation, and reducing poverty. Contaminated water transmits diseases such as diarrhoea, cholera, dysentery, typhoid and polio. Contaminated drinking water (www.who.int/entity/water_sanitation_health/water-quality/guidelines/en/index.html) is estimated to cause more than half-a-million deaths because of diarrhoea each year. We have already waged a war against polio and I am proud to say that the disease has been eradicated all over the world except in a few countries. But polio may resurface if we do not check water contamination. WHO, the international authority on public health and water quality, leads the global effort to prevent the spread of waterborne diseases. It does this by promoting health-based regulations among governments and implementing effective risk management practices to water suppliers, communities and households.

I regret to say that according to the WHO-UNICEF (2010) report India has the highest rate of open defecation despite the huge efforts put in by our Government to build more toilets and encourage hygienic sanitation measures. Open defecation means no sanitation. It sullies the environment, degrades water quality and spreads diseases. Access to safe drinking water and good sanitation are vital for family wellbeing. It results in control of child-centric diseases and boosts child health. A healthy child has better learning and retaining ability. Surveys have demonstrated that girls avoid going to school without proper sanitation measures.

Sanitation makes a positive contribution in family literacy. According to a UNICEF study, for every 10 per cent increase in female literacy, a country's economy can grow by 0.3 per cent. Thus, sanitation contributes to social and economic development of the society. Clean drinking water and good sanitation alone cannot prevent infections without practising good hygiene. A simple habit of washing hands goes a long way towards preventing diseases. Stored water may also serve as a source of infection in the absence of hygiene.

Rotary's WinS programme promotes awareness of safe water and good sanitation. Every government-run school in our country must ensure good hygiene, have effective sanitation and safe water facilities.

When water comes from improved and more accessible sources, people spend less time and effort collecting it, meaning they can be productive in other ways. This can also result in greater personal safety by reducing the need to make long, risky journeys to collect water. Better water sources also mean less expenditure on health, as people are less likely to fall ill and incur medical costs, and can remain economically productive.

With children particularly at risk from water-related diseases, access to improved sources of water can result in better health, and therefore better school attendance, with positive long-term benefits.

Let us extend a hand to support our WinS programme and ensure that our contribution makes for a healthier future for the children of our country by providing safe drinking water and sanitation. This will unveil a *Rotary: Making a Difference*.

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

C Basker
Director, Rotary International

Message from the Foundation Chair



Welcome to the Rotary Support Center

Questions, questions, questions. Two topics I am frequently asked about during my visits with Rotarians around the world relate to Rotary's website and our Foundation's grants. Quite likely you have had these questions and more, about things such as donor contributions, point transfers, club and district reports, club invoices and club officer changes, to name a few. If you don't know where to find the answer, Rotary's Support Center is the place to start.

The Rotary Support Center is an easily accessible first point of contact for Rotarians, donors, staff, and others to help answer questions in English, French, and Spanish. Business hours are 8 am to 5 pm Central Time, Monday through Friday. You can reach the Support Center toll-free at 1-866-976-8279 (1-866-9ROTARY). Email inquiries to rotarysupportcenter@rotary.org will be responded to within one business day.

The Support Center averages 3,500 calls per month. This includes about 1,500 callers who want to be directed to a specific person or Rotary department, allowing easier access within our

complex organisation. On average, 7,000 emails are responded to each month.

With only an eight-year history, the Rotary Support Center has been certified as a Centre of Excellence by Benchmark Portal, the industry leader in contact centre benchmarking. The Centre of Excellence recognition is one of the most prestigious awards in the customer service and support industry. This distinction requires that a centre be both efficient and effective, providing service that is of superior quality with lower overall costs compared with other centres in the service industry.

The Rotary Support Center team also includes a Visitor Services and Tour Programme coordinator to schedule tours and large group meetings for those who want to visit Rotary headquarters. Rotary has a surprising number of visitors each year. Are you planning a visit to the Chicago area? You can request a tour by sending an email to visitors@rotary.org. Perhaps our paths will cross at One Rotary Center!

I am confident you will agree with the 96 per cent quality score the centre has received from satisfied customers.

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

Paul A Netzel
Foundation Trustee Chair

Do you still have a question?
I want to hear it. Email me at
paul.netzel@rotary.org.

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Making *green Kerala* greener

Rasheeda Bhagat



From R: A technical expert
of the Govardhan Agriculture
Practice, DG Suresh Mathew,
RC Tiruvalla President
Mathew K Jacob, REAP Chair
Bijumon Kurien, AG Santosh
George and Anil S Uzhathil.

Read about RI District 3211's path-breaking REAP project, where Rotarians are not only involved in growing traditional varieties of healthy rice, but where club meetings, frequently held in lush green paddy fields, become a celebration of nature's beauty and bounty.



For those of us who are huge fans of the clean and green Kerala and grab the first opportunity to holiday in this nature-friendly State, it will come as a surprise to know that DG Suresh Mathew of RI District 3211 has undertaken an initiative to make the already green Kerala even greener.

Pithily named REAP (Rotary Empowerment of Agricultural Production), the aim of this project is manifold, primary one being to grow a traditional variety of Kerala rice through natural and organic farming, with no chemical fertilisers or pesticides. Well-planned before Mathew took over as DG, and launched on July 1, REAP has the ambitious objective of infusing the State's fallow land, destroyed over the years through chemical pesticides, with bio-nutrients and producing healthy crops — mainly paddy.

Thanks to the enthusiasm with which 3211's clubs have jumped in, in the last seven months over 250 acres of fallow paddy fields have been rejuvenated, and already over 250 metric tonnes of organically grown rice has been harvested. About 60 per cent of this leased land is under paddy cultivation; the rest being banana, tapioca and vegetables.

"The rice we grow is healthy and delicious, and has become very

In 1966, there were
8 lakh hectares of land
under paddy cultivation in
Kerala, but that has now
shrunk to only
2 lakh hectares.

PDG **K P Ramachandran**



**DG Suresh Mathew, REAP
Chair Bijumon Kurien and
AG Santosh George.**

popular among Rotarians,” smiles Mathew.

The genesis

Agricultural data shows that due to better employment prospects overseas, over the years, tens of thousands of Keralites left for foreign lands, particularly Gulf countries, and the farmland used for paddy cultivation by many families was abandoned. Also, the continuous use

of chemical fertilisers had destroyed nutrients in the soil and there wasn't much charm left in growing rice. Add to this the shortage of labour with the Gulf beckoning, agriculture took a big blow.

“The result is that people of Kerala have become dependent on rice, most of it infested with chemicals and pesticides, imported from Andhra Pradesh and other States. DG Mathew

learnt from oncologists and other health experts that this is one of the many causes for the rise in the incidence of cancer in Kerala,” says Bijumon Kurien, an exporter of organically grown food and chairman of REAP.

Another architect of the project and its chief advisor, PDG K P Ramachandran, who helps Mathew and Kurien to implement this scheme,

provides another startling statistic. He says that in 1966, there were around eight lakh hectares of land under paddy cultivation in Kerala, “but that has now shrunk to only two lakh hectares. Around six lakh hectares have gone away to rubber plantation and other activities and a major portion of that land is sitting idle.” The result, he estimates, is that around 85 per cent of rice consumed

From lottery to Rotary

DG Suresh Mathew explains that the objective of the REAP project was primarily to convert fallow and chemical infested land into rich, fertile land infused with bio-nutrients and organic manure, but it was also to enhance Rotary's public image.

For one, as in most places, in Kerala too, most people associate Rotary with an elitist organisation with wealthy members who meet and party in five-star hotels. "A lot of the serious welfare projects that we do are not noticed by the people. Actually in Kerala many people think of and refer to Rotary as *lottery!*"

The governor himself had a taste of this during a club visit the previous day. "Here, the government owns the Karunya Lottery, and it gives money for surgery to deserving people. Yesterday, during a club visit one winner came to the club for a recommendation letter because a government officer had asked for such a letter from the State Lottery department and she thought that meant a Rotary club," laughs DG Mathew.

To say it loud and clear that Rotary is a service organisation which undertakes great initiatives for the community, each of the sowing and harvesting events is celebrated as an *utsav* by the club concerned. "In these events not only Rotarians and their families, but also the local villagers, farmers and farm labourers and panchayat representatives participate. And we insist that while visiting the rice fields for such events, Rotarians should wear a shirt and *veshti* and not trousers, so that we merge with the local community," he adds.



by people in Kerala comes from outside, mainly Andhra and "it is infused with a lot of chemicals. Kurien is an expert in bio-cultivation and that is why DG Mathew chose him to chair this project," he says.

So when REAP was being planned, it was also decided to make it as inclusive as possible by roping in more people from the community into the initiative to grow healthy

food through natural and organic methods. It was decided that Rotarians in the district would give out one lakh 'grow bags' with vegetable saplings for kitchen gardens. "The idea was to get people interested in farming. Everybody doesn't have farmland, but we all can grow vegetables in our homes," says Mathew.

Kurien contacted the GoI's Coir Board, and

discussed the use of giving out grow bags filled with cocopeat to make it much easier for the women to handle the much lighter bags. "They provided us cocopeat enriched with manure and other nutrients and many clubs have given out 1,000 or more such bags with the Rotary logo and name in their communities," he says.

Many pilot projects were done and this

initiative attracted the attention of the media in a big way; "we made videos and a manual in Malayalam explaining the methodology and advantages of organic farming — both through grow bags and rice cultivation through natural farming in fallow land," says Kurien.

Involving community

The approach, says Mathew, is to involve as

many stakeholders as possible. Various Rotary clubs started leasing fallow land in their region — the average cost is around ₹12,000 per acre. The soil was enriched with bio-organisms and organic manure and traditional seed varieties were acquired from local experts. By the time Mathew's year as DG had begun, the REAP team was ready to officially launch the project, at as prominent and visible a place as the State Secretariat in Thiruvananthapuram. "We distributed 1,000 Rotary grow bags; the Agricultural Minister V S Sunil Kumar and some other ministers, and several MLAs and bureaucrats participated and it got high visibility," says the DG.

An interesting aside to this is that a couple of months ago, when rice was harvested at one of the fields, one of the ministers invited for the *utsav* made a telling comment "in front of the TV channels. He said when the programme was launched, he didn't think Rotarians will be able to do this work and was both surprised and happy that we have taken this project so far. 'I now realise Rotarians are good people who are trying to change the mindset of the community,' he said," smiles Kurien. At another meeting the Rotarians presented another minister with

REAP rice. He tried it and liked it so much that he has asked for more!

DG Mathew adds that at any Rotary event the REAP rice stall is the most popular and is the first to finish all stocks.

Swaying green fields

When I visit the first field at Vaikom, about 52 km from Kochi, where 3.5 acres have been leased by RC Vaikom, it is a cloudy day with excellent weather; a gentle breeze is blowing and the lush green paddy fields attract a swarm of birds, particularly the egrets. RC Vaikom President Shuja Matthew and Assistant Governor of the zone Shine Kumar explain that here the club has leased the field from a local farmer.





From L: AG Shine Kumar, Biju Jose, James Kurien, REAP Chairman Bijumon Kurien, Secretary Roy Varghese, RC Vaikom President Shijo Mathew and AG Sabu Varghese.

The land had been kept idle for decades and now has started yielding two tonnes of rice per acre. Kumar explains that Vaikom is basically an agricultural area and has no heavy industries, the only notable one being Hindustan Newsprint. Adds the president, “There is 270 sq km of agri dominated land here but due to lack of labourers, climate changes and the ill-effects of chemical pesticides, none was interested in cultivating the land, till we came in.”

His club has 42 members and all of them are actively involved in this project, along with their families. It has almost become a rule with many clubs — of the 130 clubs in D 3211, 60 clubs are now involved in the REAP project — that they frequently organise their club meetings in the green environs of the paddy fields they are cultivating. There is no alcohol served at these meetings and the food is traditional Kerala food.

During events such as sowing, harvesting or infusing the soil with natural ingredients such as natural manure, neem paste, neem pesticides etc, which are scattered on the fields,

the Rotarians make it a point to wear only traditional clothes; the trousers or jeans are exchanged for *veshtis* and *lungis*. “When this happens, the workers and the local villagers are happy to join us and ask about the project, because they feel that these guys might travel by Mercs and BMWs, but they are people like us,” says REAP Chair Kurien.

Shine Kumar adds that even those clubs which do not have land to lease and cultivate as they are city-based clubs, “are encouraged to partner with clubs doing this project”.

We next drive to the paddy fields leased by RC Thalaolaparambu, which has 21 members and has leased 5.3 acres of land. The land is green and the air fresh and the harvest is due in a few days. “Had you come here two months back you would have found it like a jungle filled with snakes. But we have made it a green paradise with support from farmers and labourers,” says Club President Shijo.

A nearby canal brings water to the fields and the club has distributed

1,000 grow bags to the local community to cultivate vegetables. This was done through schools to sensitise the youngsters on the importance of natural farming. Tapioca and bananas are also grown on this land, he adds.

Inclusive, with partnerships

REAP’s success can be attributed to its inclusive approach and partnerships. I meet at this village the local panchayat president V G Mohan, who says it is “always good to partner with Rotary. Thanks to their initiative, local people are getting jobs and more important, good healthy food.”

The other major spin-off from this greening project is the recharging of groundwater. Not only are the wells filling up but there is also some reversal of saline water turning sweet again. Though this region has a lot of water, the problem was drinking water, but that is slowly getting solved, he says.

Kurien adds that one of the Rotarians has started cultivation of 8,500 banana plants through natural farming. He explains that each of the



paddy fields leased has a partnership with a local entity. “We have tried very hard to shake off the five-star image of Rotary through REAP, which is also a branding exercise, and now the Rotary logo is well-known in the communities where we have distributed grow bags or are cultivating paddy.”

Clean, green, natural

Clean, green, natural, organic... these are the four words I hear constantly. The next day I visit two more paddy fields in Thiruvalla, about 40 km from Kumarakom and where Rotarians have leased 11 acres of land for paddy growing. DG Mathew has joined the Rotarians in inspecting this project. The Rotarians are dressed in shirts and *veshtis/lungis* and the accompanying Rotary Anns are armed with colourful umbrellas.

Club President Mathews K Jacob has come with several of his club members for the field meeting. Rtn Harikrishnan, the coordinator of the project, explains the club has leased

the 11 acres from a temple. Omana Kumar, a farmer and technical adviser, explains about the special breed of seeds which he is developing and Chellappan, a labourer, is all smiles as he serves delicious coconut water to us.

Around a dozen women labourers are engaged in a de-weeding operation and their mellifluous notes flow across the green fields. They are singing a folk song, which is praising the deity for giving a bountiful harvest. Here, the harvesting period is 120 days — in some fields it is only 90 days.

In a corner of the field are stacked a couple of plastic containers, filled with natural manure made from cow dung, cow urine and grains such as powdered rajma, peas and jaggery, to boost the crop. Harikrishnan explains the difference between natural and organic farming. “In natural farming, which we do here, we just culture the microorganisms and put them into the soil. That gives micro-nutrients and the

much-needed immunity against diseases and pests to the crop.”

Also, he calls the manure a growth enhancer and not a fertiliser. “Subhash Palekar (agriculturist who propagated natural farming) never uses the word fertiliser; he always says you don’t have to interfere much



The rice we grow is healthy and delicious, and free from chemicals and pesticides and has become very popular among Rotarians. At all Rotary events the REAP rice stall is the first to sell everything!

DG **Suresh Mathew**

into nature... the less interference the better for a more bountiful, quality yield. So this is one step above organic farming. We bring natural ecology into farming and are actually changing or reintroducing the original ecosystem."

Adds DG Suresh Mathew, "This particular soil has now been converted and is free from chemical pesticides, which means new microorganisms are growing to enrich the land."

₹10 to TRF

Mathew adds that seeing the immense popularity and demand for REAP rice, "we are going to increase the price from ₹50 to ₹60 a kg, and



A group of farmers inspecting plants in Grow Bags provided by the Rotarians.



From L: REAP Chair Bijumon Kurien, AG Santosh George and DG Suresh Mathew.

will give the additional ₹10 to TRF. I am also going to export one consignment of this rice to the US; since I am already in the frozen food export business, I already have a channel."

We chat with the women who are singing as they are picking out weeds. Prasanna, who had earlier worked as a nurse in Jodhpur but had to return home as her two children were very young, speaks in fluent Hindi. She, along with the other workers, works from 8 am to 2 pm and gets a daily wage of ₹400. She is very happy that the REAP initiative gives her this income, which goes to supplement the money earned by her husband who runs a small *paan* shop. Thilagamma, a mother of three, and whose husband is a painter says, "Thanks to this work we get some additional income." Kalyani, the leader who has taught them the folk song which weaves in many traditional tales, says this venture of the Rotarians has provided her the much-needed employment.

I put in my requisition for 1 kg of REAP rice and Kurien smiles, "You are going to taste it at lunch today." We pile into Harikrishnan's house for lunch; his wife is a doctor and at work. But under the expert guidance of his mother, other Rotary Anns

have taken over the kitchen and the delicious, sumptuous meal they serve is among the best I've ever had. This region's famous *kari meen* (pearl spot fish) has been prepared to a new perfection and the *sambar* and other vegetables served with the REAP rice, complete the meal. The rice is indeed delicious.

So have other districts replicated his dream project, I ask DG Mathew. "Not yet; but we have managed to inspire many other organisations in Kerala, as well as many panchayats, who are enthused that we use traditional seeds, instead of hybrid seeds, which we have brought from Wayanad and Palakkad." And now, basmati rice seeds have been brought from Gujarat and that rice is also being cultivated, he adds. Also around 20 members from one Rotary club in UK, who were visiting a club in Kerala, were taken to the REAP rice fields. "On that day the paddy was being harvested and they were amazed and told us this is exactly the kind of project we would like to associate and partner with, so please send us more details," adds Mathew.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S

District Wise TRF Contributions as on January 2018

(in US Dollars)

District Number	APF	PolioPlus	Other Restricted	Endowment Fund	Total Contributions	EREY Donors (in numbers)	EREY %
India							
2981	23,612	1,215	0	0	24,828	142	3.3%
2982	34,322	70	2,725	0	37,117	170	6.3%
3000	27,550	7,159	88,541	0	123,250	802	15.9%
3011	63,420	314	44,262	0	107,997	178	5.9%
3012	38,482	6,693	46,590	3,016	94,780	213	6.1%
3020	23,121	9,961	19,950	42,478	95,510	72	1.7%
3030	455	22,724	1,050	0	24,228	3	0.1%
3040	3,432	0	26,185	0	29,617	26	1.2%
3053	5,602	78	11,550	0	17,230	15	0.5%
3054	(1,414)	102	212,650	0	211,338	6	0.1%
3060	34,999	640	206	18,000	53,845	385	10.1%
3070	28,124	148	24,219	789	53,281	144	4.9%
3080	99,765	11,149	15,578	92	126,585	159	4.9%
3090	508	0	0	0	508	2	0.1%
3100*	5,975	0	0	0	5,975	32	2.0%
3110	63,302	2,848	60,631	0	126,781	157	4.1%
3120	77,342	508	0	0	77,850	103	3.5%
3131	195,807	(3,900)	240,333	58,094	490,333	576	11.3%
3132	29,655	906	7,875	0	38,435	120	2.8%
3141	382,353	14,120	353,008	8,785	758,266	571	11.2%
3142	193,383	2,901	350	(1,000)	195,635	399	14.8%
3150	44,450	11,357	9,050	61,000	125,857	244	6.8%
3160	80,502	1,000	0	8,469	89,971	133	5.7%
3170	21,182	7,789	17,707	0	46,678	267	5.0%
3181	46,560	559	0	78	47,197	298	9.9%
3182	36,775	0	20,843	0	57,618	342	10.9%
3190	99,449	300	36,620	16	136,384	72	1.4%
3201	77,185	6,991	131,298	15	215,490	139	2.7%
3202	20,768	2,056	0	0	22,824	61	1.3%
3211	53,429	0	0	43,846	97,275	67	1.6%
3212	189,648	34,322	32,500	1,000	257,470	311	8.4%
3231	52,913	462	61,250	20,000	134,625	67	2.7%
3232	53,337	11,300	83,312	500	148,448	153	4.2%
3240	58,602	325	0	555	59,481	216	7.4%
3250	47,271	100	0	0	47,371	128	3.6%
3261	23,769	100	0	0	23,869	90	3.8%
3262	71,982	150	0	0	72,132	248	7.5%
3291	47,714	24,973	58,789	4,639	136,115	44	1.2%
India Total	2,355,328	179,419	1,607,072	270,372	4,412,191	7155	4.6%
3220 Sri Lanka	63,835	10,293	6,940	1,217	82,286	156	8.2%
3271 Pakistan	28,971	34,888	1,050	0	64,909	70	4.9%
3272 Pakistan	10,477	577	0	1,000	12,054	48	1.7%
3281 Bangladesh	317,592	13,085	175,328	44,025	550,030	514	9.1%
3282 Bangladesh	78,164	1,691	500	1,000	81,354	339	9.0%
3292 Nepal	120,722	19,960	145,485	0	286,167	417	9.5%
South Asia Total	2,975,087	259,913	1,936,376	317,615	5,488,990	8699	4.8%
World Total	67,397,651	21,550,948	8,944,796	14,170,047	112,063,442		

* Non-districted

Source: RI South Asia Office



Benches for Purulia's children

Team Rotary News

On Jan 28, the students of Bagatbari Primary School in Purulia district of West Bengal were all excited to go to school, for, they were going to sit on benches for the first time, thanks to the project of RC Calcutta Mid South, D 3291.

“It gave us so much happiness to see the excited children when they trooped into the classrooms and sat on the benches with such reverence. Until then, we didn't realise what a luxury simple furniture can be. We are so used to them that we don't



even notice such things,” said Rama Prasad Nag, immediate past president of the club.

The school, established in 1905, is popular in the

locality for mid-day meals. Nag saw the need for the benches and desks during one of his visit to the school when he found the children sitting on the floor.

The project took shape when the club got financial support from RC Battersea, Brixton & Clapham, London, and together they provided furniture to the school at a cost of nearly ₹1 lakh, in the presence of Dr Amar Basu, International Project Chair of the London club, who made a special visit to the school.

The club is celebrating its silver jubilee year and has carried out several developmental projects in and around the backward regions of Purulia in these 25 years. ■

A leadership workshop

Team Rotary News

A two-day Rotary Leadership Institute (RLI) was organised by RC Dharapuram, D 3202, with six facilitators mentoring 25 participants on diverse topics related to Rotary through lively interactions.

DG P M Sivashankaran inaugurated the Institute in the presence of the district trainer PDG Sagadevan. PDGs Rekha Shetty (D 3232), Navamani (D 3212),

T George Sundararaj (D 3202), Rtns Mythili Muralidharan, P Seshadri and Krishna were the other mentors.

Topics such as My Rotary World, ethics in vocational service, strategic planning and analysis, membership, communication and team-building, Rotary Foundation, public image and leadership abilities were discussed at the workshop. The participants came from places across Kerala and Tamil Nadu.



Expressing her views, Rtn Mythili Muralidharan said, “It was an opportunity for the participants to interact and draw inspiration from seasoned past governors with rich expewrience in implementing community projects.” While for Hareesh of RC Payangadi, D 3202, “All the sessions were informative. I still could not come out of their great and positive impact and the voices of the trainers echo in my ears, knocking and telling me to wake up and get ready for the next beautiful action. All of them made me love this organisation more and more.” Certificates were given to all the participants. ■

Three women on an adventure unlimited

Jaishree

When most of us complain about the traffic and how stressful it is to drive the few km to office daily, here we have three women who drove 26,800 km from Coimbatore in Tamil Nadu through valleys, plains, deserts and hills, for 70 days, criss-crossing 24 countries, before hoisting our National Flag in London on June 5 last year in the presence of the Deputy High Commissioner of India to the UK Dinesh Patnaik. “It felt so good to be in the British capital, particularly when our mission included commemorating our 70th independence from the British rule,” said Mookambiga Rathinam who, along with Meenakshi Arvind and Priya Rajpal, formed the team ‘XPD

2470’. A fourth member, Ruckmani Sekar, had to cancel her trip at the last hour, due to health issues.

The cause

The cross-country adventurous drive had a purpose: the all-women team promoted women’s literacy and the various components of TEACH of the Rotary India Literacy Mission (RILM). “It is perhaps the longest literacy drive and who better than these daring women to serve as ambassadors for women empowerment and literacy,” said PDG K A Kuriachan, Chief

From L: Meenakshi Arvind, Priya Rajpal and Mookambiga Rathinam in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

It felt so good to be in the British capital, particularly when our mission included commemorating our 70th independence from the British rule.





From R: Meenakshi Arvind, Mookambiga Rathinam, PDG K A Kuriachan and RC Aakruti President Leema Rose Martin (far left) with the then President John Germ at the Rotary Literacy Summit in Chennai.



Coordinator XPD 2470. The initiative brought in Rs 5 lakh to send 200 drop-out children back to school.

The entire trip cost around ₹60 lakh. Rotary clubs of Aakruti and Coimbatore Texcity, D 3201, the Ramakrishna group of institutions, Roots, CRI Pumps and few other philanthropists supported the adventure. Apart from the actual costs spent for fuel, vehicle maintenance, toll charges and accommodation, “we had to spend for the International Driver Permit, 11 visas, air tickets from London to India and travel agents’ fees,” said Mookambiga.

Tata Motors provided their SUV Hexa for the trip and also trained the team in its mechanics at their plant in Pune to handle emergencies along the way. The car was then shipped back to Pune from London after the trip. A diagnostic cable with a special software for the car helped in troubleshooting. The car was exclusively fitted with 19-inch tyres for better grip on various terrains, and they carried two spare wheels, oxygen cylinders and other spare parts. “Thankfully, we did not need them,” she smiled.

The journey

XPD 2470 was flagged off in Coimbatore on March 26 by the Minister for Municipal Administration S P Velumani and received with great fanfare in the other States and UTs. “We had women achievers flag us off in most of the places. In Puducherry it was Lt Governor Kiran Bedi, and we were flagged off from Imphal in Manipur, our last leg in India, by Governor Najma Heptulla.” Rotarians cheered the team in all the States they passed through.

They drove through Myanmar, China, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia, Croatia, Austria, Czech Republic, Switzerland, Germany, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and reached London on June 5.

The team

Coimbatore-based entrepreneur Meenakshi Arvind (45) led the team — Mookambiga Rathinam (38) an agriculturist and a yoga trainer from Pollachi, a small town near Coimbatore, and Priya Rajpal (55) an adventurer from Mumbai. The three women met for the first time after Meenakshi, who had just returned from a road trip to Thailand, posted an online invitation to participate in the world trip. Mookambiga, Priya and Ruckmini responded to the invite and the logistics were finalised. “I am used to driving solo across the country, exploring places. I was of the view that our country has a lot to offer and I must explore every place here before crossing the seas. But Meenakshi’s idea was very appealing and my mother encouraged me to go ahead,” said Mookambiga who has a seven-year-old daughter.

Her visa was rejected thrice due to insufficient bank balance. “Ours is an agricultural vocation and most of transactions used to be in cash. But thanks to demonetisation and PM Narendra Modi’s push for online transactions, my bank balance became healthier, and finally my visa got through, of course, after a lot of struggle.”

XPD 2470 was the longest trip for everyone in the team. Meenakshi researched the route for nearly a year, and read up the rules for each country. “We planned every hour of the day meticulously, because any delay, even on one stretch, will collapse our well-planned trip,” said Mookambiga.

Adventures galore

Didn’t you find the whole trip daunting when you began, I ask Mookambiga.

Kuriachan, who was enthusiastic and fully supportive of the expedition right from its genesis, was quick to answer: “A lot of my friends ridiculed me for supporting the adventure. All of them are young and at any moment they may abandon the idea, and you’ll lose face, they said. But I didn’t listen to them, although I did have a small inkling of doubt then. They are not actually friends. They met each other very recently and I was not sure of their chemistry, nor were they. But thank god, it all went through fine.”

Mookambiga with an enigmatic smile listened to this revelation and

A lot of my friends ridiculed me for supporting the adventure. All of them are young and at any moment they may abandon the idea, and you’ll lose face, they said.

PDG K A Kuriachan.

calmly replied: “Yes, at some point we did have arguments. Even for something as simple as buying a bottle of water, there were three different opinions. This is what we call ‘Cabin Fever’ — constantly being confined to a small space can be a challenge. Soon we made our own set of rules. For instance, the person who drives gets to choose what music to play. And it taught us lessons in tolerance.”

But they had larger challenges to face. Like the journey in China. “We were supposed to exit China from the Irkeshtam Pass into Kyrgyzstan. Instead, our guide took us to the wrong exit towards the Torughat Pass which is

about 13,000 ft above sea level. A sudden blizzard took us by surprise and we didn’t have snow tyres. So we had to spend the night in a 10 ft by 10 ft room with three border guards. It was minus 18 deg C outside and the border was closed. The next morning we couldn’t start our car as the engine had frozen due to the severe cold.”

The women covered deserts to high altitudes and some rough roads. “The stretch from Guwahati to Imphal was real tough.” Adapting to left and right hand driving was not a problem, but understanding the road signs was difficult. “We restricted driving to six hours a day and kept rehydrating. The weather conditions would be completely different. We would begin our journey at 30 deg C, and by the end of the day, reach a place where the temperature would be minus 16,” she said.

Surprises

In some countries like China, Myanmar and Kyrgyzstan, it was mandatory to engage guides and in Uzbekistan diesel was sold in black as vehicles run on liquefied gas, methane and propane.



The expeditionists in London with the Deputy High Commissioner of India to the UK Dinesh K Patnaik (centre) and Minister Coordination A S Raja. Also present: PDG T George Sunderraj, Rtn Satwant Singh from RC Palakkad East, PDG K A Kuriachan and Uma, spouse of Satwant Singh (far left).

In China.



To drive in China, you need a temporary licence and a local number plate, and the trip has to be planned by a local travel agency. You need to get your car registered before you drive through Myanmar. Thailand requires you to have a special permit to drive your car on their roads. “We learnt this when we entered Thailand from Myanmar. We were told that we could enter, but not our car. We could get the permit only in Bangkok, and it would take three weeks. But we had date-specific visas for the countries ahead. And Thailand would shut down for the next 10 days for the Songkran festival. If we didn’t get our permit, we would just have to return to India.

We made calls to the Indian Embassy and sought help from friends. Finally a contact in Coimbatore who knew a former Thai Deputy Prime Minister agreed to help. So we flew to Bangkok, got our permit in 24 hours, but lost four days in the process. To make up, we drove through Thailand without taking in the sights, and caught up with our schedule in China,” she added.

The team enjoyed a royal treatment in Uzbekistan because “we hail from ‘the land of Raj Kapoor’. We were surprised and excited to hear a family band sing Bollywood music, particularly from Raj Kapoor’s movies.”

The longest stretch the team did in a single day was 893 km from Budapest to Bucharest. On an average they drove 550 km a day. “But in Kyrgyzstan, we couldn’t drive beyond 250 km a day due to the bad roads and high altitude.”

Technology was a huge blessing on an expedition like this. The women had taken with them a satellite-connected gadget, which provides Wi-Fi facility in 200 countries. “It cost us \$80 a day. We updated our progress on social media and connected with our families with this device. It acts as a Wi-Fi hotspot, to which five gadgets can be connected.”

The Carnet

Since the team planned to ship their car from London to India, the Carnet, an international customs and temporary

export-import document is mandatory. They had to get the document stamped at every border crossing and borders are open only for a few hours a day, “so we had to stay alert and clock-watch every day.”

“Punctuality needs a special mention here. They were on the dot on June 5 at London as planned,” said Kuriachan. He, along with the Project Chairman Krishnaraj and Leema Rose Martin, President of RC Aakruti, were there in London to receive and felicitate the team for its grand feat. Earlier, the team met the then RI President John Germ in Chennai at the Rotary Literacy Summit.

“I must mention about Leema’s motherly concern. Every morning she’d message us asking about our wellbeing and whereabouts. I am deeply humbled by this journey. We met amazing people along the way and more than what we invested in this trip, we learnt a lot,” concluded Mookambiga.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Wash or Wipe?

Rakesh Bhatia

When Indians go abroad they do not demand a health faucet; rather they try adapting to the western style, wiping after they are done in the washroom. Many dump the used tissue in the dustbin present in the toilet, for fear of a clogged drain which may lead to an embarrassing situation.

When Indians receive foreign guests, the first thing we check is our washroom, and ensure that it is equipped with a toilet paper roll. We do not even suggest that our visitors adopt the Indian hygienic-cleaning style, again, for fear of an embarrassing situation.

What wash does, no wipe can. Spill some fluid on the floor, wipe it, scrub it. Still there will be retention; wash it, the area will be totally clear of all stains. Similarly, no amount of wipes can clean the derrieres totally, which a single wash can do. Indians have learnt from their forefathers to wash after each toilet sitting. We are taught — the left hand is for cleaning and the right is for eating. Today, we use the hand shower to wash and clean to the last bit. This is not only hygienic and healthy, it also saves paper, and there is no fear of drain clogging, keeps away infections and saves the environment too.

Health workers and doctors agree that wiping can leave behind traces and excessive wipes can cause health problems such as anal fissures and urinary tract infections. Particularly when the movement is from back to front, which pulls the bacteria from the excreta to the body front. But washing cleans the area and leaves it fresh and healthy. It is also said that slight water pressure in the area stimulates smooth bowel movement too. One gram of faeces can contain ten million viruses, one million bacteria and 100 worm eggs.

Wiping can also contaminate your hand. If your toilet paper is white, it could contain bleach. Chlorine bleach creates dangerous toxins that can accumulate in the body causing serious health conditions.

WASH is a known word in Rotary, it is now time to teach the world — adopt wash in your washrooms and feel the difference.

The author is the President Elect of RC Belur, D 3291.





Street fun in Bharuch

Rasheeda Bhagat

Normally Gujaratis welcome the onset of winter by celebrating winter mornings with food that keeps the body warm through the day — such as dishes made of fresh garlic leaves or a *halwa* — yes *halwa* in the morning, remember this is Gujarat... made with *methi* (fenugreek) and jaggery, *bajra* (millet) rotis, etc.

But as during the last two winters, this year too RC Bharuch Narmada Nagari, D 3060, decided to celebrate the Gujarat winter in a unique way by organising a novel event titled *Rotary ni Dhamal Galli* or Street Fun!

Club President Poonam Seth said the project was conceptualised “so as to attract a large number of people in one prominent place in the city to have fun and fellowship during winter mornings.



The idea is to establish Rotary’s identity and create awareness about Rotary and enhance its public image among the larger community.”

So a buzzing street of Bharuch, where many citizens hang out, was identified for this fun and PR exercise. “We took

special permission from the Bharuch Police, local municipality and district administration, and with their cooperation, the road was closed for traffic and alternate traffic route arranged for the people,” she said.

Organised during a Sunday morning in order to attract a larger number of people, particularly the youth, lots of fun games were planned, along with Zumba dance, *garba* and live rock bands adding a flair to the event.

Traditional activities such as *gilli-danda*, kite flying, *rassa khench*, *lakhoti*, tyre rolling, street cricket, street painting, applying *mehndi*, and street plays were also organised. Youngsters

including schoolchildren, Interactors and Rotaractors were encouraged to put up food stalls.

The event was partnered, apart from Interact and Rotaract, by NGOs such as Clean Bharuch Green Bharuch, Senior Citizens Club of Bharuch, Bharuch Agarwal Samaj, Art of Living Foundation Bharuch and the Asmita School for mentally-challenged children.

During the event in which about 2,500 people participated, a lot of information was shared about Rotary and the humanitarian projects it carries out. With Jan 28 being a polio NID, a polio booth was put up at the venue and about 70 children were given polio drops. ■

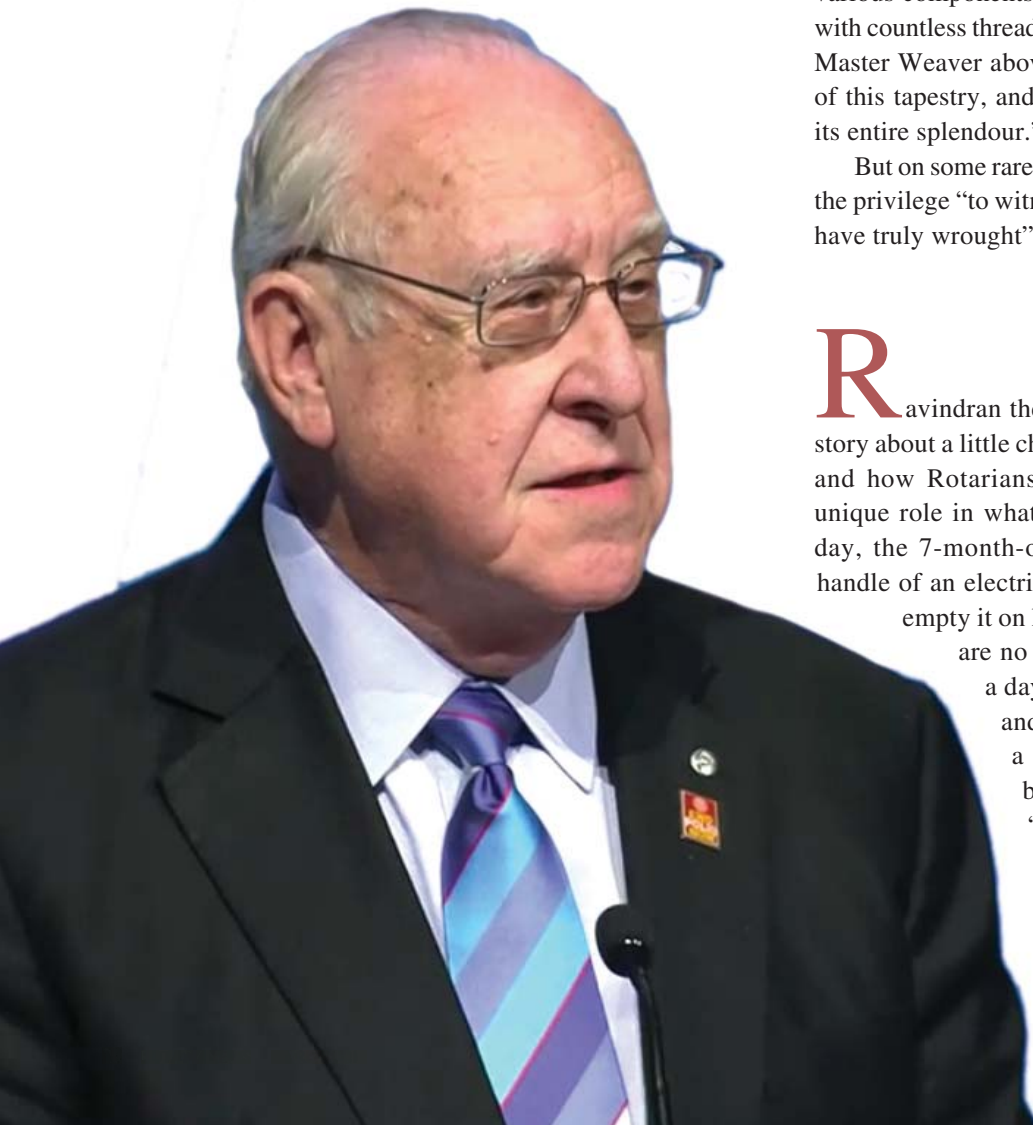


A drawing contest for children.

Two past RI Presidents enthrall DGEs

Rasheeda Bhagat

**Past RI President
John Germ**



Two riveting presentations at the International Assembly in San Diego this January were made by two immediate Past RI Presidents — John Germ and K R Ravindran.

Ravindran said the IA was a special event for all incoming governors but each one felt and absorbed its different moments just like the various components that go into making “a tapestry with countless threads, dyed in countless colours. The Master Weaver above sits coordinating the creation of this tapestry, and only he can see the tapestry in its entire splendour.”

But on some rare occasions human beings do have the privilege “to witness a glimpse of what our hands have truly wrought”.

Ravindran then shared with the DGEs a true story about a little child called Zachary in Mongolia, and how Rotarians, including himself, played a unique role in what happened to him. One fateful day, the 7-month-old child managed to grab the handle of an electric pan full of boiling water, and empty it on himself. In rural Mongolia there are no ambulances, and it took almost a day to get him to the closest clinic and another two to transfer him to a hospital. But by this time his burns were terribly infected and “the hospital lacked even basic antibiotics to treat him”.

The doctors threw up their hands and said only a specialty hospital overseas could save his life. “The desperate

parents reached out to every friend, every relative they had. But Zachary's time was running out.

He had third-degree burns on more than half his body, and his infection had turned septic."

Shriners, a charity hospital in Cincinnati, agreed to take him and the desperate parents somehow raised the money for the air tickets, organising a doctor to fly with him. But "no airline would carry a child so fragile, so desperately ill, hovering in the land between life and death. And the child, had only two days!" The parents could do little but pray desperately and hope for a miracle. As they prayed through the night and the child grew weaker, they begged God for mercy.

Suddenly the next morning they found a stranger at the door of the Burns ward in the Mongolia hospital. He said he was there to help them, took their documents and returned in the evening, with the magic authorisation required to fly out the child and its parents to Cincinnati. Everything had been arranged beginning with the ambulance, and the family reached the Cincinnati hospital just in time to save Zachary's life.

But then some thread had been worked at the other end of the tapestry to make the miracle happen... far away in Evanston, the Rotary headquarters. It began with the RI President's office phone ringing; Ravindran, the then incumbent, picked it up and heard an RI staff member's impassioned plea to save her friend's grievously ill grandchild in Mongolia. "She said: You are the president of Rotary and you can make this happen. Honestly I did not know if that was true," Ravindran told the Assembly.

But he promised to try; contacted the district governor for the region Peter Pang, based in Hong Kong. It was an unearthly hour there, but the DG assured assistance. By morning, the DG

had reached the president of RC Ulaanbaatar in Mongolia, who in turn zeroed in on senior officials in the government with authority to direct the airline to carry the child. Other Rotarians went to the hospital, completed the formalities and in "Evanston, our staff member stayed late into the night, booking the special tickets required for a medically fragile child. The airline executive called the airport, and said, these are VIP passengers — make sure they are treated well."

Ravindran then delivered the crucial message to the incoming DGs: "On that day we each held in our hands only one thread. But by that thread hung the entire world of a family in distant Mongolia. And next year, you will hold the threads upon which whole worlds may hang. It will be your job, to weave them well and strong."

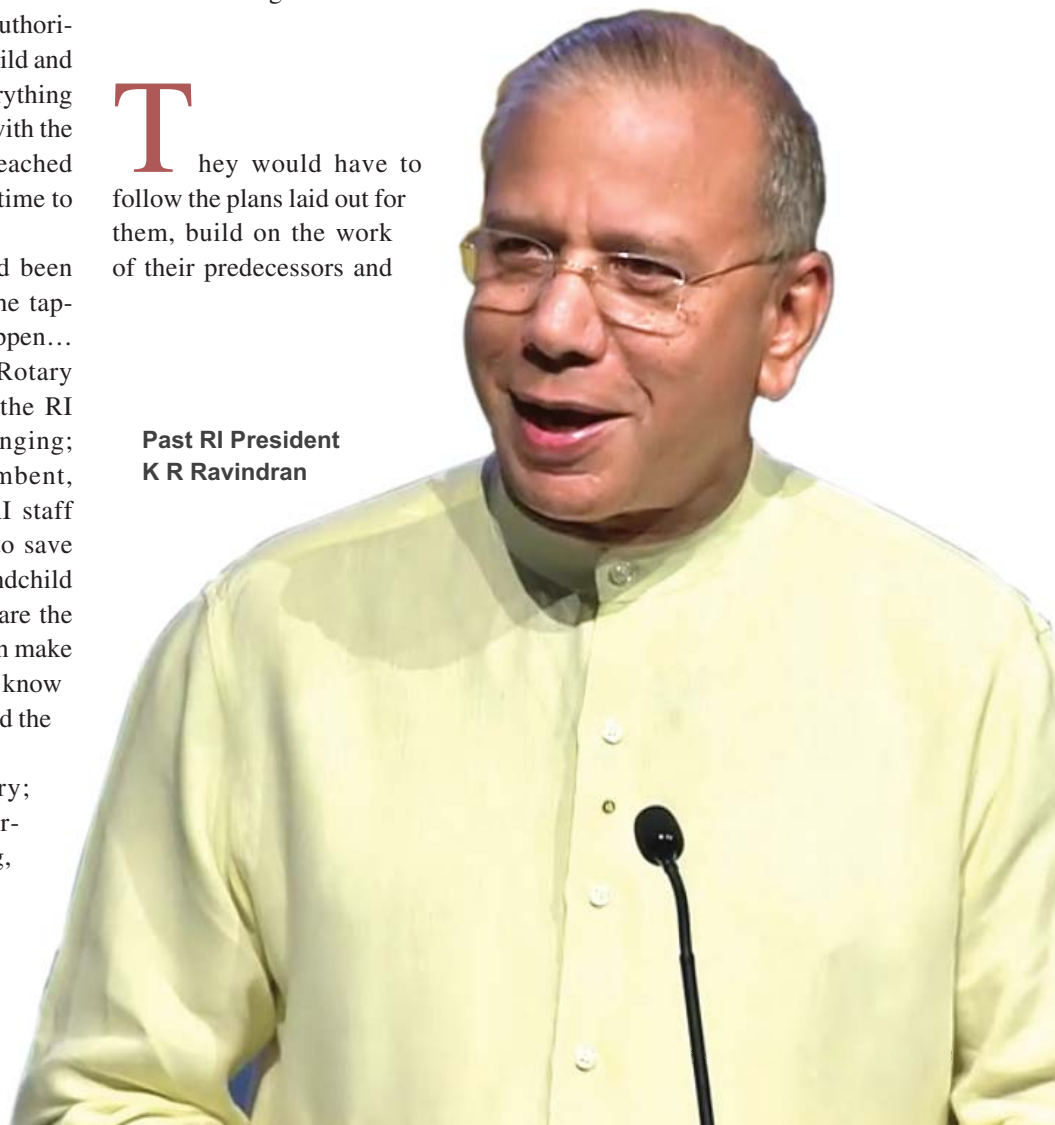
They would have to follow the plans laid out for them, build on the work of their predecessors and

prepare the ground for "those who will come after — to weave one great tapestry of service together." On their work will rest the future of such people in distress. "For one year, you should feel the urgency of your office — to do as much as you can, in the time that you have, for the people who are waiting for you. To insist on the same standards of work, the same quality and the same degree of ambition when lives hang in the balance."

Ravindran disclosed that when he looked back on his job as president of Rotary, "to be very honest with you, I never imagined it would be so hard.

It was grueling, it was exhausting, they were the toughest years of my life." So he boarded the flight back home anticipating a long sabbatical from Rotary; "I said to myself, I did what I set out to do. The torch has been passed on. My work is done."

**Past RI President
K R Ravindran**



But then the “job of a Rotarian” came home with him.

And he saw with new eyes a project that his club, RC Colombo, had done a decade earlier — the Rotary Cancer Detection Centre in Colombo, where 40,000 women had been screened for cervical cancer, and over 7,000, who tested positive, referred for further treatment. All the club members always quoted these two numbers as a measure of their success.

But the other number he looked at, with his new vision, was that each year in Sri Lanka 2,000 women are diagnosed with cervical cancer, and nearly half of them die. And almost all of the infections, caused by the HPV virus, could have been prevented through vaccination.

A new plan was born with the goal of immunising every girl in the country between 15–18 years, and screening every woman from 35–60. The club will now work with TRF and the Sri Lankan government for joint funding of the vaccines, and education on prevention, to make his country free of cervical cancer.

Addressing the DGEs, PRIP John Germ stressed upon them the need to do “projects on a much larger scale that are sustainable and affect

more individuals”, partnering with a wide spectrum of organisations.

He said the world “needs Rotary more than ever; our courage, our optimism and idealism. It needs the voice of tolerance, cooperation and hope that we can offer, and above all the example of an organisation that has proven that citizens of all countries can work together successfully, and in friendship.”

Rotarians don’t know the full impact of their action. This was driven home to him when with spouse Judy he visited Beirut, and met PDG Jamil Mouawad. Seeing students getting sick from drinking contaminated water he mobilised Rotarians throughout Lebanon, the government, private corporations and TRF. And now clean water has been provided to over 700 schools; the goal is to reach all schools in Lebanon. The smiles on the children’s faces as they drank the water were most satisfying to see.

A transformational project needn’t always be the one costing a lot, having the most partners, or involving the most Rotarians. It could simply teach a young entrepreneur how to start a business, provide her access to credit and transform her and her family’s life.

Over two years of travelling for Rotary, he saw repeatedly that the best projects had a few things in common:

- They were well researched and planned.
- Addressed real needs in the community, not preconceived ideas of Rotarians.
- Involved the beneficiaries, listening to their thoughts and feedback, and took into account local challenges.
- Were sustainable; they’d continue to go on changing lives in a significant way for years to come.

Giving an example of a project they had seen in Guatemala, he said they had visited a very rural remote

The world “needs Rotary more than ever; our courage, optimism and idealism. It needs the voice of tolerance, cooperation and hope that we can offer.

Past RI President
John Germ

community where an x-ray facility was 6–8 hours away over dirty bumpy roads. If the clinic couldn’t diagnose the problem “they simply placed a piece of paper on the shirt or blouse of the patients and sent them to the hospital with the sign saying diagnosis unknown”.

Then came Rotary with a project bringing digital x-ray technology that completely changed access to medical care in that community. “The people were so happy they literally celebrated in the streets. That machine meant the doctor could take care of them and they could take care of each other.” That single clinic could service over a million people in 29 rural villages.

As governors, they would need the vision to do work that made a transformational difference; “look for what’s wrong and the causes you can address. There isn’t a week that goes by that I don’t look at something and think, there’s a Rotary project ready to happen,” Germ said.

One such possible project was finding a more environmentally friendly way for farmers to clear the stubble out of their fields after harvesting a crop. Right now they were burning it, resulting in thick smoke and smog so bad that people can’t breathe and planes can’t land. “As Rotarians we see the needs, but do we have the vision to solve them? We are only limited by our imagination,” he added. ■

For one year, you should feel the urgency of your office — to do as much as you can, in the time that you have, for the people who are waiting for you.

Past RI President
K R Ravindran



Celebrating the bicycle, Rotary style

Team Rotary News



A bicycle prototype exhibit in a mall.

Have you ever wondered how the ubiquitous bicycle's first-ever prototype looked like?

If you had been in Bengaluru recently you would have seen a replica of the 'Dandy horse', invented by German Baron Karl von Drais in 1817, that was put up for display in the city's malls.

This was part of the celebrations organised by RC Bangalore Koramangala (RCBK), D 3190, to commemorate the 200 years of bicycle

invention. The club also arranged a road-show where the replica was taken around the happening places across Bengaluru. The event was a boost for Rotary's public image as it attracted media attention, besides courting eyeballs.

Two cyclothons

The club promoted a 'bicycle for the needy' project where, with the help of NGOs, they identified beneficiaries such as farmers, tea vendors, housemaids, watchmen and students who need a

two-wheeler for daily commute. So far, the club has presented basic model bicycles to nearly 60 beneficiaries.

Further, two cyclothons were organised by the club, along with RC Channapatna, where Rotarians from other clubs, members of the Rotary Cycling Fellowship and Rotaractors of RAC Jyoti Nivas College participated. Each participant was given a sapling to be planted across the city. So far, RCBK has planted over 600 saplings in the city and its suburbs. ■



From L: Club President Janet Yegneswaran, Secretary Ganesh Prabhu, District Vice Governor B N Prasannakumar, DG Asha Prasannakumar, AG N Ravindranath and Secretary Prakash Belavady handing over a bicycle to a beneficiary.

From blackboard to digital board

Rasheeda Bhagat

Just as our government has reduced the prices of LED bulbs, similarly we will lower the price of digital boards and ensure that every school in India has at least one digital board,” said Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar, launching Rotary’s e-Siksha Mission at an event in Pune organised by the

Rotary Indian Literacy Mission (RILM).

Clarifying at the outset that education cannot be the sole responsibility of the government and that total and quality education across India will happen only when the citizens participate, he welcomed the e-learning initiative of RILM headed by PRID Shekhar Mehta. Many

people might not be aware that in Maharashtra, it was the primary teachers posted in remote, rural areas, who initiated the e-learning revolution.

“Like many other good things in our country, even this digital revolution happened without government participation. A project becomes successful only when the community participates in it,” he said.

Javadekar said that in the 1960s, the popular slogan was ‘Operation

Blackboard’. “But keeping in mind the need of modern times, “we want to provide a ‘digital board’ in each classroom.”

Rotary’s credibility

The Minister recalled that when a couple of years ago, his close friend PDG Pramod Jejuriker “came to me and talked about Rotary wanting to take up e-learning, I thought many people come to us and talk about big schemes; then nothing actually happens.



Education is not the sole responsibility of the government; we need partners for doing everything, and what better partner than Rotary?

HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar

But because it was Rotary, there was some credibility. And the government needs partners for doing everything, so what better partner than Rotary.” Hence his ministry signed an MoU to introduce e-learning in 18,000 schools in Maharashtra in partnership with Rotary, at the South Asia Literacy Summit in Chennai last year.

Addressing the meet, PRID Mehta said this was a “historic moment for Rotary as the impact of this massive programme is

going to touch over 40 lakh children in India. And the value of the programme is over Rs 75 crore. Have you ever seen a programme in Rotary worth Rs 75 crore in India, polio apart?”

He assured the HRD Minister that this was only a beginning. “Apart from the 18,000 schools with the Maharashtra government, we have signed an MoU last month with the Madhya Pradesh government for 30,000 schools, the Punjab government for 20,000 schools and the Haryana CM has said let’s start with

2,000 schools and we will take it forward.”

Ultimately, the goal was to reach e-learning to every school in India, “but the momentum came only after we signed the MoU with Maharashtra. Combined, the value of this programme is Rs 150 crore. Times have changed in Rotary, we now have to think big, bold and bigger. Through this programme we will be reaching one lakh schools, and if we put the average strength of a school at 200 children, over 2.5 crore children will be impacted by this programme.”

Mehta thanked the Maharashtra Education Secretary Nanda Kumar, who was present, “for the speed at which you do things”, and the Inner Wheel for partnering with Rotary in a big way

to ensure success of the TEACH project.

Training 10,000 teachers

He also thanked RC Pune North for agreeing to give 10,000 tablets to 10,000 schools. Also, the ICEDC headed by Racquel Shroff had agreed to train 10,000 teachers. The curriculum has been approved by the Secondary Education Board. “It will be totally funded by Rotary, all that Nanda Kumar has to do is give us the names of the 10,000 teachers. We are ready to do everything to fulfil Past RI President Kalyan Banerjee’s dream of a totally literate India, but please make us the Government’s preferred partner on literacy.”

Apart from adult literacy and building libraries, the RILM was working on skill development too, and only last month PRIP Banerjee had signed an MoU with Cherie Blair of the Loomba Foundation in London under which 30,000 widows will be skilled for employment.

If a school provides budget education to children in a slum, why should it matter if its playground isn’t big enough? Let parents decide what they value.

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee

From L: PRID Shekhar Mehta, Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee and PRID Ashok Mahajan.



Banerjee speak on girls' education

Addressing the launch of the Aarose-Siksha event in Pune, Past RI President Kalyan Banerjee made a passionate plea for educating the girl child and said the time had come to move beyond just the expression of "righteous indignation".

Reiterating that he was speaking for girl's education in entire South Asia, he said only education offers them "a fair shot, a path out of poverty." Denying them education means that "women can work the land but can't bank it." This is why poverty is female-centred, and world leaders need to act to ensure that universal access to education by 2030, the target set in the Sustainable Development Goals, becomes a reality for girls too.

Apart from "righteous anger at the injustice of all this, there is a need for outrage at the violence — physical emotional and legal — that perpetuates such injustice against girls. But there is also room for hope. Because the research is clear — it's plain on the page and proved on the ground — that funding girls' education isn't charity but investment, and the returns are transformational."

Give girls just one additional year of schooling and their wages go up by 12 per cent. "Give them as much schooling as boys, and things really start changing. Closing the gender gap in education could generate \$112 billion to \$152 billion a year for developing countries in South Asia. When you invest in girls and women, they rise and lift their families, communities, economies and countries. They rise — and they lead."

He added that in these countries, there were 130 million girls "counting on women and men to get our collective act together, push for better policies and request politicians to do more and fund more of what works. Minister (Javadekar) Sir, let India show the way."

State of flux

Banerjee said education in India was "in a state of flux. The government



devotes vast amounts of money to it, but outcomes are not everywhere as hoped for or desired." A recent Annual Status of Education Report (ASER), described by the government itself as "somewhat depressing," showed that 52 per cent of students in Class V were unable to read a Class II textbook. And 58 per cent of Class VIII students could not do simple division, and teacher absenteeism was rampant. Also, compared to budget private schools, government teachers got much higher wages and were "more or less tenured. They have no reason to aim for excellence or try to provide quality education. How does one make them accountable, and make sure that our money is better spent? One answer is school vouchers. It's a system gaining popularity in the US. Can it work here, I wonder."

Under a voucher system, the government, instead of giving money to government schools, gives vouchers to parents, who then choose the best school for their children, and submit the voucher there. That school then gives the voucher to the government and gets the money to pay the teachers.

This changes the incentives for government school teachers. "They have to perform now, and deliver quality education, or parents will take their kids elsewhere. Competition brings accountability. This also empowers parents with choice; they can decide

what is best for their children. In a nutshell, the State, instead of funding schools, as is done now, funds schooling," said Banerjee.

He added that he had always supported putting up smaller, volunteer-run private schools in communities. "For 70 years, we have had regulations in places that disallow or disincentivise private schools, especially for the poor. If a school provides budget education to children in a slum, why should it matter if its playground isn't big enough? Let parents decide what they value."

Organisations such as the Centre for Civil Society had documented how thousands of poor parents in slums and villages across India prefer to send their kids to a budget private school rather than a free government school. "I believe that in a marketplace, the profit motive is the best incentive. After all, you can only make a profit by delivering value to others. When I was growing up, in the 1950s and '60s, telecom, airlines and education were all government monopolies, and delivered, as we all know, poor quality service. Today, two of the airlines and telecom, allow private players to compete freely, and because of competition and the profit motive, we, the people, are better off." But this hadn't been done for education, "which is so important for our nation's growth," Banerjee added.



From L: DG Vyankatesh Channa, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, PRID Ashok Mahajan, PDGs Gopal Mandhanja, Vinay Kulkarni and Prashant Deshmukh. Back row: PDGs Zubin Amaria and Ratna Prabhakar Anne.

Addressing the meet, Banerjee said Rotary clubs in India have been committed to join hands and support the GoI in making India literate as early as possible. “Helping India go digital is a critically important step in the process and Maharashtra is well ahead of many other States in the country in this.”

Thanks to the evolution of digital technology in India, learning concepts had changed in schools. “The traditional chalk and talk method has paved the way for more interactive teaching methods as schools are increasingly adopting digital solutions to keep themselves abreast with technological changes.” With the

It’s plain on the page and proved on the ground that funding girls’ education isn’t charity but investment, and the returns are transformational.

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee

current generation of students being well-versed with laptops, i-pads and smartphones, these innovative teaching methods guarantee more participation from students, he said.

Today, most States in India were deep into digital education with thousands of schools, adopting it, and teachers were also being made digitally conversant. “We in Rotary believe that the first and most important aspect of schooling is good teachers; this is our most pressing need,” he said emphatically.

Maharashtra Education Secretary Nanda Kumar said a big revolution was sweeping across the State vis-à-vis digital literacy. “We have 66,000 government schools and of these, at least one classroom in 63,458 schools has become digital.” Also, from the 3 lakh teachers that the State had, “about 1.6 lakh teachers, many of whom are seated here, have declared themselves tech-savvy. This is not a government but a people’s project, and the ₹350 crore spent on these measures have come from both corporate and community social responsibility. And all this has happened, thanks to Rotary’s leadership.”

Through the digital learning programme, we will be reaching one lakh schools, and over 2.5 crore children will be impacted.

PRID Shekhar Mehta

PRID Ashok Mahajan said a paradigm shift had taken place in teaching methodology and new technology was making learning much more effective and interesting. Surveys had found that school enrolment and attendance in Maharashtra had gone up following the introduction of e-learning. Attendance had improved by 15 per cent proving that digital learning was soon replacing the noon meal scheme as an incentive to attend schools by making education enjoyable.

DGs Abhay Gadgil (D 3131), Prafull Sharma (3141) and Vyankatesh Channa (3132) participated in the programme.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat
Designed by N Krishnamurthy

An extra mile in member connectivity

Jaishree



PRID Frederick Lin giving polio drops to a child. DGN Dr A Zameer Pasha, PDG P V Parthasarathy and Conference Secretary M C Saanthosh are also in the picture.

The annual conference of District 3000 exuded abundant warmth and bonding among the Rotarians, impressing PRID Frederick Lin from Taiwan to comment, “It is like attending an Indian wedding. There

is so much grandeur and affection all around. And above all, Rotary celebration is at its best here.” He was in Madurai as the RI President’s Representative for the conference. Referring to DG P Gopalakrishnan’s theme — *Go*

the Extra Mile and Serve (GEMS) — he commented that the event was certainly “an extra mile in member connectivity”.

As it was a Polio NID, he, along with the DG, administered polio drops to a few children at the venue.

He echoed RI President Ian Riseley’s call for inducting more women members. “We must make Rotary interesting to attract women members. Presently their membership comprises only 20 per cent of the total membership which is far too less,” he said. Stressing on inducting young members to Rotary, he added, “We must find new and better ways to consistently attract and engage younger members so that we are constantly creating new generation of members and leaders for Rotary to flourish. The 2016 CoL allows more flexibility in membership and meetings.”

Community first

RI Director C Basker connected with the audience, speaking in Tamil. He recalled the District Conference of



RID C Basker in conversation with PRID Frederick Lin.

1991–92 when he was president of RC Karur. “Back then it was just 32 clubs but still the conference used to be like a family get-together. And today with 120 clubs, it is still grander.” He congratulated DG Gopal and the Conference Chair V Ramesh for the choice of speakers and programmes.

Reiterating his thoughts on serving the local community needs, Basker asked, “How many of you have highlighted your community’s requirements at your club meetings? Addressing such needs will greatly enhance Rotary’s public image.”

He urged the Rotarians to believe in the cause they were working for. “When Rotary wanted to address polio that was rampant in the Philippines, there were many naysayers. But TRF’s 3H Grant helped to make the country polio-free and that inspired the world to adopt polio immunisation on a big scale. Your belief makes everything possible. Our country has the largest youth power, but lack of self-confidence deters us from becoming a developed nation. Let us teach the younger generation to believe in their power to bring a transformation in society,” he said.

Earlier, chief guest Vanitha Mohan, Managing Director of Pricol and the NGO *Siruthuli*, explained their efforts in reclaiming water bodies in Coimbatore. “With the support of 10,000 people, we cleared a 300-acre



DG P Gopalakrishnan, PDG M Muruganandam, his spouse Sumathi and Neela Gopalakrishnan honour Sarathkumar.

lake which was covered with weeds for years. We were overjoyed to see it fill up from an unseasonal rain last year. When we take one positive step forward, nature leaps 10 steps to meet us,” she said.

P R Seshadri, MD and CEO of Karur Vysya Bank, spoke about the bank’s plan to associate with Rotary to set up dialysis centres in the district. Chanchalapathy Dasa, Vice Chairman of the Akshayapatra Foundation, spoke about how the organisation feeds 1.6 million children across 12 States in the country every day. “Rotary is associated with us in a few regions,” he said.

Polio victim and Paralympian Madhavi Lata recounted how she overcame challenges to emerge a successful swimmer and basketball player.

The SCAW (Sleeping Children Across the World) team from Canada that has been providing sleeping kits to underprivileged children in the district and cyber-savvy auto driver Annadurai were felicitated. A lively debate on whether the present technological developments are a boon or a bane and poet Joe Mallori’s thought-provoking talk on the topic, *Life – a blessing or a curse*, rooted the crowd to their seats.

An auction was held for six best paintings from a contest for special children organised by RC Trichy Diamond City and the proceeds were donated to TRF.

Actor/politician/Rotarian Sarathkumar introduced a mobile App ASK, developed by him to receive public grievances. His deputies will follow up with the local authorities for getting solutions. So far, 1,000 social issues have been processed, he said.

The highlight of the valedictory was the presence of the Deputy Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, O Paneerselvam, who is a Rotarian. He recalled his days as secretary of RC Periakulam in 1986 and how his team executed a polio fundraiser through an Ilayaraja music concert and various other service projects in the town. Appreciating the district’s humanitarian projects, he also agreed to extend support for setting up a dialysis centre in Periakulam.



Neela and DG Gopalakrishnan felicitate Deputy CM O Paneerselvam as Conference Chair V Ramesh looks on.

Pictures by Jaishree

Message from RI South Asia Office

- Clubs which were terminated on account of non-payment of July 2017 club dues are encouraged to fulfill the following compliances for reinstatement within 150 days from the date of termination:
 - ❖ Pay all outstanding financial obligations at the time of termination.
 - ❖ Pay all membership dues that continue to accrue thereafter.
 - ❖ Pay a \$30 per member reinstatement fee plus Goods & Services tax @18%
 - ❖ Reinstatement application.

Please note that 150 days after the termination date, clubs stand permanently terminated and cannot be reinstated.
- As required under The Income Tax Act 1961, all donors making contributions are requested to either inform their Permanent Account Number (PAN) in their contribution form/letter or send us the scanned copy of the PAN card, for the purpose of reporting contributions made in the current financial year.
- Current club officers should update the details of incoming officers at the earliest. Providing timely data updates will enable incoming club officers to receive e-mail communications from RI and their names will feature in the RI's 2018-19 Official Directory.
- Rotarians can access videos available on various topics such as who we are, our causes, our young leaders, our history, as well as International Assembly speeches etc. at <http://video.rotary.org/> Please make use of these resources to better understand Rotary's causes and functioning.
- These are interesting months in Rotary with district conferences and the annual training programmes for incoming club and district officers taking place. Several training resources, documents and manuals are available on RI website (through My Rotary) under learning and reference menu. Our best wishes for the success of the district conferences and the forthcoming training events.

Rotary strongly believes in the power of partnership and is working with corporates through Corporate Social Responsibility mandate. Today, Rotary is proud to be associated with many corporate partners to implement global grant projects by our districts/clubs.

Attention to approaching deadlines:

- Deadline for pre-registration discount for the RI Convention: To avail a \$10 discount, please register online at <http://www.riconvention.org/en/toronto/register> on or before **March 31, 2018**.
- Grant Reporting deadline: Kindly submit interim report of activities of all open grants upto March 31, 2018, by **May 31, 2018**; otherwise the Grant will become overdue on reporting effective June 1, 2018. New grant applications will not be accepted by the Foundation if a grant sponsor has an overdue report for any Foundation grant.
- Applications for the 2019-20 Rotary Peace Fellowship programme are now being accepted. To learn more about Peace Fellowship Application, click on <https://my.rotary.org/en/peace-fellowship-application>. The deadline for applicants to submit applications to their district is **May 31, 2018**. Districts must submit endorsed applications to The Rotary Foundation by **July 1**. For queries, please write to rotarypeacecenters@rotary.org ■



Where Rotary is more than a preferred partner

Rasheeda Bhagat

We now involve Rotary in every programme we do in e-learning,” says Anubhav Kapoor, Company Secretary and Head-Corporate Sustainability at Tata Technologies, Pune.

So would you say Rotary is your trusted partner, I prompt him, during an interview in Pune. “Oh, I’d say they are much more than that. Over 5 to 6 years of association, they have become our friends, philosophers and guides,” is his response.

His euphoria can be gauged from the fact that over the last four years Tata Technologies has pumped in “around \$1 million in Rotary’s e-learning programme in Maharashtra schools, giving over 1,000 e-learning kits in over 700 schools. And what I like the best about this project is the simplicity with which it is being implemented in our schools, particularly those in rural areas,” he adds.

Tracing the genesis of the relationship with Rotary, Kapoor says that six years ago, in a strategy meeting and planning the company’s growth path over the next five years, one goal put forth was that Tata Technologies should become a \$1 billion company by then. “We then had a revenue of \$400 million.” As the company basically provides engineering solutions, “we found that to get to the billion-dollar mark, a crucial need would be manpower and we’d need about 25,000

engineers. At that point we were only 4,000 engineers.”

Also, as the entire engineering space is growing, “there is a gap worldwide between supply and demand. So we came out with the concept of ‘ready engineer’ and decided to do something about education, innovation and related issues.”

Data clearly showed that good engineers require good schooling and active promotion of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math), on which the company focuses.

A partnership begins

In 2013, DGN Ravi Dhotre met Kapoor and talked about Rotary’s quest to improve education, what Rotarians were doing in India to achieve this and make India totally literate. “I was really interested because our data on education shows that out of 100 students, only two per cent take up science and maybe 0.2 per cent join engineering. When we went into the reason for this, we found it was the poor quality of education, because both teaching and learning science is tough. Dhotre said if we join hands, we can take a strong and sustainable e-learning project to schools, particularly in villages.”

Our data on education shows that out of 100 students, only two per cent take up science and maybe 0.2 per cent join engineering. The reason, we found, was the poor quality of education.



After several rounds of discussions—earlier, PDG Deepak Shikarpur too had approached him—and trials to determine how best to implement an e-learning project in schools, “we were convinced that Rotary will be a good partner. I must say after five years of association they have proved this.”

So Tata Technologies has put in \$1 million in providing e-learning kits to schools. Says Kapoor, “I told you what I like the best about this programme is the simplicity with which it is being implemented and the way it has grown. We do go to the ground level to see how this project is working, and when I go to such a classroom equipped with e-learning, I find it is the students who are running it. Which means we don’t have to really change the teachers.” The teacher, he adds, is standing on the side as the digital board unravels the wonders of science to the students who ask the teacher when they have a doubt. “We all know this is the best way to learn; Q and A makes learning quicker.”

Kindling excitement to learn

He is delighted that unlike in earlier visits, the garland or roses being given to him have now been replaced by a simple object made by the child. “These may be small things but we are triggering

What I like the best about Rotary’s e-learning programme is the simplicity with which it is being implemented and the way it has grown.

curiosity in young minds and that is the best way to initiate excitement in the child and lead him to innovation in science. The results are fabulous. Real growth in the country can happen only if we can add value through innovation. HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar said so too at the Rotary Literacy Summit in Chennai.”

Kapoor adds that this year the e-learning programme was implemented in 100 schools and “we can see that in all the six parameters such as attendance, quality of learning, improvement in grades or reduction in the dropout rate, everything is positive.”

“And then Pankaj Patel, former president of RC Pune Far East, came on the scene. He is very passionate about one particular school in Tambe village near Pune. He wanted our sponsorship for the science lab. The school

is located in a very scenic place, with nearby hills and valleys.” Kapoor got the school inspected by some people and “found they have done it up really nice and almost as an ideal school.”

Patel gave a proposal to build a science lab in this school. “Usually we don’t do such activities, we believe in programmes and impact measurement at Tata Technologies. So I told him let’s not do one but 15 to start with, because at the end of the day, if the students don’t feel the power of science... and a science lab is the best way to do it... we can’t excite children to learn science.”

Both Dhotre and Kapoor strongly believe that these initiatives done in small towns and particularly villages will make ready graduates/engineers, who will remain in India and work for the development of their regions.

“We also find that most of the recruitment is happening in the B and C class cities in India and at Tata Technologies we believe that the next generation with high potential is going to come from these cities.” The result is that his company has already given 1,000 e-learning kits to 700-odd government and government-aided schools and their criteria is that the school should have a minimum of 220–250 students in Class 8–10.



(From L) Anubhav Kapoor, DGN Ravi Dhotre and Rtn Pankaj Patel

Of *jugaad* and kookabara

Tata Technologies' Corporate Sustainability chief Anubhav Kapoor raises two valid points on the Indian *jugaad* and the bird kookabara.

He says the term *jugaad*, which actually sums up the essence of Indian innovation, "has sadly got a very negative connotation, even though it stands for real and genuine innovation. Look at the machines that our villagers in Punjab or Gujarat develop. Or the simple device for coconut plucking in Kerala. They are so simple and yet so effective, but because they are not patented, we don't talk about IP and other such terms, and it becomes *jugaad*. Innovation happens *jaha zaroorat hoti hai* (where there is need). And India's growth is in the villages where there are farms, production and processing.

So we have to excite that part of the population by getting them interested in science, and that too from a young age."

One thought that R A Mashelkar gave us was why do we wait for or expect invention ideas only after students graduate? "You must kindle young minds as they will be much more receptive to innovative approaches."

Kapoor adds that just giving teaching aids or electronic kits is not enough to make learning happen. "We need the right mix of content, teaching, mentoring, etc to get results." Sometimes, he says, a mindless curriculum is being followed, and gives the example of the nursery rhyme 'Kookabara sits on the old gum tree'.

For generations, teachers have been teaching this rhyme and students recite it. But this bird is not found in India; it is found only in Australia. "But the irony is that even a village school teacher has to teach this rhyme to the child; and neither the teacher nor the child have heard of this bird, leave alone seen it."

He relates an anecdote of how during a visit to a village school he saw a teacher struggling to even pronounce kookabara! "Neither she nor her students had any idea of what a kookabara is; they might have even thought of it as a person sitting on a tree! We are so stuck with our old curriculums that we continue teaching things without asking a question on how relevant it is. This mindset has to change."

Coming to the science lab, "we will do due diligence on staff support, quality of teachers, the focus the school has on teaching science, and only then we will give a science lab," he says. The equipment cost for each lab is around ₹60,000 and the lab costs ₹1.75 lakh to 2 lakh to build. "We are

now supporting operating cost for the 15 labs for which the capex is provided by a global grant. That is the collaboration," says Kapoor.

He adds these labs, which will kindle analytical thinking and hopefully trigger innovation, will measure the benefits the students are getting on their science subjects. "This is a pilot programme, the lab will be complemented with the online programme we have developed for STEM." A survey will be done at some point and the impact measured.

Future partnerships

On Tata Technologies' partnership with Rotary in the future, DGN Dhotre says, "We are discussing with them the scope for a partnership in the skill development centre they are putting up in Pune." Kapoor adds that the company has put in almost ₹20 crore only for the building in this innovation centre in Pune which will collaborate with the College of Engineering, Pune. "We are being mentored by IIT Bombay and sponsored by Tata Trust".

The idea, he says, is to correct the present situation where everybody joins a college to get a degree and then find a job. "Nobody goes to a college because he wants to become an entrepreneur. This is because he has no funds nor can he showcase his idea to a level which can get him funds. Such students with bright ideas don't even have the right mentoring; their inventions stop, at the most, with the annual project. But if we can encourage these youngsters to share their ideas with us, we can then connect them to mentors who could be the best or the most brilliant professors not only in India but also overseas because after all, the Tatas supports institutions like the MIT."

Adds Dhotre, "In 2019, Rotary in India will be celebrating its *shatabdi*, as the Rotary Club of Calcutta, the first in India, was started in 1919. For that year we are planning to do 100 Happy Schools and we would like to partner with Tata Technologies in that venture too."

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat





A helping hand

Rasheeda Bhagat

When Nihal Kaviratne, who retired from Unilever after 22 years of postings across the world, returned to Mumbai in 2005, he and his wife Shyama were disturbed by the sight of children, afflicted by cancer, and their parents, sleeping on the footpath opposite the Tata Memorial Hospital (TMH), that specialises in the treatment of cancer, in Mumbai.

They found that while TMH, in partnership with charitable trusts, offered free treatment and other voluntary organisations offered money for medicines, accommodation was a huge challenge in a mega city like Mumbai. Parents, with their children afflicted by cancer, came from all over India. While the families who had a little money stayed in *dharamshalas* (modest lodges) until their money ran out, the majority settled down at railway stations and on the pavement outside the hospital. "Living on the street

amidst unhygienic conditions rendered the already weak children susceptible to infections. Chemotherapy weakens the immune system and the children often succumbed to pneumonia and tuberculosis long before their treatment could be completed," says Mala Swarup, Secretary, RC Bombay Midcity, which is one of the nine clubs from RI District 3141, that are helping this project in a big way.

Adds Kaviratne, "When I did some detailed enquiries, I found that a space to stay in Mumbai posed a huge

Children try their hand at painting in the comfort of a St Jude centre.



challenge to these people, forcing large numbers to live on the streets. What was worse, many families, dejected with the challenge of street life, abandoned the treatment of their children midway. They preferred to go back to their villages where their children might live for a few months, but die in peace and dignity in the comfort of their own homes, rather than on the streets of a big city.”

The abandonment of treatment was the biggest cause of mortality in cancer-afflicted children, found the Kaviratnes and they decided that something had to be done. Thus began their work to create a centre to give

Many families dejected with the challenge of street life, abandoned treatment of their children, and returned to their villages, where their children might live for a few months, but die in peace and dignity in their own homes.

Nihal Kaviratne



decent accommodation to these sick children, a clean and hygienic place where they could stay with their parents free of cost. And thus was born the St Jude India Childcare Centre (SJICC), named aptly after St Jude, the patron saint of hopeless causes.

The centre had a humble start with just eight family units at a dilapidated building in the BDD Chawls of Lower Parel, kindly offered by former Mumbai Police Commissioner Julio Ribeiro, the then chairman of The

While the families who had a little money stayed in *dharamshalas* (modest lodges) until their money ran out, the majority settled down at railway stations and on the pavement outside the hospital.

Mala Swarup

Bombay Mothers and Children Welfare Society.

A prototype was developed and refined to become a model for all such centres. In ten years, SJICC has made tremendous strides and now has 33 centres across five cities — Mumbai (22), Delhi (4), three each in Kolkata and Jaipur and one in Hyderabad. These centres can house 418 children and their parents. One good deed gets another, so in 2016, thanks to a generous donation from the Bombay Port Trust



A yoga session (right) and a music class (below)



to the Tata Memorial Hospital, which in turn offered it to this organisation, three disused buildings at the city's suburb Cotton Green have been converted into a beautiful campus, with two playgrounds and space for 165 families.

Rotarians step in

In 2013–14, when Rotarians from D 3141 learnt about this worthy project, they decided to get involved. Mala points out that cancer is one word that carries with it “the finality of a life sentence.” Parents come under enormous stress and anxiety when they learn that their child has been diagnosed with cancer. “Underprivileged people living in small towns and rural areas have to bear the crippling expense of treatment as they bring their child to a large metro for treatment. And Mumbai, in particular, intimidates ordinary people who come from outside. We found that such families often come here after selling their small piece of land, cattle or any other asset they own, to seek a cure for their child.”

Nine Rotary clubs came together to join hands and raise money for this cause to serve children with cancer. From 2013 till now they have sponsored eleven family units of SJICC, raising ₹49.5 lakh. Mala says that last year the capital for two centres in Mumbai has been raised by RC Mumbai Malabar Hill and RC Mumbai Queens Necklace; each raising ₹1 crore. Jai Diwanji, a Rotarian of long standing is a Director and one of the original team members of the organisation. Another team member of the Sponsors and Donors Team, Dr Ajay Bhatnagar, is a PDG from Basle, Switzerland.

More St Jude centres for children with cancer are coming up in Vellore (Team Leader Rtn Selwyn Ratnarajan), Chennai (Team leader PDG Rekha Shetty, D 3232) and Guwahati. During the last three years, RC Zurich Belvoir has been raising funds by organising runs for SJICC. While the Vellore centre will be opened in March, Chennai and Guwahati will follow later this year.

Facilities at SJICC

Each family unit at a St Jude children's centre contains a bed, space for a mattress, a steel cupboard and a rack of shelves. It can accommodate a sick child and her parents. Each family has access to a single-burner gas stove "to prepare fresh meals, a storage space with weekly rations of rice, sugar, tea and oil and utensils, plates and glasses for the use of the family, all free of cost. Each centre includes a common bathing and toilet area, with separate facilities for men and women, a common kitchen and dining area, and a common recreational space. All centres are identical according to the prototype."

Families also receive free transportation from the centre to the treating hospital, besides nutrients to build the children's immune system. This support is supplemented by educational and recreational activities such as art-based therapy, music therapy and yoga. To minimise disruption of the child's education during months of treatment when they are away from home and school, basic computer skills, English, reading, math and science are all taught in a creative and engaging way. "We, Rotarians from D 3141, feel very happy to be associated with this NGO, which brings hope and happiness for



The centre had a humble start with eight family units at a dilapidated building in a chawl in Lower Parel, offered by former Mumbai Police Chief Julio Ribeiro, the then chairman of The Bombay Mothers and Children Welfare Society.

children battling cancer," says Mala, who is volunteering with SJICC to help in administrative matters.

Needless to say, Rotary has become a proud partner of St Jude's in this venture.

... and they get cured

Thanks to the little cancer patients getting a comfortable and hygienic accommodation, nutritious food and the care of their parents, apart from of course the treatment and medicine given by the hospitals, many children are now getting cured and returning home to pursue their education and lead a normal life.

"The vision is to ensure support for every needy child under treatment for cancer and Tata Memorial Hospital, India's premier cancer hospital, has asked SJICC to be their partner wherever they set up hospitals. As childhood cancers have a high cure rate if treatment is properly and timely administered and completed, thanks to SJICC, thousands of families are able to ensure their children have a fighting chance to overcome cancer. And we Rotarians feel privileged to be a part of this humanitarian service," adds Mala.



A well lit room at a centre.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Walkathon for diabetes awareness

Team Rotary News

Over 800 people participated in a walkathon conducted recently by RC Nigdi, D 3131, in association with Supreme Clinic, Akurdi, to sensitise people about diabetes. Deputy Mayor Shailaja More inaugurated the event and blood sugar test was conducted for all participants before the start of the walk. Rotarians displayed banners on the subject all along the walkathon route. The 2-km walkathon was followed by breakfast and a seminar on diabetes awareness where topics such as healthy plate for diabetics, anaesthesia in diabetics and challenges in surgery of diabetics were discussed.

Traffic police regulated the walk and volunteers distributed water bottles and Glucon D sachets for the participants. An ambulance was kept ready in case of emergency. Tee-shirts and caps were given to all the participants. This event also aided in enhancing Rotary's public image in the region. ■



Cycle for fitness

Team Rotary News

The Rotary Club of Rourkela Royal, D 3261, recently promoted health and fitness among the citizens of the city through a 'mega cyclothon', with a participation of nearly 900 registrants, including 200 tribal students from the outskirts of the city. "We were happy that we

could get participation from all strata of the society; it was not an 'elite only' event," said Assistant Governor Ajay Agrawal.

Over 1,500 people had gathered to cheer the participants at the crack of dawn. Four types of marathons were flagged off by veteran cyclist Minati

Mohapatra, an eight-time national champion, along with PDG Shashi Varvankar.

While a 16-km race for men and women was the main attraction with a prize money of ₹11,000 (first), ₹5,000 (second) and ₹3,000 (third), three more fun rides of 16 km, 8 km and 4 km were also held simultaneously for the younger age groups. A host of entertainment programmes offered plenty of thrills to the visitors. By the time the event got over by 10 am, the happy faces and rave posts on social media did a world of good to the club's public image.

Cyclothon Chairman Rakesh Agrawal, a renowned cyclist who had taken part in national and global marathons and the brain behind this event, and Club President Vivek Lall have decided to further scale up the project in 2018.

Corporate entities such as Scan Steels, Track & Trail, Audi Bhubaneswar, Mahanadi Coalfields and the Petroleum Research Conservation Authority also pitched in with sponsorships. ■



Cyclothon 2017
Rourkela TIPS

District 3160

puts focus on gender equity

Jaishree

Indian conferences are almost like movies. They are all full of spirit and effervescence... it's a rich experience to be here," said the RI Director from Sweden, Mikael Ahlberg. He was the RI President's Representative at the District Conference of D 3160 hosted

by DG Madhuprasad Kuruvadi in Bengaluru.

"The Rotarians here are warm and friendly, very devoted to service. Being here, one can realise how powerful Rotary is in India," he said. His spouse Charlotte added, "India is very special to us because of the energy, culture and

RID Mikael Ahlberg, PRID Ashok Mahajan and Charlotte Ahlberg being given a traditional welcome. DG K Madhuprasad, DGND Chinappa Reddy are also present.



India is very special to us because of the energy, culture and love that are spread around the Rotarians and it is a pleasure to see so many Rotary supporters among the spouses.

Charlotte Ahlberg



RID Mikael Ahlberg and Charlotte groove to music, along with guest speaker Lavanya Patel and PDG R S Narayanaswamy.



love that are spread around the Rotarians and it is a pleasure to see so many Rotary supporters among the spouses. I see the potential for Rotary to grow even more here, by turning Rotary supporters into Rotarians.” Soon after the big event, the couple toured the famous ruins of Hampi near Hospet.

The two-day conference was hosted by four Rotary clubs of Chitradurga — RCs Chitradurga, Fort, Chinmuladri and the district’s only all-women club, Windmill City. Around 1,200 delegates registered for the event.

Ahlberg and Charlotte were “overwhelmed by the traditional welcome” accorded to them by the conference committee led by Conference Chair M K Ravindra and his wife Veda. This included the *Purnakumbham* replete with chanting of the *slokas* in Sanskrit. PRID Ashok Mahajan and Dr B N Suresh Rao, the founding Director of the Indian Institute of Space Science and Technology, were the chief guests.

PRID Mahajan spoke on the topic, *Giving is Living*. Citing the generosity of Rajashree Birla, chairperson of the Aditya Birla Foundation, he said, “The Birlas know the value of money

and its proper use. Thanks to people like her, our Polio Fund has contributed to making the world almost polio-free.” He also commended PDG Ravi Vadlamani (D 3150) for his recent contribution of \$250,000. “No one asked him. He himself volunteered to become an AKS member.” Mahajan encouraged DG Madhuprasad to raise his District contribution goal to \$265,000 from \$250,000 to which the DG agreed. His home club RC Chitradurga has already raised \$40,000 with all 56 members becoming PHFs.

Vadlamani explained the procedure for obtaining global grants through his session, *Magic of grants*. He encouraged the delegates to give to TRF and explained how TRF grants helped RC Guntur in his district to set up an operation theatre in a government hospital. “The ₹3 crore worth project was made possible through a global grant, while the club contributed just ₹ 6,000,” he said.

PDG Tikku (D 3150) asked the Rotarians to *take* from the Foundation. “Only after understanding the benefits, you’ll know the value of the Foundation and you’ll be strongly inspired to give,” he said.



Conference Chair M K Ravindra and spouse Veda being felicitated. RID Ahlberg, Charlotte, DG Madhuprasad, his spouse Madhuri, are present, along with the Conference Committee team.

Dr Rao, paying rich tributes to scientist Vikram Sarabhai and late president Abdul Kalam, spoke about the significance of developing a space programme and explained how it is helpful in every field. “The technology is indeed difficult, and hence the phrase ‘rocket science’ is commonly used when you set out to achieve a lofty task.”

A variety of speakers added spice to the event. Hilary Leav, RI’s Manager for Evaluation and Strategy, Evanston, spoke about RI’s strategic planning. While psychologist Lavanya Patel taught the audience how to translate their ‘pressures to pleasure’ and even had them groove to music, Laxmi Mai, a transgender rights activist, urged the delegates to educate their sons about gender sensitivity, so that they understand and respect women better, which will go a long way in reducing female foeticide and all other forms of abuse. She suggested the Rotarians set up night shelters for transgenders, most of whom are otherwise living on platforms, leaving them open to various risks. She recommended vocational skill training for the third gender to help their livelihood. “They don’t need your sympathy and reservations.

Instead, give them an opportunity to live a decent life,” she said.

An informative session addressed by educationist Gururaj Karajagi had the audience’s rapt attention. Some food for thought from his session:

- Citing people like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Vivekananda and Mother Teresa, he said, anyone who lived for himself shall not be remembered; one who lives for others shall not be forgotten.
- Don’t think people expect something from you always; sometimes a shoulder to lean on is just what they need.
- Show interest in other’s work however minimal it may be, for him it is a significant achievement.
- Teaching is the only profession that has a dialogue with the future.
- People do not follow what you say; they follow what you do.

When acclaimed TT champion Naina Jaiswal and her brother, Agastya, the Google Boy, demonstrated the art of chain memory to

remember information, rather than blindly mug up which is common in schoolchildren, there was loud applause. Naina cleared her Grade 10 exam when she was 8 and now at 17, she is probably the youngest to do her doctorate. An equally gifted Agastya created history last year when he became the youngest boy to pass Intermediate examinations at 11.

Awards and recognitions

DG Madhuprasad felicitated Vomina Naga Satish Babu of RC Nellore for his contribution to the Endowment Fund, the first such donor of the district; Dr NB Sajjan for his consistent annual contribution of \$1,000 for the past 28 years; and PDG Surendra Reddy for receiving the RI’s Distinguished Service Award. Dr Akbar Saheb of RC Ananthapur, who got State recognition for performing 65,000 free cataract surgeries, was also honoured. The Major Donors were feted by Director Ahlberg in the presence of the DG and RC Hospet was recognised for becoming a 100 per cent PHF club.

Pictures by Jaishree



Raising rubella awareness

Team Rotary News

As Indian Rotarians get ready to sign an MoU with the GoI to ensure wide coverage of universal immunisation for preventable diseases such as rubella, measles, tuberculosis, etc a Rubella Awareness walk was conducted on the Elliot's beach in Chennai by Inner Wheel District 323.

Explaining the seriousness of rubella, Past District Chairman Nalini Prabhakar said this is a mild form of measles which can affect anyone. But

“most at risk is the pregnant woman; because if she gets rubella during her pregnancy, the child may be born with congenital birth defects.” But this can be prevented by a single vaccination dose which “every girl should get at the age of 15, or at least before marriage.”

About 300 Inner Wheel members and students carrying placards in Tamil and English, explaining the dangers of rubella and the vital importance

of rubella vaccination, marched along the beach. Pamphlets carrying similar information were distributed to the people.

Apart from Nalini, others involved in planning this public education campaign were District Chairman Padma Preetha Sumanth and Special Projects Coordinator Vijayalakshmi Prabhakar.

The walk was flagged off by Assistant Commissioner of Police Ravindran. ■



At the Walkathon for Rubella awareness.

Rotary honours six eminent people

Team Rotary News

Six eminent persons were feted with Vocational Excellence Awards by RC Bombay Sea Face, D 3141, under the project *Rotary Seva Abhiyaan*. For the first time, the club extended its focus to start-up enterprises, said Manishi M Vora, Director in-Charge, Vocational Service.

Raj Neravati, founder of Hug Innovations, Hyderabad, which manufactures smart watches controlled by movements, and Balaji Viswanathan from Invento Robotics, Bengaluru, who had designed a humanoid robot that recognises human faces and can interact in many languages, shared the honours in the start-up category. Both the firms had made it to the list of *50 Hot Startups* as featured in the *Economic Times* in December 2017.

Edelweiss Group founder Ramesh Shah and scientist Revathi



Rotarians with the award winners.

Hariharakrishnan from Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre (LPSC), a wing of ISRO, were the other recipients.

Music composer Anandji Virji Shah, the younger sibling of the

famous duo Kalyanji-Anandji, and Dr Bhim Sen Singhal, neurologist, who teaches at the Bombay Hospital Institute of Medical Sciences, received the Lifetime Achievement Awards. ■

Now an SIP for TRF giving?

Rasheeda Bhagat

To instil the habit of giving among Rotarians, “we are planning to put in place an SIP (Systematic Investment Plan) through which Rotarians can contribute a sum of their choice

regularly to The Rotary Foundation. The quantum does not matter; it can be as small as ₹100 a month or ₹1,000 or more. What matters is developing such a habit,” said PDG Vinod Bansal who was deputed as the RIPR to D 3261 District conference titled

Rising 3261 held in Kanha, Madhya Pradesh.

Also an ARFC for this district, he said that as a representative of the RI President Ian Riseley, he brought to the delegates several messages from the President. The first was the reminder that Rotary

is a 113-year-old organisation which had lots of achievements to its credit. It had managed to carry on its legacy of serving the community for over 100 years, while many others had fallen by the wayside, thanks to some principles it followed. “And one of

RIPR Vinod Bansal charts RC Vilaspur Queens in the presence of DG Harjit Hura, Sangita Bansal and club leaders.



these is to change with the changing times. Our President has made it very clear that if Rotary has to remain relevant for the next 100 years, it has to change according to the needs of society.”

But to ensure that, the present model and structure of its membership would not do; “we cannot continue to grow as an organisation with nearly 90 per cent of our members being in the 50-plus age group”. Two largest segments of society — youth and women — were not

adequately represented in Rotary’s membership and this would have to change, he said. Other messages he brought from Riseley were serious efforts required to safeguard the environment and stop its degradation, and do sustainable projects. “As our RI President says Rotary’s job is not to dig wells but to ensure that the wells we give the community get water for long years.”

Bansal added that the true quality of a leader was his ability to take all kinds of

people along with him and work as a cohesive team, and District 3261 DG Harjit Hura had proved to be one such leader. As D 3261 came under him, as an ARFC he had occasion to closely watch how the DG had handled the leadership of a difficult district such as 3261 with “its own peculiarities, issues, cultural diversities and other challenges. Despite the geographical diversity of your district, with parts of three States within which you work and the

We cannot continue to grow as an organisation with nearly 90 per cent of our members being in the 50-plus age group.

PDG and ARFC
Vinod Bansal

economic disparities that exist, you have major achievements to your credit and have come out with flying colours.”

One of these was giving a modern cath lab to the Satya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital in Raipur at a huge cost of over ₹3 crore and with a global grant. Hura had also surpassed expectations on membership growth, Bansal added, congratulating him.

Urging more Rotarians in the district to become PHFs and Major Donors, Bansal added that he had himself become a Major Donor in 2007, and “found that whenever I gave liberally to the TRF for a good cause, God gave me much more in return.”

Why Rising 3261?

Addressing the conference, which had a registration of 350 members, Hura explained why he had named his conference ‘Rising 3261’. When he became DGN three years ago, at the “Jaipur Institute, the RI Director



said D 3261 is the least performing district; three such districts were named and ours was one. I felt very bad... I asked our PDGs the reason and they said it was because we contribute little to TRF. I said this cannot be a criterion for a social service organisation, to be ranked on giving money.”

But when he talked to the RI Director, “he said: ‘Harjit, do you know how many clubs got citation in your district? Only one out

of 70. And that was RC Sambalpur (his own club).

Do you know only 140 of the 2,400 Rotarians in your district have registered on *My Rotary*? That is why your name is at the bottom.”

Hura said he took this as a challenge; from July 1 when he took over as DG, when only 185 members

from D 3261 were registered on *My Rotary*, the number has now gone up to 1,000. He gave the credit for this to District Trainer PDG Shambhu Jagatramka, My Rotary Chairman F C Mohanty and webmaster Jatinder Sharma. He had another four months to go and he would take the number up to 2,000.

Hura added that due to a surgery he was out of Rotary activities for 45 days, but “we have



DG Harjit Hura honours PDG Subhash Sahu at the District conference. Also seen is his spouse Rani.

worked very hard to improve the parameters in our district.” When he took charge as the DG, five clubs closed, three for not paying their dues “but that was not my fault. Despite all this, we have added 150 members till now, delivering on the membership target promise made to RI Director C Basker.” Both RC

We have chartered two Queens’ clubs and three more are in the pipeline; in keeping with President Ian Riseley’s directive, I am getting more women members into Rotary.

DG Harjit Hura



(From R) D 3262 PDG Ashok Mohapatra, D 3261 PDGs S P Chaturvedi, Shashi Varvandkar, D 3262 DG Harjit Hura, PDG Rakesh Dave and DGE Nikhilesh Trivedi.

Sambalpur Greater and RC Raipur Greater had seen many Rotarians becoming PHFs in a single day.

At the conference, Bansal chartered a new all-women's club RC Vilaspur Queens "and seeing the energy and enthusiasm they have displayed, I know they will achieve excellence. In keeping with RI President Ian Riseley's directive to induct more women into Rotary, we are going to open another women's club — RC Jabalpur Queens. The application has been submitted and the charter will come in a few days. Two Queens' clubs have been started, three more Queens club are in the pipeline along with five more Rotary clubs. By the time I hand over charge on June 30, I am confident

of taking our membership figure higher by 400," he said amidst applause.

TRF giving looking up

The DG added that even on the TRF front, things were getting better. "From the time our district was formed, and even earlier, we had only six Major Donors — those contributing \$10,000 to TRF. "But in just eight months, I made six more, including PDG Vivek Tankha, who was the first person I approached. And I am sure we will get a few more Major Donors at this conference."

He got four — Sushil Ramdas (RC Raigarh Steel City) Nikhil Dhagat (Raipur Midtown), DGND F C Mohanty and Manjit Singh Arora (RC Rourkela Midtown).

Tanka, "who made such an immense contribution to our district by conducting so many RAHAT medical camps and helping eye surgeries of people", was honoured at the conference with a *Legendary Rotarian Award*. As he had to go to Nepal with a PMO delegation, his wife Aarti accepted the award and addressed the meet. PDG Shambhu Jagatramka moderated a very interesting session titled *Aap ki Adalat* and Executive Editor of *Aaj Tak* channel Sanjay Sinha addressed the meet.

Urging Rotarians to donate liberally to TRF, Hura said, "We need money to do more good in the world. At the Sri Satya Sanjeevani Hospital the cath lab we have put up has reduced the waiting

period for children needing surgery from three years to 15–18 months. We are now trying for another global grant to provide an operation theatre at this hospital to further reduce the waiting period for children. Another good project of ours is a dialysis centre in Raipur. We can do a lot more with your help."

DGE Nikhilesh Trivedi described his experience at the International Assembly and said he was amazed by the discipline and the concise manner in which all the senior RI leaders made their presentations — beginning and ending bang on time. There was a lot of learning there, he added.

Pictures by
Rasheeda Bhagat
Designed by
Krishnapratheesh S

Another chance to walk

V Muthukumaran

Abhijeet (7) and his mother are from Hosur and await eagerly the annual Jaipur limb fitment camp organised every January by RC Bangalore Peenya, D 3190, for replacing the prosthetic on his leg. In 2013, while playing in front of his house, the boy was run over by a reversing truck.

For growing children who have lost their limbs, it is mandatory to periodically replace the prosthetics to suit their growing limbs as this

ensures flexibility. Over the last 21 years, the Jaipur limb fitment camp has reached out to over 38,000 beneficiaries across the southern States. “We provide dormitory-type accommodation and three meals a day, besides snacks and beverages. For those who need to stay overnight, we provide rugs, pillows and blankets,” says Savitha Suresh, President, RC Bangalore Peenya.

The club has been working on this project for over four decades, in

partnership with Bhagwan Mahaveer Viklang Sahayatha Samiti (BMVSS), Jaipur, and the 21-year-old limb fitment camp, its signature project, was listed as one of the 100 ‘exemplar projects’ of Rotary International.

Wide publicity, networking

Nearly 140 clubs in the district are involved in the pre-launch publicity and campaign through various media channels to attract the maximum number of beneficiaries. “Kannada

A happy Sumanth with his parents and teacher.



The camp is absolutely free of cost; the beneficiaries just need to turn up. We take care of everything.

Savitha Suresh
President
RC Bangalore Peenya

TV channels also chip in by scrolling the message through the day, a week before the camp begins, for the benefit of viewers.” This year, the club took to social media too through WhatsApp and “each of our three dedicated volunteers got nearly 300–350 calls a day till D-Day.”

In all, 150 volunteers comprising Rotarians, Rotaractors and Inner Wheel members took part in the week-long camp. Besides, auto maker Mercedes Benz sent a 50-member team to help the organisers. “The camp is absolutely free of cost and the beneficiaries need only to turn up at the venue and we take care of everything,” says Savitha.

A bond with the Jaipur NGO

Over the years, the 15-member team from the BMVSS has struck a bond of friendship with the club members. “The technicians from Jaipur stay at the campsite and manufacture each limb customising it to the individual needs of recipients. We also take care of rehabilitation after fitment and provide counselling for the kind of vocations the patients can take up for their livelihood,” says Project Chairman Vasanth Kumar. The names of the beneficiaries are also registered for employment at the camp site.



Shabeena tries out her new calipers with her mother's help.

The camp is no cake walk; the technical team has to put in hard work for nearly 14 hours a day to mould the right designs and ensure that there is a perfect fit for each beneficiary. Both comfort and flexibility are important. Here crutches, callipers and LN 4 prosthetic hands are also given to the needy.

Jagadeesh was full of joy after he got two LN 4 prosthetics as his forearms in place of an existing ill-fitting

artificial implant with which he had many problems. “Now, I can move my fingers with flexible joints and even sign documents. It is almost as if I have got back my hands that I had lost in a road accident,” he remarks, thanking Rotary for the invaluable gift in his life. DG Asha Prasanna Kumar inaugurated the 21st edition of the camp which saw 2,500 beneficiaries. ■

Ask the



Jaishree

Amma Meenakshi, pick a card for Ramya after worshipping Kamakshi,” says Selvam. Meenakshi, the parrot, squeaks and hops out of the cage, climbs up a box seemingly to worship Goddess Kamakshi, who is placed on top of the box, alights and pecks at a stack of tarot cards. Then it pulls out one and hands it over to Selvam who prays to the goddess and starts reading the predictions for Ramya, after rewarding the parrot a grain for its services.

The above scene is what is called ‘parrot astrology’ (*kili josiya* in Tamil), a common

sight in Tamil Nadu, especially in the smaller towns where one can see the parrot astrologer seated underneath a tree or by the roadside, with a deck of cards and a cage. The fee for his services is a nominal ₹11 or ₹21.

Mythological connect

But why parrot? Why not a crow or a dove? The Upanishads say that parrots can foresee the future. A mythological story relates that when Saint Purandharadhasar failed to recognise Ram, Lakshman and Sita in disguise, a parrot perched on a tree branch screeched “Ram, Ram!” And the sage who had been meditating for long



for Ram's *darshan* fell at his feet. Hindu mythology is rich with more such legends, including that of Saint Arunagirinathar composing the poems on Lord Karthikeya, in a parrot's body; in fact, the *Taitriya Upanishad* is dedicated to the bird.

It is believed that parrots can even predict extreme weather conditions such as storms or cyclones. It is a well-known fact that hours before the tsunami hit Chennai and the coastal towns, birds showed strange behaviour.

Parrots hold significance with the Hindu deities too. Saint Andal is depicted with a parrot in her left hand. This parrot is specially made of leaves daily and given to a devotee at the end of the day. It is believed this brings luck. A family is dedicated to making these parrots. A parrot adorns the right shoulder of Goddess Meenakshi and is believed to impart knowledge of 64 art forms to her. The *Kili Mandapam* in the Madurai Meenakshi temple has several parrots housed in it. When you call out 'Rama' or 'Meenakshi', the birds repeat after you. They are believed to have repeated the Vedas which strengthens the theory that all good thoughts we utter are repeated.

Parrot is the mount of Kama, the god of love. Parrots also served as messengers as mentioned in certain verses of various Tamil literature. Andal's parrot holds pride of place in recognition for serving as a messenger of love between her and Lord Vishnu, say the *puranas*.

We eat meat and chicken.
But what is the logic behind
banning parrot astrology which
has been providing a livelihood
for people for years?



A waning profession

Unfortunately, times are bad for parrot astrology, thanks to animal welfare activists and organisations such as PETA. Selvam cannot understand why, because in *kili josiya*, the bird is not harmed or tortured. On the contrary it is looked after well and fed too.

To add to this, the present generation is not interested in pursuing the vocation, laments Selvam. The art is generally passed on from generations. Selvam's forefathers were parrot astrologers. "I used to accompany my father as a child and when I grew up, he trained Meenakshi and gifted her to me." Meenakshi has been with Selvam for the past seven years. A parrot's lifespan is 40 years and female parrots are generally used for *kili josiya*, he says.

"We never lie nor do we exaggerate. We only read out whatever card our parrot picks out," he adds. There are 27 tarot cards symbolising as many

stars in the cosmic system and each card contains a picture of a Hindu god or Jesus Christ, Mary or the Quran too.

On an average, an astrologer earns around ₹200 a day and "on festive seasons, I take home at least ₹1,000," says Selvam.

Woes

Chitra Ganapathy who runs the Kadambavanam resort in Madurai relates how a parrot astrologer who was engaged by the resort was robbed of his livelihood by forest officials; they snatched away his cage, along with the parrots, reasoning that it was illegal to cage the birds. They agreed to give it back to him for a bribe of ₹5,000. "That is huge money for these people," says Chitra.

She asks: "We eat meat and chicken. But what is the logic behind banning parrot astrology which has been providing a livelihood for people for years?" Food for thought? ■

Swapping corporate jobs for a jungle experience

Jovita Aranha



Do you remember how as kids, most of us were awestruck by the life of Mowgli? The carefree, naked, feral child from the forests of Pench in Seoni, a fictional character, was immortalised by Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book* series.

While most of us only dreamt of living that life, a little boy living 50 metres away from the core of the

Pench forests of Madhya Pradesh is doing exactly that!

Swinging from branches, running barefoot through the forests, imitating monkeys, chasing butterflies and enjoying tiger calls by his window at night, three-and-a-half-year-old Kaizen is unleashing the Mowgli inside him, and living life to its fullest. All thanks to his parents, Harshita and Aditya Shakalya, who

gave up their corporate life to live close to nature and raise him in an unconventional way.

Kaizen was only six months old, when his parents quit their business in Indore in two months, to become caretakers of the 'Tiger N Woods' resort in the core of the Pench Tiger Reserve.

While Aditya was born in Delhi, Harshita was raised in Indore. The foreign-educated couple, with their

Harshita and Aditya Shakalya with their son Kaizen and pet Carlos.



exceptional marketing qualifications, has worked across industries. Harshita, a professional chocolatier, started her own business as early as 17! Aditya, who is a novelist, worked with several brands and publications.

The couple first met when they were working at the same firm and hoping to set up their own company. Sharing similar ideas and beliefs, they began their own social media and designing start-up in Indore. What started as a business partnership, eventually turned into a partnership for life.

Calling the couple workaholics once upon a time would be an understatement. Married in 2013, the couple even worked on their honeymoon! Harshita recalls their trip to Thailand that turned their lives around. "We were on our way to Krabi in a nice little van. But instead of looking out of the window at the visual treat that beheld us, we continued to worry about the network so we could work again," she says.

That was the moment of truth for the couple. It dawned upon them that this clearly wasn't the life they wanted to live for the rest of their days, especially with

their future children. While deciding to quit was impulsive and easy, they had no backup plan, whatsoever.

It was only when everyone around them was welcoming the dawn of the new year that the opportunity came. At the New Year's Eve party of 2014, Harshita and Aditya met a few acquaintances who started discussing Aditya's new book, and a friend said he knew a place where Aditya could write peacefully and that he was anyway looking for a family who could manage the resort.

"By that time Kaizen was only six months old. We thought, why don't we take it up? We were anyway thinking about raising him in a different environment, away from the exhausting city life," says Harshita.

While they were lucky enough to receive a good education in city schools, that they are ever grateful for, she feels the current education system is flawed and schools have become commercial. "I knew in my heart that I did not want him to be a part of this never ending rat race. We did not want him to be worried about succeeding at something because the world expected him to or think that grades define success in life," she says.

This was their opportunity to explore a life beyond the concrete jungle and do everything they ever

wanted to as a family. By March 2015, they had stepped into their home with their backpacks.

Was the big switch easy? No. "We had lived the city and corporate life, partying till wee hours in the morning. So, the big switch was difficult. Visiting a park is way different than living in the core of a Tiger Reserve," she says.

While living this close to the wilderness makes you feel one with nature, it continues to strike fear too, confesses Harshita. "It was scary, it still is. I, once had a cobra walk out of the bushes and Kaizen has had alpha monkeys growl at him. But the truth is, we are living in an area which is dominated by wildlife. It is their home, and we'll always be encroachers here. So it was important for us to live in harmony with them and keep this place as close to nature as possible," she says.

The first year was difficult when they were trying to rebuild the resort from shambles and struggling with electricity.

She remembers days when her heart ached while a young Kaizen would keep turning over, sleeping in the heat. But today, when she looks



back, there are only happy memories. From watching birds in the forests from their 10-ft high machans to spotting deer, jackals, nilgais and other wildlife, they not only see, but also experience the changing weather every single day.

The nearest village, with over 30 to 40 homes, is right outside the Tiger Reserve's main gate. Kaizen is an absolute hit among the villagers. Harshita remembers how he first ran to her crying out, "*Mamma, machchar chaap gaya*" which meant a mosquito bit him in the local dialect of the village. "He is more flexible and adaptive than most city kids and even adults. He strikes a conversation easily with new people. When guests arrive from other countries, he speaks to them in English and speaks to our village staff with the same ease in their local dialect. He also signs to our hearing and speech impaired staffers," she says.

From knowing his way around the kitchen to growing fruits, vegetables and herbs, he assists the staff and continues to stay grounded. While most



Harshita tries her hand in primitive cooking with the locals.

parents struggle to give their kids maximum exposure, Kaizen has the world coming to him.

Even though the kid might not write like most kids his age, he is learning all the basic skills he needs, to become self-sufficient. He started going to an open school this month, 60 km away from home called Caterpillar Labs. This school format has no age-specific classes. Instead, it holds different language and activity labs and helps them progress as and when they master each of those skills.

One of the reasons for sending him to school was that he started missing children his age. He'd get really excited when guests arrived with their kids but would be heartbroken when they left. With the resort giving them

time for themselves, Aditya, who is also a qualified yoga teacher, holds workshops for guests and children. His recently launched Bodhisattva Yoga Foundation — for the emotional and mental wellbeing of young children — is teaching them to embrace the philosophies of yoga to fight early anxiety and depression.

While running a chocolate business was certainly not an option, Harshita went around the village and understood the local ingredients — rice, seasonal vegetables etc from the villagers. She launched her project called Pench Pickle Company, which manufactures marmalades, pickles, jams, squashes etc from the local produce.

So what if Kaizen wishes to move to the city when he grows up?



Kaizen gets to taste the local snacks.



The pebbles in the riverbed don't hurt Kaizen.

She smiles and says, “Honestly, I know the city life would lure him someday. It lured us too. But it is his choice and call. We didn’t listen to our parents when we decided to take this leap of faith. But we hope we did our groundwork well with our young boy.”

And if you think Kaizen is restricted only to the village and forest all the time, you are mistaken. “Who are we to restrict him, honestly? In fact, we make sure he experiences everything. I want him to be what he wants to be. We take him to places within and outside India,” she says.

Embarking on several road trips, flights and trains, Kaizen has already travelled to Goa, Delhi, Indore, Varanasi, Sri Lanka, Andamans and other places.

Get in touch with Aditya and Harshita at bodhiyoga.foundation@gmail.com

This article first appeared in The Better India (www.thebetterindia.com)

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Main events

Randi Druzin

The host committee for the 2018 Rotary International Convention in Toronto wants to make your nights on the town as memorable as your days at the convention. It has come up with a lineup of events that will help you explore all Toronto has to offer.

On Saturday, June 23, local band Lady Be Good (pictured) will bring its mix of old-school jazz, R&B and modern pop to an unexpected setting: Ripley's Aquarium of Canada. The evening will feature a menu designed to give you a taste of Toronto's diverse cultures.

For those whose musical tastes run a bit rowdier, Saturday night also offers Rock at the Historic Distillery District.



You can browse the neighbourhood's shops while enjoying foods from around the world and listening to live music from rock and country acts.

Get to know the Rotarians of Toronto on host hospitality night

Monday, June 25, when local Rotarians will entertain guests either in their homes or at a select venue.

On Tuesday, June 26, make room in your schedule for *Rotaryfest*, an evening of fireworks, food and friendship. Feast on ribs, halal chicken, vegetarian selections, and other tasty treats from around the world.

Tickets are limited for all of these events, so reserve your space now. Find more information and purchase tickets at rotary2018.org.

Register for the convention at riconvention.org.

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sd/-
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TOGETHER, WE CONNECT

Let's tell the world we are **PEOPLE OF ACTION**

The new Rotary public image campaign is now available. Bring your club's story to life and help the world understand who we are: leaders who work together to connect, inspire, and transform our communities.

Get started at rotary.org/brandcenter today.

Rotary  PEOPLE OF ACTION

When books go walkabout

Sandhya Rao

It's all very well for Shakespeare to go on about being neither a borrower nor a lender...

It hurts when borrowed books are not returned. Never mind that you've already read it and are likely not to ever read it again for the simple reason that there are so many books waiting to be read — and no amount of gratitude would do for that.

Never mind also that the books are generally only always gathering dust and are also feeling pretty lonely up there, until one fine day, maybe once in three years, comes the Great Shakedown and you wipe the shelves clean of all they carry, motes and mites and all manner of minuscule items, dust down the books and return them to their shelves, rearranged. That's what happens in my personal library.

For the longest time I thought what kind of person would borrow a book and not return it? I mean, steel *dabbas* are okay, pens too. Gold earrings on the odd occasion. But books? Now, that's unforgivable.

Then I remembered an anecdote my mother-in-law had shared. When

my husband and his sister were really, really little, they once got so mad with their mother they said to each other, "*Chal, bhaag jaatey hain*" (Come, let's run away). They packed some things in a *jhola* and marched out of the house. Their aunt ran to their mother in a panic: "Look, see what they're doing! Where are they going? Stop them!" Their mother cackled and said, "How far will they go? When the mice dance in their tummies, they will be back."

Sure enough, they were back, sooner than the mice began to dance.

It seemed like a good metaphor for borrowed books. Where would they go? How far would they travel? Sooner or later they would have to return, when the mice — guilty conscience, flash of memory, clearing day, whatever — began to dance. That assuaged some hurt feelings over the absence of books. It's another matter that more books are likely missing from my shelves than I could



When books take flight.

Steel *dabbas* and pens
are okay; but what kind
of person would borrow a
book and not return it?



imagine. The point is, for a while this helped. But the uncomfortable feeling returned.

That's when I was spurred to action. Whenever I visited somebody, I'd make it a point to scour their bookshelves and when I spotted something familiar, I'd pounce on it with an "Ah! That's mine! I'm taking it back!" as my friend — friend? FRIEND? — looked on with a puzzled (really?), anxious (tell me another), amused (the worst!),

outraged (yeah!), curious (go figure) look on her face. Like she never knew the book was with her. Like she had no idea the book was mine. Like — and this is the killer — it's mine, not yours...

But seriously, why do people borrow books and not return them? A peek into a discussion on Quora threw up some really interesting, esoteric answers. One sensibly reasoned argument was: "They are most likely not to return books if they have not read them. With me personally this is usually the case; any book that I've borrowed and haven't read will likely remain on my book shelf until I read it. And that point may be postponed indefinitely in the future." Fair enough.

One solution for this is: "I always gift books to my friends because I don't like to lend my books, I know I will never get them back." That's an idea. Also, as someone else points out, people who borrow think the person who is lending is done with the book and doesn't want or need it back. Ok... maybe. Although "laziness and accountability" are the more guilty parties.

Then the Quora discussion steps up several notches into some pretty weird space. Here it is, verbatim:

- "Lend" just removes "owe". And, I've rarely known the culture of book lending to make one into a river to the people. Suck it up, and take part in the purest incarnation of Karma.
- If it is a very good book, that book could begin consuming not just your time or sleep but also your soul; and how can you return something that contains your soul?
- There is an ancient proverb in Sanskrit — "*Pustakam, bharya, vittam — para hastam*, (into others hands) *gatam*, (gone) *gatam* (gone)"

What do you think? It's a pretty shattering dilemma, right? As someone on another forum says, "If that's

not one of the seven deadly sins, it definitely should be." Ha!

Still, no amount of ha-ing and ho-ing is going to bring back books gone walkabout. So I reckoned, there had to be another way. And that was to simply let them go. Release them. Set them free. The rationale was that someone somewhere was maybe reading the book and enjoying it as much as I did. That was reason enough.

Indeed, that's the reason for the book's existence in the first place, isn't it? To be read. For ideas to be shared. The world created within the pages to be entered into by the reader. The experiences reimagined. The universe expanded.

The Guardian carried a story about George Washington having borrowed a book from the New York Society Library back in 1789, and there being no record of his having returned it. The book was *The Law of Nations* by Emer de Vattel. Overdue fines totalled about \$300,000 in 2010 when the article was published! And the reason the story was written was that when the "staff at Mount Vernon, Washington's former home in Virginia, learned of the situation, they got in touch with the library offering to replace the book with another copy of the same edition". And they did — 221 years later, and no fine!

My friend Pradipti sort of emulated this when she borrowed my *This Divided Land: Stories from the Sri Lankan War* by Samanth Subramanian, and someone whacked it from her desk when she wasn't looking, and she replaced it with another copy and many apologies. Now, that's a true book-lover for you. She understands the pain. She understands why, despite all the rationalising and philosophising, I'm still mourning the missing in action of *A Disobedient Girl* by Ru Freeman. It's a signed copy. Does anybody have it?

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

Designed by Krishnapratheesh S

Meet your **Governors**

Jaishree

Reforming clubs, motivating members

Dr K Sunder Rajan

Orthopaedic surgeon, RC Nagpur West, D 3030



I'm utilising this opportunity to recharge Rotarians in the district, motivating them to be more pro-active," says Dr Sunder Rajan, referring to RI's suspension of the district. He ensures that members are engaged in humanitarian activity to sustain their interest in Rotary and feels such involvement will make the club and district vibrant.

"When I joined Rotary in 1990, I had the opportunity to perform several polio corrective surgeries. There is no looking back since then. When you see the happy faces around you, you are inspired to give yourself repeatedly. This is what I experience even today," he says.

He is confident that the 'Continuous Rotary Orientation Programme' that he has devised for every region will rejuvenate the team and keep Rotarians updated.

Rajan is also concentrating on strengthening the district stewardship committee. "We've burnt our fingers, there shouldn't be any more repeats." The clubs are engaged in several community projects, though the DDF cannot be accessed. "For instance, RC Nasik Road has just constructed seven toilets in a village with CSR assistance." Several water management projects are also being done, he adds.

He has encouraged his team to send its contributions directly to the Rotary Foundation (India); "accuracy and transparency are my watchwords this year," he says.

He has inducted around 350 new members and installed two new clubs.

His most cherished moments are the orthopaedic surgeries that he performs annually for the poor in Bihar and Jharkhand, along with six other orthopaedicians. "I was totally zapped when the parents of a polio-afflicted girl whom I had treated years ago fell at my feet and with tears of joy, gave me her marriage invitation."

Rajan and his wife Bhagyam are Major Donors and donate \$2,000 to TRF every year since 2010.



Abhay Gadgil

Jeweller, RC Pune University, D 3131

Getting CSR tie-up, his forte

Addressing the challenges of differently-abled people, especially autistic children, is his priority. He is concentrating on getting CSR funds to help them. “Tata Technologies has already given nearly ₹5 crore for equipping schools with e-learning kits in the past five years. We have a tie-up with IOC and AMDOCS, also an IT company, which is planning to pump in ₹7 crore every year,” says Abhay Gadgil.

On membership, he says his benchmark is a minimum number of 30 good members for chartering a club. “I recently rejected an application of a club which had just 10 members.” On June 30 last year, 1,500 members were removed because they were not performing. “This reflects badly on the district. So I’m particular about the genuineness and quality,” he says.

On contributions to TRF, Gadgil reveals that during his early years in Rotary he was not keen on giving to the Foundation. “I was only interested in supporting my club projects. But Vinay Kulkarni (the then DG) inspired me to do this. And today, can you believe it, I am an AKS member,” he smiles.

To this day, Gadgil treasures his club’s global grant project to start the Jagriti School for visually impaired in Alandi, near Pune. “Every time I visit the school, I’m deeply moved to see the children there so passionate about their studies,” he says.

He got inspired to join Rotary from his brother, a Rotarian in Sangli. His wife Deepa is a past president of his club.



T K Ruby

Pharmaceutical marketing, RC Himalayan Ranges – Mansadevi, D 3080

Caring for orphans and elderly

He is a charter member of the club since 2000, inspired by his “Rotarian friends”. Ruby holds his ongoing project — support and care for destitute children — close to his heart. “I was deeply touched when one day a little girl came and hugged me and said, ‘Thank you uncle for helping me go to school’. That is my best moment. There are 200 children in the orphanage we support. We foster-parent and help them in every possible way,” he says.

He is motivating his team to do projects that will make a permanent impact in the lives of the underprivileged, and more importantly, help restore their dignity. His focus is to provide education for children and vocational training for youngsters.

This district is spread across six States — Punjab, Haryana, Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, UP and Chandigarh. “We have hills, plains, industrial and pilgrim towns. Each region has a different need. Instead of persuading clubs to do one signature project, I encourage my team to take care of the local needs of the community they serve,” says Ruby.

He attaches greater significance on care for the elderly. “I know many parents who have been abandoned by their children. They go through intense pain when they are abandoned like this. We try to connect them with their children.”

He is focusing on establishing Rotary clubs in unrepresented areas. Asked about the participation of Rotarians in the hilly areas, he recounts his recent visit to a club in Rampur Basher, a seven-hour journey from Shimla. “This club has just 20 members. People of the town respect Rotary. The same is true in Mussoorie. You can feel the Rotary spirit there. So I think a club need not necessarily be big to do good.”

Ruby has been working with Rotaractors for the past seven years, involving them in organising programmes for children in orphanages. “Their dedication is just mind-boggling.”

When asked about his TRF contribution goal, he laughs and says, “I am one governor who has not been given any target, because I was appointed late.” But he is confident of surpassing previous records, and is on his way to become a Major Donor, Level-III. ■

New year resolutions are a common practice. The turn of the calendar from Dec 31 to Jan 1 usually witnesses a flurry of resolves for a better life, better body, more money and greater happiness. Setting a goal does not automatically translate to its accomplishment. Most New Year resolutions fall by the wayside by the end of a couple of months, if not earlier.

Here are some tips to ensure that your goals suit your lifestyle and are actually realised.

Goals need to be SMART:

- **S**pecific and definite
- **M**easurable
- **A**chievable
- **R**ealistic
- **T**ime bound

While all the above hold true, ensure that goals need to be action - and not result-based. What does that mean?

A goal such as, 'I intend to lose five kg this year' is result-based, even though it is Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time sensitive. The loss of five kg is the result of your effort. The result is not always within your control. Much depends on genetics, metabolism and other lifestyle factors like sleep and stress. You may lose five kg or, you may not reach your goal. On the other hand you may end up losing more.

A better approach is to focus on your effort or the action leading to that result. So, for instance, your goal should not be simply to 'lose five kg' but perhaps one or more of the following:

- I will walk for 30–40 minutes every day at a moderately intense pace
- I will aim to cover at least 10,000 steps a day, every day
- I will stop eating sugar and desserts
- I will consume at least five cups of vegetables a day
- I will include weight training for two days a week

- I will reduce the intake of refined carbs and processed foods
- I will stop consuming alcohol
- I will be more mindful of what I eat.

The above action is pretty much under your direct control. If adhered to, the result, which is the weight loss, will emerge. The success of the result of course depends largely on the effort you put in. Your focus therefore needs to be on the effort which is under your control.

Many times, however, despite your best efforts, you may not achieve exactly what you were going for. While this may be the case, it is quite pointless lamenting this 'lack of success' (as I said the result is not always under your control). Instead, recall the positive spinoffs from your effort (which may not have been on your agenda to begin with). Following the above goals will make significant 'lifestyle' changes for long-term success. These changes are far more important

than the mere loss of weight. You learn to incorporate regular exercise, you understand and apply the basic principles of healthy eating as a lifestyle rather than a short-term strategy with an end goal like 'weight loss'. You understand food groups and serving sizes, you learn to adapt to your new goals by walking those 30 minutes a day, even while on a holiday. Focusing on what you can and should do on a day-to-day basis is more beneficial than focusing on the end result.

Record your progress

Recording your progress in a journal, which includes your exercise and diet on a daily basis, gives you not only a sense of accountability but also something concrete to work with. Human beings have a notoriously selective memory. Very often we tend to forget what we actually ate or how much we exercised or walked through the day. We disregard stress and lack of





Setting wellness goals

Sheela Nambiar

following and explore ways in which you can improve all the aspects.

- **Physical wellness** (fitness, weight, posture, health)
- **Psychological wellness** (self awareness, emotional hygiene, anger, depression)
- **Social wellness** (relationships, community, friendships, contribution)
- **Financial wellness** (establishing financial security, understanding your finances)
- **Spiritual wellness** (exploring the realm of spirituality, if it appeals to you)
- **Environmental wellness** (caring for your environment, recycling, segregation)
- **Intellectual wellness** (work, education)
- **Creative wellness** (hobbies, creative outlets for fun)

When you focus on more than your physical wellbeing, you diminish the anxiety involved with not being able to achieve the intended weight loss. Addressing all the aspects of wellbeing is important for holistic development. This is not to say you need to overwhelm yourself with lofty goals for each aspect of wellness and finally not attend to anything. Address them all periodically. Set simple goals and take them forward once again, focusing on what you can do and not the end result.

Whatever your goals, focus on the action and give it your very best. The results may or may not be exactly what you intended, but that's okay. The effort invested is all that really matters.

The author, an Obstetrician and Gynaecologist, is a fitness & lifestyle consultant, and has published two books: Get Size Wise; Gain to lose.
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Designed by N Krishnamurthy

sleep. Journaling all of these aspects keeps things in perspective. Looking through your journal reminds you that you haven't, for instance, eaten all the vegetables you aimed for. It reminds you that you haven't walked three days in a row. It also allows you to really understand food as you identify the various components of your diet and mark them in various groups like carbs, protein and fats.

Remember to incorporate stress and sleep in your journal. Both these aspects of lifestyle hugely impact weight. We don't realise just how much, until we go through our journal and recognise the signs of stress or lack of sleep.

Review your effort periodically

While you may set out with certain objectives and intend to achieve them, review them periodically to understand if they are realistic, given

your lifestyle. So while you may start out saying you will walk for an hour every day, six days a week and train with weights twice a week, this may not be feasible for you. You may need to rework your planned effort to better suit your day. This is where a journal helps. Looking through it you are able to understand, for instance, that the problem time when you tend to binge is perhaps the evening hours between 5 and 7. You may then identify boredom at this time as the cause for the binge. Finding something to do at this time, eating a better midday meal, changing your morning exercise to an evening routine etc may help.

Set goals on various aspects of wellness

While it is advisable and commendable to set goals pertaining to physical health, fitness and weight, it is important to focus on other aspects of wellness too. Divide your wellness into the

Membership Summary

As on February 2, 2018

FIND A CLUB

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www.rotary.org/clublocator

Rotary



Rotary at a glance

Rotarians : 12,21,527

Clubs : 35,648

Districts : 539

Rotaractors : 2,49,711*

Clubs : 10,857*

Interactors : 5,16,718*

Clubs : 22,466*

RCC members: 2,26,711*

RCC : 9,857*

* As on February 2, 2018

RI Zone	RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians	Rotaract	Interact	RCC
5	2981	112	4,608	220	60	225	172
5	2982	67	2,995	98	61	111	43
5	3000	126	5,210	443	290	653	195
4	3011	75	3,305	632	57	107	25
4	3012	86	3,366	632	68	127	55
5	3020	94	4,220	202	117	461	351
4	3030	92	4,976	621	75	309	164
4	3040	92	2,025	214	53	119	136
4	3053	73	2,777	430	15	37	93
4	3054	130	6,351	1,010	93	305	473
4	3060	98	4,160	436	61	122	131
4	3070	103	3,002	280	68	156	54
4	3080	75	3,269	213	72	216	108
4	3090	80	2,153	93	32	36	122
4	3100*	73	1,690	69	11	73	146
6	3110	113	3,974	298	51	49	104
6	3120	78	3,325	357	37	58	50
4	3131	131	5,430	1,075	106	276	82
4	3132	105	4,087	419	65	200	138
4	3141	90	5,369	1,136	119	252	84
4	3142	83	3,096	458	68	188	69
5	3150	98	3,596	355	93	229	109
5	3160	69	2,416	120	26	48	81
5	3170	128	5,567	398	58	303	161
5	3181	71	3,095	231	32	179	104
5	3182	80	3,289	243	34	272	91
5	3190	129	5,049	587	146	352	51
5	3201	139	5,207	315	100	129	47
5	3202	128	4,851	239	102	434	46
5	3211	137	4,408	264	12	89	123
5	3212	96	3,906	257	111	272	125
5	3231	67	2,829	112	54	196	237
5	3232	101	4,067	548	139	304	80
6	3240	86	2,969	338	61	146	151
6	3250	98	3,787	678	47	205	177
6	3261	67	2,430	218	16	102	42
6	3262	95	3,275	375	44	68	75
6	3291	147	3,812	713	81	131	587
India Total		3,712	1,43,941	15,327	2,735	7,539	5,082
5	3220	67	1,888	242	82	199	77
6	3271	81	1,443	253	49	16	13
6	3272	154	3,096	439	41	36	36
6	3281	205	5,748	801	228	84	186
6	3282	139	3,980	390	133	45	38
6	3292	114	4,415	666	122	114	110
S Asia Total		4,472	1,64,511	18,118	3,390	8,033	5,542

*Non-districted.

Source: RI South Asia Office

What millennials want...

RI General Secretary John Hewko addressed the growing concerns of the millennials, who now constitute half the world's population, at the World Economic Forum held recently in Davos, Switzerland. The transcript...

Fifty per cent of the world's population is under the age of 30. This is the highest youth population in history, and the latest *World Economic Forum Global Shapers Survey* (covering more than 30,000 individuals under 30 from 186 countries) tells us what today's young leaders think about our world and their place in it.

So, what are the essential insights we should be acting on in 2018?

Firstly, the millennial generation views climate change and conflict as the most critical issues we face.

Secondly, they regard a "start-up ecosystem and entrepreneurship" as the most important factor contributing to youth empowerment in a country.

In addition to these priorities, young people feel their voice is not being heard, as 55.9 per cent of respondents to the survey disagreed with the statement: "In my country, young people's views are considered before important decisions are taken."

How can we address some of those pressing concerns while ensuring that our young leaders actually have a say in the decisions that will shape our future?

On climate change, it's clear that rapid implementation of Sustainable Development Goal 13 — "to combat climate change and its impacts" — is a basic prerequisite at the level of

national policy planning. However, deciding what precise actions to take across all levels of society to combat climate change is a more open-ended question.



RI General Secretary John Hewko

Some would say the technological answers to climate change are already in our hands, but in the words of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's lead author Dr Leon Clark: "We really have no sense of what it would take to deploy them at scale."

Initiatives such as Project Drawdown provide a useful calculation of the most powerful solutions already in existence, ranked according to estimated CO₂ and greenhouse gas

reductions. But for the sake of this article, our focus is youth empowerment and its relationship with conflict, the second "most serious global issue" identified in the survey.

Let's start with the question of entrepreneurship.

The majority of young people are optimistic about the impact of technology and innovation: 78.6 per cent think technology is "creating jobs" as opposed to "destroying jobs" (21.4 per cent).

However, can technology alone address the alarming reality of 71 million unemployed 15-to-24-year-olds around the globe? This is close to a historic peak of 13 per cent, according to the International Labour Organisation?

The current youth unemployment challenge affects countries at all stages of economic development. Latin America faces high and growing youth unemployment rates (higher than 17 per cent in 2017) and the EU-wide rate is currently at a similar level, with figures as high as 35%, 38.7%, and 43.3% in Italy, Spain and Greece.

As I noted at last year's World Economic Forum on Latin America, unleashing the potential of entrepreneurship is not simple. When taking action to cut red tape, remove structural barriers or alleviate social ones, we must not fall into the trap of a one-size-fits-all approach to innovation.

In fact, the pursuit of innovation for its own sake is not the answer to the challenge of youth unemployment.

Many projects to stimulate entrepreneurship have failed because they have attempted to replicate the *nonpareil* of innovation, Silicon Valley. In the words of Stanford Business School lecturer Federico Antoni “no government programme, no internal market will create a new Silicon Valley”. Even those who consistently back successful start-ups in the Valley — which attracts more than one-third of all US venture capital investment — find it hard to pinpoint the reasons for its unparalleled prosperity.

Peter Thiel, the entrepreneur who has co-founded or invested in some of the world’s leading companies, such as PayPal and Facebook, is sceptical about attempts to replicate the world’s largest innovation hub: “It is not even clear why Silicon Valley works. It is a singular thing, it is one time, one

place... then I always think that once you have set out to copy something you have already put yourself in somewhat of an inferior position.”

Even with generous government grants and tax benefits, ambitious attempts to create new tech hubs, such as London’s Tech City, have failed to live up to expectations. To put this in perspective, according to *The Spectator*: “Facebook, which was founded in 2004, is worth about twice as much as the 40 European unicorns (start-ups valued at a billion dollars or more) put together.”

If our mission is to reduce youth unemployment and social conflicts, then a better strategy would play to the strengths of particular regions with solutions tailored to local needs.

For example, one World Economic Forum Global Shaper project in Kabul, Afghanistan, attempts to implement sustainable initiatives to benefit unemployed youth at risk of radicalisation

by groups who seek to take advantage of ongoing security problems.

The emphasis is less on pure innovation, but on supporting those who have the skills, but not the financial resources, to launch their own businesses. The funding mechanism is divided into two components, designed to meet the growing demands of each start-up. In-kind grants will fund upfront expenses, while no-interest loans will cover recurring expenses until each start-up becomes self-reliant.

By identifying young people with business skills in remote areas who need a leg up, the initiative can provide the type of opportunities that can reduce the allure of militant groups, who in many cases are attractive for purely economic rather than ideological reasons.

In addition, projects such as this address not only the challenge of youth unemployment in a local context, but also another critical issue identified by the Global Shapers — the refugee crisis.



In 2018, the world will continue to struggle with the reality of a record 65 million-plus displaced people in need of shelter, safety and employment. About half of global refugees are under 18, so our actions to assist them will directly affect our progress on youth empowerment and conflict prevention.

Of particular concern is the opportunity of extremist organisations, who are “filling the void in State services for desperate refugees in their country of origin and ‘safe third country’,” according to the first detailed report on *Pathways of Youth Fleeing Extremism*, by the counter-extremist organisation Quilliam.

One response to this phenomenon which I cite frequently is the work of Anne Kjaer Riechert, a Danish Rotary peace fellow alumna living in Berlin. Her ReDi School of Digital Integration, founded in February 2016, intervened to meet the needs of two constituencies: the migrants entering

If our mission is to reduce youth unemployment and social conflicts, then a better strategy would play to the strengths of particular regions with solutions tailored to local needs.

Germany who sought gainful employment, and the companies who needed to fill 43,000 open IT jobs in Germany. The coding school she co-founded, in addition to training offered in entrepreneurship skills, has already supported the emergence of three start-ups.

Mutually beneficial economic integration initiatives like ReDi offer a model for the future, as Europe anticipates 756,000 open IT jobs by 2020. These projects also reflect the attitudes of young people; a majority of millennials (55.4 per cent) believe

host countries should “try to include refugees in the national workforce”.

Our efforts to give millennials what they want in 2018 should be measured against two questions articulated by tomorrow’s leaders. Firstly, does it make a positive social and environmental impact, with inclusive solutions tailored to local needs, and enough opportunities to build resilience in young people against radicalisation?

Secondly, does it fall into some of the same entrepreneurship and innovation traps which have derailed previous attempts to expand the positive impacts of the Fourth Industrial Revolution?

We already have many sustainable solutions at our fingertips — it should be every organisation’s challenge to empower the generation who want to make a difference and to do so quickly.

Source: rotary.org





Carnival time for children

Kiran Zehra

While 11-year-old Arun Shankar spoke about his family members, eight-year-old Gayatri Devi, who has a speech problem, described her colourful wooden dolls that her father got her from Thanjavur. All this

thanks to the Rotarians of RC Madras T Nagar, D 3232, who have been putting a smile on the faces of underprivileged and special children by treating them to a daylong carnival named *Rota Talent Contest*. In its silver jubilee year this project hosted



over 2,000 children from 57 schools.

“They need emotional support and guidance to hone their talent and Rota Talent gives these kids a good platform,” says Meenakshi Perikaruppan, spouse of A Perikaruppan, President of the club. At the Rota Talent Show children showcase their talent on stage. “Some forgot their dance steps, others the lines in their speech. But they didn’t stop. Some of the performances left us in tears,” she adds.

The event was inaugurated by DG R Srinivasan and the State Commissioner for Differently-abled V Arun Roy. Each

competition was divided into categories (mentally challenged, hearing impaired and regular) and the participant was given a time slot to perform. A painting competition was conducted across all categories simultaneously by the Inner Wheel Club. The winners were given trophies and cash prizes, two children from each school received the Best Talent Award. Gifts and trophies were also distributed.

Apart from all meals being complimentary, popcorn, cotton candy and few other snacks were given to children as they indulged in getting a temporary tattoo, face painting or *mehndi*. As it



DG R Srinivasan inaugurating the Rota Talent Contest in the presence of the club members.

involves special children “this is a very satisfying project. These children never get the exposure they deserve. There is so much hidden inside them and so much they want

to show the world,” says Perikaruppan. All the children returned home with a hobby kit containing books, glitter pens and Camlin crayons and story books sponsored

by Pratham Books. The caretakers and school representatives were given a gift too.

With a few games and jolly rides including a cartoon character parade,

a jumping castle and live food counters, it was “very entertaining and well organised,” said Shanthi, a teacher from Bala Mandir Trust. The stalls section had toys for special children and a motorised wheelchair stall attracted many enquiries. In association with V-Shesh, an impact enterprise that provides jobs to the differently-abled, a job fair was conducted at the venue for students with special needs above the age of 18 years, said Meenakshi.

“We have to thank the Rotarians and all the volunteers. But, most of all the kids who made our day extremely special,” said Perikaruppan. ■





RC Manora Pattukkotai — D 2981

Republic Day was celebrated at Annai Saratha Orphanage with a donation of rice, groceries and toiletries which were sponsored by the Club Secretary for the 20 inmates. An LCD projector costing ₹60,000 was also presented to a government girls school by the club.

RC Kaveripattinam — D 2982

Two condolence boards were installed near the bus stand and at the Palakode road junction for bereaved families to put up obituary messages. Club President G Venkataramanan says the permanent boards will help to keep the common walls and public space neat without being defiled by obit posters.



RC Nasik — D 3030

School kits were donated to over 1,100 students living in and around Ghoti area near Nasik. The kits included two pairs of uniforms, socks and shoes, notebooks, water bottle, school bag, geometry box and pencil box.

RC Vizag Elite — D 3020

A medical camp was organised at a village near Visakhapatnam, in association with Apollo Hospitals. Besides general check-up for BP and diabetes, medical tests were conducted in ENT, gastroenterology and orthopaedic fields. Medicines were also distributed to the patients.



Matters

RC Jaipur Kohinoor — D 3054

Monthly ration was distributed to needy families and the project was sponsored by Rotarian Satyakamji. Club President O P Khadiyaji, along with other members, was present on the occasion. The project is being done for the last three years.



RC Vapi Riverside — D 3060

An attempt to create a Guinness record in holding the largest multi-venue quiz was made by the district with the involvement of 27 clubs from 18 cities. Over 6,000 teams were moderated by 160 quiz masters across 72 venues selected as per the Guinness norms. Also, 245 stewards and 70 witnesses from non-Rotary background were present to validate the process.



RC Amritsar North – D 3070

A mega medical-cum-blood donation camp was held in a slum locality where 200 people were screened for various ailments related to thyroid, sugar and bone density. Over 50 people donated blood. Medicines were also given.



RC Chandigarh Midtown — D 3080

A government school at Mataur village was equipped with two toilet blocks, one each for boys and girls, and the students were trained in proper hygiene and how to keep the toilets clean. The total cost of the project is ₹3.5 lakh and will benefit over 2,000 students.



RC Barabanki — D 3120

Well-packaged food packets were distributed to flood victims in the villages around Barabanki. A team of Rotarians also distributed eatables to those affected by the floods.



RC Pune Kalyani Nagar — D 3131

Nearly 800 needy and underprivileged people were given blankets to keep themselves warm during night. Rotarians dressed as Santa Claus distributed the woollen material at select localities such as railway station and the slums.



RC Guntur Vikas — D 3150

Sewing machines were given to needy women during the club's Charter Day celebrations. PDG Ravi Vadlamani was the chief guest and Rtn Bruce Allen from Australia was the guest of honour.



RC Kollegal — D 3181

Renovated toilets at a government primary school in Hittaladoddy, a remote area, were inaugurated by DG Suresh Chengappa. He distributed study material, furniture and sports equipment to make the school environment healthy and attractive to the students. Wheelchairs were given to differently-abled persons.



RC Bangalore Vijayanagar — D 3190

A drinking water system was installed at Hegganahalli Government HS and Primary School in Peenya. DG Asha Prasannakumar donated furniture, dictionaries and educational books, sponsored by the club with global grant assistance. Furniture and books were donated to Panchasheelanagar BBMP School in Moodalpalaya under the global grant.



RC Tirupur Knit City — D 3202

Medical insurance policies were provided to differently-abled persons at the Sai Kirupa School in Tirupur. The total project cost is ₹7,500.



Matters



RC Ranipet — D 3231

A new toilet block was installed at the Government Boys HS School at a cost of ₹10 lakh. The sanitation facility was sponsored by Thirumalai Charity Trust and was inaugurated by the local MLA in the presence of Rotarians and sponsors.



RC Bokaro — D 3250

A three-day RYLA camp was organised for students of Classes 9 to 12 of various schools in Jharkhand. Nearly 100 students benefitted from the programme.



RC Jabalpur South — D 3261

The club felicitated the Aditya Birla Centre for Community Initiatives and Rural Development Chairperson Rajashree Birla for her philanthropic work and support to Rotary's Polio campaign.



RC Calcutta South City — D 3291

Saplings were planted at the Khalsa English High School in Bhowanipur in association with its Interact club. Over 200 children and widows were given new clothes ahead of Durga Puja, with support from Sabuj Sporting Club, Behala.



RC Butwal — D 3292

A street musical was organised at Traffic Chowk to collect relief funds for flood victims. The relief amount will benefit 40 families in the flood-affected Narayangarh village near Madi Municipality. The club members distributed relief material to the affected villagers.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran
Designed by L Gunasekaran



Zealous clerks and stubborn babus

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

Recently, there was a message circulating on WhatsApp, complete with scanned copies, of a letter that a bureaucrat had written to a subordinate, asking him to return, of all things, a matchbox which the latter had borrowed. It seems in the absence of the matchbox, the mosquito coils could not be lit and everyone was suffering. Later the writer of this letter explained he was only practicing the art of official letter writing. It is not known whether the borrower of the matchbox returned it.

This episode reminded me of another narrated by the late B K Nehru, ICS, Jawaharlal Nehru's cousin, Indian ambassador to the US, Governor of Assam etc. B K Nehru, when he was a very junior officer, sent an official telegram in which he tagged a line enquiring after his father's health.

A zealous clerk wrote back to him to pay for the last line as it was personal in nature. The sum involved was miniscule. Nehru declined, the clerk replied, Nehru responded and over the years the file became more than six inches thick. God knows how many hours and how much of taxpayer money was wasted on this ridiculous correspondence.

I once received a notice from the DDA asking me to show 'cause' virtually to demolish a hole in the wall!

Then there is an apocryphal story about the bureaucrat who was asked to make sure that people removed their shoes before entering the temple. One day a man came without shoes but was prevented from entering the temple by the bureaucrat who said the rules required the shoes to be 'removed', never mind that the person was not wearing any shoes.

I, too, had a strange experience once. Forty years ago when I was starting out as a journalist on a laughably low salary, my father bought a DDA flat for me to live in. We found that one of the bedrooms did not have a door connecting it to the bathroom which was right next door. So I knocked down a bit of the dividing wall and installed a door.

Then, when my wife and I moved in and tried to push the furniture against the walls we found them to be askew. So I first measured the furniture to see if they had all got damaged somehow in the move. But they were ok. So I checked the walls and found that none of them was at 90 degrees to the other. They were all slightly off.

So I wrote a letter to the DDA complaining about this. A few weeks later four DDA men came in a jeep and measured the walls and said there was nothing wrong. In any case nothing could be done about it. But that was not the end of the story. A couple of months later I received a notice from the DDA asking me to show 'cause' why the new door between the bedroom and the bathroom should not be 'demolished'.

I wrote back asking them to demonstrate how a hole in the wall could be demolished. This time I did not hear from them again. But several

Once in the mid-1980s, a clerk in the Ministry of External Affairs whose job was to stamp 'top secret' on documents, also stamped press releases thus, and for a week no press release came from that ministry.

years later I met someone else who said the DDA had sent a notice to him once threatening to demolish the garden he had developed outside his house!

My favourite story, however, is about the time in the mid-1980s, when a clerk in the Ministry of External Affairs entrusted with the job of stamping 'top secret' on documents, also stamped press releases as 'top secret', with the result that for a week no press release came from the ministry. Everything was being duly filed.

A government-run cremation ground in Faridabad apparently put up a notice that no cremations would be permitted without the Aadhar number. Later, the mayor said there was no such rule. But a few months earlier the central government had put out a circular that the Aadhar number was a must for getting a death certificate. But if the relative can't find the card, he or she has to give his or her Aadhar number along with a declaration that he/she can't remember the deceased's Aadhar number! Later the government clarified that it was not mandatory. Right now no one knows what the correct position is. ■

In Brief



Drones fly handbags

At the Milan Fashion Week, drones were used to promote the luxury handbags of Dolce & Gabbana, dangling them on the catwalk and swinging them to the tracks of the famous band Kendrick Lamar.



Armani school uniform

Tokyo may be known for its citizens' penchant for fashion, but a public school prescribing Giorgio Armani uniforms for students is taking it too far in the name of fashion! This move has triggered criticisms across the country. Taimei Elementary School has announced plans to introduce the new uniform comprising a long-sleeve shirt, navy-blue jacket and matching skirt or trousers and a hat, and this luxury brand was chosen. The full set comes with a price tag of 80,000 yen.

No smartphone for Putin

Russian President Vladimir Putin revealed that he does not have a smartphone, in response to a comment by Mikhail Kovalchuk, head of the Kurchatov Nuclear Research Institute, when he said that everyone has a smartphone.

Putin has earlier admitted that he had no interest in joining any social media network, fearing the content available online, and until 2005, he did not have a mobile phone at all! This is in stark contrast to his Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who is often seen with an iPhone and even uploads his own photos on his official Instagram page.



A Nepali cricketer for the Daredevils

Sandeep Lamichhane becomes Nepal's first IPL player. The 17-year-old leg break bowler has been taken by the Delhi Daredevils in the IPL auction for ₹20 lakh. He was first spotted by Australian skipper Michael Clarke at the T20 match played in Hong Kong, where Clarke mentored the team. Nepal became an Associate Member of the ICC in 1996 and has been participating in international matches since 2013.



An Indianised Beating Retreat

Indianised tunes marked the Beating Retreat ceremony held on Jan 29, marking the culmination of the four-day long Republic Day celebrations at Vijay Chowk in Delhi. The Defence Ministry had earlier announced that this year Indian tunes will be the flavour of Beating Retreat. Many veterans had expressed surprise and disappointment as they felt the solemnity associated with the occasion was compromised and reduced to a cultural show in the name of change.



Inspiration AROUND EVERY CORNER

The chat about soccer that changed everything

Michael from Hawaii was looking for a project his club could take on as he wandered the House of Friendship at the 2016 Rotary Convention. Before long, he met Graeme from Hong Kong and struck up a conversation about soccer. Soon, the subject changed to service, and Graeme told him about the Affordable Classroom Construction Project.

A few months later, the new friends worked with their clubs and the charity Worldwide Action to construct eco-friendly, durable classrooms for schoolchildren in Nepal. They also brought in Rotarians from Japan and Rotaractors from Kathmandu to help with the project, which was in an area devastated by two earthquakes. Michael and Graeme, still working together, show us a great example of how Rotary's convention brings people from around the world together to create lasting change.

**Find your inspiration at the Rotary Convention in Toronto.
Register today at riconvention.org.**

Rotary



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