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RI President 2026 - 2027

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Important Announcement Revision in Subscription Rates

Dear subscribers,

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

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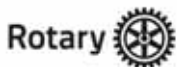
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We encourage Rotarians to choose the e-version.

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

Editor



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Selfless service indeed!

Your four-page story titled *Mending Little Hearts* in the September issue of *Rotary News* has an interesting write up on the heart surgeries being done on children. There are several pictures of the beneficiaries too. This is an outstanding and one-of-a-kind project. But I found it remarkable that there are no photos of the Bombay Airport Club



Rotarians who do all this work. Kudos to the club, and kudos to you!

Past RI President Kalyan Banerjee

In the project report and photos submitted for our consideration, there wasn't a single picture of any club member. Unusual, indeed! However, after receiving this letter from PRIP Banerjee, I approached the club and asked past club president and moving spirit behind the project Nitin Mehta for his picture with a beneficiary, which he shared and is being published now!

Editor

An inspiring Fellowship article

My sincere thanks for the article on Rotary fellowship for healing. I met this young couple at a Rotary meet in Shimla where they demonstrated the power of the subconscious mind. After the event, I invited them to my table and briefed them about Rotary Fellowships. I have been a Rotarian since 1989 and a regular Convention delegate. At one such Convention, I became a member of one Fellowship.

Pragati Sablok, Harsimran Choudhry, Harleen Kaur and I worked to get this new Fellowship going. I am happy and proud to see this article, which has boosted our morale, and will definitely motivate Rotarians

interested in hypnosis and healing worldwide.

*Dr Suresh Kumar Sablok, RC Nahan
Sirmour Hills — D 3080*

The article, *A Rotary Fellowship for healing* is quite revealing. Healing the mind and transforming life means that your daily reality, choices, and happiness improve dramatically once you release old emotional wounds and change how you think. As noted in insights on how *A healed mind will change your entire life*, intentional mental health alters everything from how you handle triggers to how you experience peace.

*KMK Murthy
RC Secunderabad — D 3150*

With reference to the Editor's note titled *A rush of adrenalin*, the work done in good spirit leads to the desired results to some extent. While athletes and players are given medals, trophies, for a Rotarian it is the satisfaction while doing service projects that carries weight and honour.

As the RI President states, we have to find the 'best year' from the last 5–7 years, and then make efforts to better that year with our performance. That satisfaction is our reward.

*Niranjan Kar
RC Bhubaneswar — D 3262*

In the Sept issue, RI Vice President IM Muruganandam's clear articulation of Rotary's core values is simple and impactful: "Fellowship, diversity and integrity are 'of' the members. Service is 'by' the members. Leadership is 'for' the members."

He says, "Rotary is a membership organisation, take away the members, and there is no project, no club, no district, no Rotary. Strong members build strong clubs. Strong clubs build strong districts. Strong districts build a stronger Rotary."

*R Murali Krishna
RC Berhampur — D 3262*

I was delighted to read the insightful article *RIDs 3141, 3000 put India on top*, which captures the achievements, leadership, growth and service initiatives of both the districts, showcasing the impact of Rotary. The article presents the journey through facts, figures and achievements, and reminds us that the true strength of Rotary lies not merely in the number of projects or the scale of contributions, but the lives touched, communities transformed, and leaders created through service.

LETTERS

Such achievements come from visionary leadership of IPDGs Manish Motwani (RID 3141) and J Karthik (RID 3000), determined to make a difference. I appreciate Karthik for his exemplary governorship, which set a benchmark for effective district leadership. My congratulations to RID 3141 Rotarians for their accomplishments.

*U Khalif Ahmed
RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000*

The message from TRF trustee chair Jennifer Jones is a touching incident from her own life. The tragic but factual event of her father's plight shows the ground realities in healthcare. As she said healthcare remains uneven across countries and communities. Let us work hard to bridge the gap between the vulnerable and the privileged.

*D Harischandra Rama
RC Anantapuramu — D 3160*

I agree with TD Vasu, RID 3233, that lavish club installations are diluting Rotary's core principles. Not following protocols loses the organisation its decorum. Such lavish events eat away the finances of the club. Its time RI steps in to stop these extravagant events. The incoming leaders are not groomed properly at PELS/SELS, where the training content gets lost in the projection of candidates aspiring to become DGs. Often, RI's training content is totally ignored or barely 10 per cent used. The training platform is used to project district leaders.

*K Nagendra Babu
RC Madras North West — D 3233*

RI director KP Nagesh has rightly said, "it all begins at the club. Friendship before fellowship, purpose before position and opportunities before obligation." These words are worthy of introspection. He says, "people will

always remember how Rotary made them feel." We have to be vigilant in clubs and districts to ensure that negative behaviour is nipped in the bud. The Rotary Learning Centre provides tools to address such deviant behaviour.

*Ranvir Kumar Agarwal
RC Moradabad Mid-Town — D 3100*

A Rotary inspired AC dress

In 1990, as a member of the GSE team, I had the opportunity to visit a Rotarian in Chicago. What fascinated me most was not just his hospitality, but his spirit of innovation. At the age of 80, he was building a helicopter all by himself in the backyard of his home.

That sight stayed put in my mind. Almost 40 years later, while going through some articles in *Rotary News*, led beautifully by Editor Rasheeda Bhagat, that old memory came alive, and I asked: If an 80-year-old Rotarian could build a helicopter, why can't I, at 74, fulfil a dream cherished for 40 years to develop an 'AC dress' that could provide relief from scorching summer heat for those who work outdoors — farmers, field workers, industrial workers, police and army personnel, who work in extreme heat.

On the cover

RI President Nominee Dr Bharat Pandya and his wife Dr Madhavi.
Picture: Rasheeda Bhagat

I've now developed a low-cost prototype of an AC dress. It is only the beginning, but for me, it represents something much bigger: the power of Rotary to inspire us to dream, innovate, turn ideas into reality and thus benefit society.

*Ashok Jindal
RC Nabha Greater — D 3090*

Growing Rotary

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Photograph: Andrew Esiebo



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Aminu Ahmed Tudun-Wada knows what polio takes from a child. He contracted the disease as a young boy in Kano, Nigeria, and was left paralysed.

Decades later, when Nigeria was struggling to eradicate polio, Aminu decided that he would use his experience to help protect other children.

He brought together polio survivors and began going door to door, talking with parents about vaccination. The survivors told their stories. They showed families the effects of polio. And they urged parents to make sure their children never had to go through the same experience.

By 2021, the Polio Survivors Group that Aminu founded had grown to more than 400 members. Their work helped Nigeria reach a milestone that once seemed impossible: In 2020, the World Health Organisation certified Nigeria, and the entire African region, free of wild poliovirus.

I think about people like Aminu whenever we talk about ending polio. Eradication is about children who will never know what it means to lose the ability to walk. It is about parents who will never have to watch a healthy child become paralysed by a disease that vaccines can prevent.

And it is about making sure the people who remember polio become the last generation that does.

Rotary has been part of this fight for more than four decades. Together with our partners, we have helped vaccinate more than 3 billion children, contributed more than \$3 billion to the global effort, and reduced cases of wild poliovirus by 99.9 per cent.

But 99.9 per cent is not 100 per cent.

Wild poliovirus remains endemic in Afghanistan and Pakistan. As long as it circulates anywhere, children everywhere remain at risk. And even after wild poliovirus disappears from a country, we must maintain strong immunisation and surveillance systems so the virus cannot find a way back.

Aminu could have looked at his own experience and asked, “Why me?” Instead, he asked a different question: “How can I make sure this does not happen to another child?” That is the spirit we need now.

The final mile of any journey can be the hardest. But we have walked too far, worked too hard, and protected too many children to stop here.

Let us remember why we began. Let us listen to those who have experienced polio. Let us be the generation that creates lasting impact and ensures no one ever experiences polio again.

Yinka Babalola

President, Rotary International



Of integrity... and corruption

For writing the profile of RI President Nominee Bharat Pandya, I sought a brief quote on his leadership qualities from two senior Rotarians who know him well — past RI President KR Ravindran, and past RI Director Raju Subramanian. A common thread that ran through both the quotes pertained to his integrity. While PRID Subramanian said Pandya had the ability to “inspire by the integrity of his leadership,” PRIP Ravindran talked about him being “immovable in principle,” and added: “He has never once confused holding office with doing the work.”

That was striking indeed; in a 4-line quote from two different people, “integrity” emerged as a principal quality of RI’s incoming top leader! That is how important integrity is... in defining a person, a leader, an institution and even a country. But quite often in all these areas, most of the times when people sing hosannas to ethics and integrity, it is not much more than lip service being paid.

In theory and public and private debates people across the world do give a lot of importance to integrity. Small wonder then that the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) brought out by Transparency International every year gets a lot of international attention on which nations are among the most honest and which ones need to step up their act. Sad to say that year after year our country comes in the second category, with the Scandinavian countries taking the pride of place at the very top of the list.

In the 2025 CPI Index, Denmark scored the first rank followed by Finland, Singapore, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland. India was at an unseemly 91st rank, tying with Maldives, Morocco and Tunisia and just a tad better than

Ethiopia! If it’s any consolation, the US was only at the 29th rank, along with the Bahamas. European countries such as Germany, Netherlands, Ireland and the UK did better. Japan and Bhutan, to their credit, got the 18th rank.

While it requires a mammoth, long-term and herculean effort to improve a country’s integrity index, as always, charity begins at home. Individuals who are honest and truthful and keep miles away from corrupt practices might not be able to put up huge business enterprises, but they would certainly sleep better at night. But to be individually honest and principled, and close your eyes to the fraud and corrupt practices taking place around you is not enough. Fortunately, we in India do have a history of sending out corrupt governments lock, stock and barrel.

But that one vote we exercise once every five years, even though extremely important, is not enough. We have to remain constantly vigilant to spot and speak out against injustice, dishonesty and corrupt practices happening around us. If our Gen Z can take to the streets to safeguard the following of strict principles in our education system, so crucial to their future, surely the older generation too can remove their blindfold, open their eyes and fight for justice and truth. Just mouthing the words of the Four-Way Test is not enough... those words have to be understood, internalised and put into action. So that sometime in the future, when we say *Jai Hind*, these words are much more than a hollow slogan, and their true meaning and spirit resonates far beyond our borders.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rasheeda Bhagat



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Director speak



Moving forward, making an impact

October brings us to the beginning of the second quarter of the Rotary year. The first three months have seen clubs across our country turn plans into action, bring people together and begin projects that are making a difference. As we enter the next quarter, it is a good time to pause, look at what we have begun and ask ourselves: What more can we do?

October is Rotary's Economic and Community Development month. For me, this focus area captures something fundamental about our work. When we help a person become self-reliant, create an opportunity for a young person, strengthen a community or enable a family to move towards a better future, the impact often goes far beyond the project itself.

The most meaningful Rotary projects are those that continue to create value long after the inauguration ceremony is over. Their full impact may never be measured. A project can outlive its creators and continue to touch lives for years. That is the kind of lasting impact we should strive for.

Rotary in India is strong. Our clubs have demonstrated what committed Rotarians can accomplish when they come together with purpose. But our ambition should extend beyond our own communities and our own country. Let us make the contribution of Rotary in India visible and significant across the wider Rotary world.

To do this, we need strong and vibrant clubs. And that brings us to membership.

Membership growth is not only about bringing in new members. It begins with **retaining the members we already have**. When clubs are active, inclusive and relevant to their communities; when members have meaningful opportunities to serve; and when good practices become part of club life, people have greater reason to remain engaged. Strong clubs naturally create an environment in which membership can grow.

And as we look ahead, we must keep our young people at the centre of our thoughts. The future of our country is young, and the future of Rotary must be young too. Interact and Rotaract give us the opportunity to introduce young people to Rotary's values and spirit of service. Let us make that connection stronger and create a natural pathway for the next generation to become Rotarians.

The first quarter is behind us. The road ahead is full of opportunities. Let us build on what we have started. Let us bring greater energy to our service, greater purpose to our clubs, and greater ambition to our collective contribution.

There is much to accomplish. Let us move forward — together.

KP Nagesh
RI Director, 2025-27

2027
Convention

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Magazine

Message from TRF Trustee Chair



Like a rock

Being a rock is Rotary's quiet superpower, and with this year's instability we've been reminded how much that matters.

Families face displacement, communities navigate climate shocks, and humanitarian needs arise both close to home and across the places we serve. These realities touch us. Yet even as the world shifts, Rotary's response remains steady, compassionate and effective. We don't turn away from uncertainty — we meet it with purpose.

The Rotary Foundation was not built for fair weather. Over the last decade, we have strengthened our approach: weaving sustainability into every project, expanding partnerships, and embracing evidence-based solutions. This evolution has made us more resilient and more community driven.

It's why our comprehensive goal of raising \$500 million across the Annual Fund, Endowment Fund and PolioPlus Fund is not only ambitious but achievable. We've proved before that we could reach it, and momentum is building again.

While global attention shifts from one crisis to the next, Rotary stays. We convene partners who might never otherwise collaborate. We mobilise resources quickly because our networks are already in place, built through decades of trust. And we strengthen communities not through one-time interventions but by sustained presence and shared commitment.

Nowhere is this dedication more evident than in our work to end polio. Last month, I asked you to reflect on your club's role in this historic effort, and many of you responded with renewed energy and generosity.

Polio cases are down more than 99 per cent since Rotary began this fight, a testament to the health workers, volunteers, and members who kept vaccinating children through wars, border closures, and every imaginable obstacle. They didn't know how the story would end. They knew who they were, and they kept going.

That is our inspiration in this moment. When the ground feels unsteady, Rotary becomes the stable ground. When plans shift, we are the partner who responds. When the path forward is unclear, our strength of self becomes our compass.

By the time you read this, I will be in a place that has tested my own footing. I'll share the full story online, and it's one you won't want to miss.

Let us continue being an organisation the world can count on. We may not always know how every challenge will be solved. But we know who we are, and that's always been enough for us to begin.

Jennifer Jones
TRF Trustee Chair

I consider RI presidency an exciting opportunity: **Bharat Pandya**

Rasheeda Bhagat



**RI President Nominee
Dr Bharat Pandya**



He became a Rotarian in 1989 as a young surgeon at 30, “by accident,” when his father’s patient JP Saxena, who was starting a new Rotary club in Borivli invited him. He was reluctant, as he had just started his surgical practice, but Saxena convinced him. Thus RI President Nominee Bharat Pandya became a charter member of RC Borivli, and was soon pushed to become club president. Having accepted the responsibility, he gave his best... doing many outstanding projects, adding 19 new members and 12 Paul Harris Fellows, “a big thing in those days.”

After his year as president, Pandya “realised that Rotary is really helping me to expand my horizons beyond my immediate circle.”

Those horizons will cover the whole world come 2028 when he assumes the role of RI President, I quip. We are having this conversation in his apartment in Mumbai, in the same building that houses the Pandya Surgical and Maternity Hospital where his wife Madhavi is the gynaecologist. The gentle, mild-mannered Rotarian smiles; “when I joined Rotary 37 years back, I never realised I would ever get the opportunity to make the whole world my horizon.”

So does he consider this an opportunity or a challenge... perhaps a daunting one? “I consider it an exciting opportunity. Looking at the scale, reach and presence of Rotary in more countries than represented in the United Nations, the responsibility begins to weigh on the shoulders. But I wouldn’t call it daunting; I’d use the word exciting.”

He is excited to take on this responsibility which will “allow me to meet and interact with more Rotarians at the grass-roots levels and understand how Rotary works in different parts of the world. I am excited about the people I’m going to meet, the different perspectives I’m going to hear, and what we can accomplish together. And I think my role is not

RIPN Pandya, his wife
Dr Madhavi with daughters
Dr Nidhi, Dr Sashmi,
son-in-law Paarth and grand
daughter Dhriti.



to have all the answers. My role is to listen, learn, bring people together and give Rotary a clear sense of direction. Hopefully we can together move the needle a little bit forward for Rotary.”

Asked what was more important in Rotary — membership, projects or something else, he says: “At the centre of everything is membership. If we have the members, everything is possible. If we don’t have the members, things are difficult. I would like to focus on two things — make Rotary more member-centric, more accessible, relevant, engaging, and very important, more enjoyable for members. If we take good care of our members, give them a good club experience and meaningful work, then members will take care of Rotary’s growth.

The maximum attrition happens in the first three years; the first three months are important because first impressions are sometimes the last impressions.”

Pandya suggests clubs should organise quality induction of a new member, give him a meaningful role in the club in the first three months,

If we want to keep Rotary alive, relevant, vibrant, effective for the next 30–50 years, we have to get younger people. Today, the young are looking for purpose and a cause.

At a glance



Music: I like old... not very old but contemporary and a little before that, Hindi songs. Also, Western music; ABBA continues to be my favourite!

Reading: I used to do a lot of reading and still do some reading, but not as much as I would like to! Hopefully, once I am finished with the presidency, then I’ll have more time to read. My favourite writers are P G Wodehouse, I’ve read the novels of Jeffrey Archer for entertainment. My recent read is *From Ideas to Impact* by Michael Sheldrick

Social media: I am on WhatsApp and LinkedIn but I need to engage more with social media.

Food: I am not much of a foodie but I like Indian vegetarian food, as also Italian and Chinese food.

Cooking: My cooking skills are limited to making sandwiches, tea and coffee. But for Evanston and when Madhavi is not around, she will teach me some cooking!

Favourite holiday destination: New Zealand, for its natural beauty and clean air. You can almost taste the air there... clean and crisp.

Fitness: I used to do a lot of treadmill walking but post-Covid, I do a lot of walking... at least 12,000 steps a day.

Relaxation: My relaxation is listening to music, occasionally reading. I like to revisit old books.

Religion: I believe in God, but I am not ritualistic. Madhavi takes care of the puja and everything else.

depending on his/her interest; provide adequate Rotary education and create a sense of belonging in the member. “Many times we induct new members and leave them on their own. We have to work on them... nurture new members.”

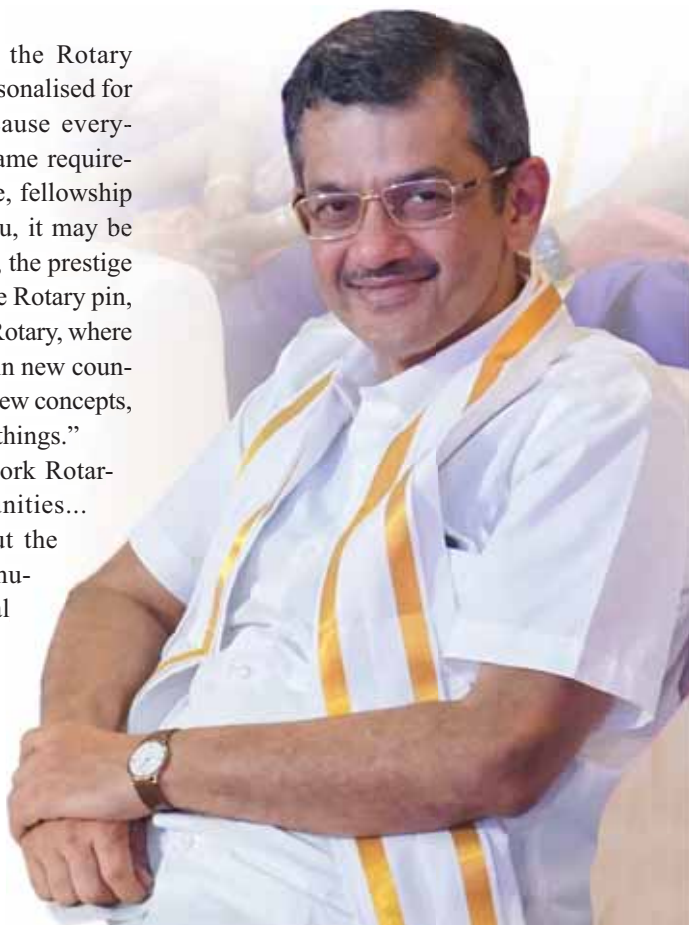
He gives the analogy of a new bride, who needs to be given special attention and made to feel welcome. “In the first 1,000 days a member should get continued Rotary learning, a leadership opportunity and a voice in the club’s decision-making to make him more engaged, involved and valued. He will then feel his voice matters and get a sense of belonging. Next, expose the member to a really impactful service project.” The following year that member should be made to mentor another new member, “because the best form of learning is teaching others.”

Also, adds Pandya, the Rotary experience should be personalised for different members “because everybody doesn’t have the same requirement from Rotary. To me, fellowship may be important, to you, it may be service, to a third person, the prestige of Rotary and wearing the Rotary pin, or the internationality of Rotary, where you can find open doors in new countries. These are not even new concepts, just packing of different things.”

The impact of the work Rotarians do on the communities... not the money spent but the transformation of communities, and the behavioural change this is bringing, also need focus. “Our leadership positions will end in a year, but the impact of the work we do should last for years and decades. So I am going to focus on membership and the impact of our work.”

I will focus on making Rotary more member-centric, more accessible, relevant, engaging, and very important, more enjoyable for members.

Rotary has scope to grow, apart from India, in Africa for the next 5–7 years at least. “President Yinka is already doing it, and President-elect Larry will continue I’m sure, and so



Pandya at the Chennai Zone Institute in 2018.





His dreams....

I first want to see Polio totally eliminated. Once that happens, there is a possibility Rotary can get the Nobel Peace Prize; that will be a big moment for us. A long-term dream is that Rotary should become a first-choice partner for the people whenever there is need in the community, at least for our areas of focus. The same for other organisations who seek a partner. Also, I am passionate about TRF, which I believe is a very good Foundation.

But leveraging the work we do through our Foundation, we should be able to attract much more non-Rotarians' money to TRF. The way AI companies are growing... they are already valued in billions of dollars.

I'm sure that 2, 5 or 10 years later, many of their founders will become philanthropists like Bill Gates. When that happens, Rotary should be able to get that money, because it can do so much more work with more funds. But of course, we will have to tailor our projects and activities to meet their needs, which would probably be different from Bill Gates' priorities. The one who gives the money decides what work needs to be done.

(For himself) My short-term dream is to do my best in this new responsibility coming my way. Once this is done, I need to come back, relax with my family, and give them, and also my club members, some time.



Left: Pandya with PRIP KR Ravindran, PRID Raju Subramanian and Vidhya at the Indore Zone Institute in 2019.

will I. There are now about 50,000 members in Africa, and in the next five years, with proper focus, Rotary membership in Africa, an entire continent, can go up to 150,000."

Pandya is happy that Rotary is also growing slowly, but steadily, in Germany, Italy and Scandinavia. However, some parts of the Rotary world are not growing and if Rotary has to grow, "we have to stop the leak and reverse the trend in those areas and encourage clubs which resist change to be more flexible and innovative."

Membership focus includes getting more women and younger members, he says. "If we want to keep Rotary alive, relevant, vibrant,

effective for the next 30-50 years, we have to get younger people."

Today, the young are looking for a cause, as was seen in India recently with Generation Z. "They want a cause and a purpose to work on... they want to connect more and use more technology. But they are also interested in developing their own leadership skills." If Rotary can offer these, it is well placed to attract younger members.

As for women members, if 50 per cent of our society comprises women, then they need equal representation in Rotary. Even though women members are increasing, the RIPN feels Rotary needs more women in leadership positions at all levels. It's not possible for women to become RI Presidents or RI Directors or even DGs directly, but they have to be "encouraged to get leadership at the club, district, zone and then RI levels."

This is happening but not fast enough thanks to the "aspiration for





Leadership is not about standing in front of people and leading them... but standing with the people. A good leader is not somebody who builds more followers, but more leaders.

positions, which men, who have entered Rotary much earlier, tend to monopolise.” He clarifies that more leadership positions are needed in Rotary for women, not because they are women, but because they are capable, competent and talented. “I hope 10 years on, we’ll stop talking about women’s leadership. It will be just leadership!”

But meanwhile, to encourage more women leaders, pathways will have to be given to them... “not to be partial to them, but more welcoming and encouraging.”

I next ask Pandya on higher expectation from him as RI President as he is widely seen as an erudite, thoughtful and caring leader. What new ideas of change can he bring on the table? “I wouldn’t call myself erudite, but thoughtful and caring, yes, and I think those are two important attributes of a good leader. I agree expectations from me will be higher because of the way I’ve grown in Rotary. But my Rotary experience is going to help meet those expectations,” he says.

He recalls that as an RI Director he had focussed on health; now he wants to expand that focus to



Attributes of a good leader

On the attributes of a good leader RIPN Bharat Pandya says, “As I said it is going to be an exciting time and a great opportunity for me. I believe leadership is not about standing in front of people and leading them... but standing with the people, bringing everybody together. I will try to do that. Also, a good leader is not somebody who builds more followers, but more leaders. If I build only followers, when my leadership responsibility is over, who is going to fill that gap?”

A good leader needs to have a vision, the ability to visualise things and a collaborative approach which makes teamwork possible. “Because you can’t do everything alone. You also need self-assurance and confidence in yourself so that you can empower others. If I am not confident about myself, how will I empower others.”

Also, a leader has to have the ability to act; just having a vision, empowering others, doesn’t work. Execution is important. I always say well done is always better than well said. “At the heart of everything is integrity.”

He goes on to give the analogy of a surgeon and how being one has “profoundly influenced the way I live. In surgery every decision is important and those are based on knowledge, your skill, judgement, evidence and teamwork. This intervention is proven to be successful so that is why you do follow it. Then there is teamwork. I can’t do



surgery alone... without the anaesthetist, my theatre nurse and even the sweeper. Because an unclean floor will cause infection.”

Then there is compassion. “In surgery, the important principle is to treat the patient, not the disease. You need compassion to treat the patient. Applying this compassion to Rotary’s work, before doing a project you have to look at the needs of the community, and do what you are doing with compassion; help those who need our help without making them feel obliged to us for helping them, and remember we are fortunate to be in a position to help. That is compassion.”

At the same time, don’t do anything totally free; ensure there is some involvement of the community in terms of their skills, labour. “As a doctor I know anything given completely free has less value. Local people have wisdom and know best what is required.”

He sums up his leadership style as ABC plus I. “Analyse the

situation, be bold in your decision, stay calm and cool under pressure and adopt a collaborative approach. Across this entire spectrum apply ‘I’ for integrity.”

Those who know him well, admire his integrity above all. Says former RI Director Raju Subramanian, “Some lead from the front, others inspire by the integrity of their leadership. Bharat Pandya represents both. Quiet in manner, profound in thought, he represents the best in Rotary leadership.”

Past RI President KR Ravindran has this to say of our future RI Prez: “I have watched Bharat Pandya at close quarters for 15 years, and in some difficult rooms. He is slight in stature and tall in significance, gentle in manner and immovable in principle, and he has never once confused holding office with doing the work. Rotary has chosen well.”

healthy communities. And this is “not just about health, but access to health-care, preventing diseases, maternal and child health, sanitation and clean water and environment. Because you can’t have healthy communities without clean water, proper sanitation or environment.”

While Rotary should push the concept of healthy communities, with different clubs working on focus areas of their choice, such as water and sanitation, maternal and child health, environment, because all these promote health communities, “eradicating polio remains our number one priority.”

On what Rotary can do for young India, Pandya says it is already doing a lot; education affects young people the most, and “we are doing a lot in education and should step up our efforts.” Health awareness is another area of concern as 20 per cent of our population under 15 is obese, and when they turn 35–45, they’ll face problems. RYLAs are providing professional skill development opportunities. These should be expanded, along with mentoring of the young generation.

On how his hospital and surgical practice will be managed during the long time he needs to spend in

There will be differences
and disagreements. But we
can resolve them without
becoming disagreeable.



Rotary in India has many strengths

Rotary in India has many strengths says Bharat Pandya. “Our members are our strength, and so is our generosity.”

Consider what India gives to TRF. “When I took over as Trustee in 2022, our TRF contribution was \$26 million; when I finished my term in June 2026, it had gone up to \$45.3 million. That’s a 74 per cent increase, which is significant. The quantum of work we do in India is tremendous. I think the maximum number of global grants are happening here. The way we’re able to leverage CSR grants is exemplary, and those CSR grants are really helping the community in so many ways.”

Does he have the CSR numbers, I ask. Of course he does; at

the top of this head! “CSR started in 2021–22, and in that year the figure was \$2.8 million; it went up to \$6.7 million next year; then to \$8.2 million, \$11million, ending at \$15 million last Rotary year.”

There’s scope for much more “it’s huge.... it’s an ocean,” he says.

For one, the companies trust Rotarians; also, at present, 65 per cent of the grants come from corporates owned or run by Rotarians, and there are repeat grants from both Rotary and non-Rotary corporates, which means Rotarians have the trust of the corporates.

The other strength of Rotary in India is “our strong connect with our partners... the governments, various other NGOs and semi-governmental organisations and

local municipal corporations. And our well-spread presence across India.”

On what can be improved in India, Pandya says Rotary in India is younger compared to the rest of the world and is growing, with more people seeking leadership positions. “Ambition is not a bad thing. But the way we handle it is important. We have to channelise it properly, and realise that there will be differences and disagreements. But we can resolve them without becoming disagreeable. At times, people should be willing to let go and move forward. There will always be another time. That is something we can improve in India,” he adds.



Dr Bharat Pandya being installed as president of RC Borivli.

Evanston for his presidential year and earlier, Pandya says he has a transition plan. “Of course, I am going to miss my operation theatre, and my operation theatre is going to miss me.”

So how difficult was the decision to put in his nomination knowing all this? “It wasn’t a difficult decision, but it required a lot of careful thought, on the part of my family too.” But once his wife Madhavi came on board, it happened. Their daughter Sashmi is a gynaecologist and will fill in when Madhavi is away with him.

Asked how Rotary has transformed him, Pandya attributes a lion’s share in his leadership skills to Rotary. “It exposed me to a wide variety and range of people in different professions, and allowed me to really mature and develop as a leader, sharpened my

public speaking skills. Earlier, in front of 10 people, I could barely speak 4–5 sentences.”

But now he is known for his meaningful speeches; do they need preparation? “For important meetings, they do; and I write down at least some points. Unless you’re a Winston Churchill, you have to do some preparation, or else your speech will be a disaster!”

So what part of heading Rotary excites him the most? “Meeting people from different cultures, countries, languages and backgrounds, looking at the work they do. We think in India we do a lot of work and we do a lot of work. But I saw in Philippines, Taiwan, Brazil, Nepal, Australia and other regions Rotarians are doing tremendous work too. I look forward to the opportunity to see Rotarians’ work all over the world and the innovations they bring to service projects to meet the needs of their communities.”

Also important is the work Rotary does for peace, and under the Programs of Scale, including in India (PWABHI — Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India), where the Rotarians are working with Mayank Gandhi and the Global Vikas



Trust in some of the most backward regions of Marathwada. Remarkably, some of those farmers’ annual incomes have jumped 5, 7 to even 10 times — up from ₹40,000– ₹50,000 per acre to ₹3–₹5 lakh.

“Through our own Rotary Peace Center at Symbiosis and other Rotary Peace Centres, Rotary can definitely make a difference by creating a peace mindset in people, and focus on how to avoid conflict by bringing people together in harmony and peace.”

On the price his family has had to pay for the substantial time he has given to Rotary, Pandya agrees there has been some sacrifice on all sides when it comes to family time. “But I have tried my best to balance things; whenever I go for a Rotary engagement, my time is given only to that engagement. There is nothing which diverts or distracts me. I finish that

engagement and I am back home... for my family and my profession.”

He adds, “Yes, Madhavi does get upset sometimes, but she, and my two daughters, have always been supportive. But in the last couple of years with my daughters studying out of Mumbai, with my increasing Rotary engagements, getting some family time together has been extremely challenging.

As a surgeon I have spent much of my life working to heal people, and many years working to serve communities through Rotary. Both have made me realise that you may not be able to change the whole world, but you can change someone’s world. If we can help every Rotarian do that a little more often, Rotary will have a better, bolder and more meaningful future. That is *Service Above Self*.”

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

We must remember
that our positions are
temporary but the impact
we can create can last for
generations.



Pankaj Shah

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 DRFC RID 3131 RY 2025-26
 ARRFC ZONE 7 RY 2023-25
 District Membership Chair 2022-25
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PATHOLOGY PARTNERS





RI President Yinka Babalola places his cap on Sunali Saluja as (from R) RI Vice President M Muruganandam, TRF Trustee A S Venkatesh, Sudhir Reddy, RID 3150 DG Uday Pilani and RI Director K P Nagesh cheer on.

A fun auction for TRF

Rasheeda Bhagat

At the TRF event during the recent visit of RI President Yinka Babalola to Hyderabad, one of the most enjoyable moments came when the President said quite disarmingly, pointing to the beautifully embroidered red cap he was wearing. “Now this is a simple cloth cap, but it is hand-made and hand embroidered too.” The cap had the Rotary logo embroidered in yellow and the presidential theme for the year ‘Create Lasting Impact’ in indigo.

He announced that he was willing to give it to any Rotarian in the hall for a decent price. The money it fetched would of course go to The Rotary Foundation. DG Uday Pilani, RI District 3150, immediately seized the opportunity and began the bidding by announcing that he was offering \$5,000 for the cap. This kept increasing by sum of \$500 to 1,000, with the main contender being Pilani’s assistant governor and AKS member (Level 3) Chiranjeev Saluja and his

wife Sunali, till RI Vice President M Muruganandam, who was in the hall, stepped in with his own set of bids.

Now the bidding war really picked steam, and with Muruganandam getting into the act, the figure quickly climbed to over \$10,000, 15,000 and 25,000 and beyond, till the VP said “\$30,000... and this is my final bid.”

With Pilani urging the district’s Rotarians to ensure that the RI President’s cap remained in the district, preferably Hyderabad, Saluja wrapped up the



From L: RI Director Nagesh, DG Pilani, Sunali, Chiranjeev Saluja, President Babalola, Trustee Venkatesh and RI VP Muruganandam.

auction with a bid of \$31,000. Amidst loud cheers and applause Babalola placed the cap on Sunali's head.

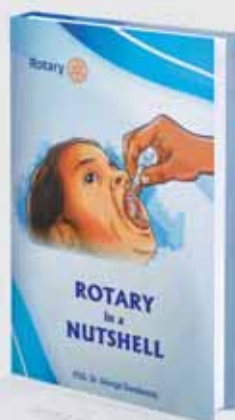
Later DG Pilani told *Rotary News*: "I gave this idea to President Babalola as we were walking to the hall for the event. I am so glad I did

because this fetched TRF ₹30 lakh!" He recalled that at the Hamburg Convention too, where four paintings were auctioned, he had told his wife that they should buy a painting. He bid for one, "and by the time I went to pay for that bid, my wife,

who thought I had said we should buy all the paintings, had bid and bought the other three too. I remember that totally, I paid 35,000 Euros for those paintings."

Anyway, all for a good cause! *Vive la TRF!* ■

A Rotary reckoner



Title : **Rotary in a Nutshell**
 Author : **PDG George Sundararaj**
 RID 3203
 Price : **₹100**
 Email : **geopris12@gmail.com**

Rotary in a Nutshell is a handy compilation of basic information about Rotary, making it a useful reference for new Rotarians and an easy way for experienced members to refresh their knowledge of the organisation and its various facets.

The book has already received a strong response. RID 3233 PDG A Subramaniam says that around 5,500 copies of the English edition were sold soon after its release in July, while 2,000 copies of the Tamil edition, *Ullangayil Ungal Rotary* (Rotary in Your Palm), were sold within 10 days of its release in August. A Hindi edition is now under translation.

Author PDG George Sundararaj, international vice-chair of the Rotary Leadership Institute (RLI), has pledged the proceeds from the book to TRF. He has also started a Named Endowment Fund in memory of his wife, Rtn Priscilla, who died in a road

accident three years ago. The \$25,000 fund has received a further \$1,000 from the book sales.

The response from Rotary leaders has been encouraging. Michael McGovern, RI PolioPlus chair and former RLI international chair, wrote: "I think you have the most successful Rotary book launch since Frank Devlyn wrote his *Frank Talk* books and he had the Rotary International Presidency to promote it. You should be proud of what you have accomplished."

District and club leaders have also appreciated the book for its practical approach. Subisha Madhu, president of RC Calicut Cultural City, wrote: "Your 'capsule book' is so informative, easy to read and understand. It's always in my bag now. Whenever I get some free time, I take it out and read a bit. Thank you for creating something so useful and practical!" ■

Look beyond outcomes, to lasting impact: **Babalola**

Jaishree

A visit to Goa by RI President Yinka Babalola, as part of his India tour in August, saw 35 new Rotaract clubs chartered in RID 3170. Addressing Rotaractors at a meet hosted by RC Porvorim, he congratulated the new clubs and reminded Rotarians that chartering was only the beginning.

“An empowered member is a member for life,” said Babalola, urging sponsoring Rotary clubs to orient, mentor and groom their Rotaractors. Recalling his own journey as a Rotaractor, he said, “Rotary found me and invested in me.” That investment has brought him to where he is today. “We have all benefitted from this

organisation and it is about time we give back to Rotary. Let’s now groom the next generation to take on the reins so that Rotary continues its journey.”

To the Rotaractors, the RI President said, “Don’t wait for permission. Step forward, speak up and take the initiative. Leadership is about action.”

Later, at a TRF thanksgiving programme, Babalola thanked Rotarians for their generosity towards “our Rotary Foundation,” stressing that it belongs to Rotarians. “If you refer to it as ‘the’ Rotary Foundation, it is as though it belongs to some people

somewhere else, and we are just being asked to help. But it is *our* Rotary Foundation,” he noted.

He urged Rotarians to look beyond immediate outcomes to lasting impact. “Change is just the beginning. Impact is what endures,” he said, illustrating the difference through *Together for Healthy Families in Nigeria*, a 2022 TRF Programs of Scale initiative. The pilot, in northern Nigeria near the Cameroon border, aimed to reduce maternal and infant mortality by 25 per cent. After two years, maternal mortality had fallen by about 35 per cent and infant mortality by about 50 per cent.

During a visit to one of the health centres, the chief medical officer told him that Rotary had begun working



From L: DG Lenny da Costa, RI President Yinka Babalola, Goa CM Pramod Sawant and RI Director K P Nagesh.



From L: RID Nagesh, RID 3011 DG Ajeet Jalan, President Babalola, RID 3012 DG Amit Gupta, his wife Swati and RI VP Muruganandam at Delhi.

there about 17 months earlier and that, in the preceding 12 months, no mother or child had died at the facility. “That is what impact means,” he said.

He shared a similar lesson from his own club. Initially, members donated mosquito nets, birth kits and anaemia tablets, but later realised that many recipients did not need them. The club changed its approach, identifying women who could not afford even the registration fee for prenatal care. It paid their fees, provided mosquito nets and promised newborn kits. At the next immunisation programme, “as we got

there, the health workers pointed to the children and told us, ‘Rotary, that’s your baby.’ They were now ‘Rotary babies.’ It did not cost us extra in terms of money, but we created impact because we thought a little harder.”

Congratulating RID 3170 on its upcoming bifurcation, Babalola said its growth reflected a healthy organisation. He warned that clubs that do not induct new members have “a destined handshake with extinction,” while districts that do not create new clubs face “a destined handshake with merger.” In a lighter vein, he said continued mergers could eventually mean district conferences in neighbouring Pakistan or Bangladesh.

“the annual \$5 contribution was small compared with the opportunities and lifelong lessons Rotary offers.”

Nagesh also announced an ambitious target of 1,000 new Rotaract clubs and one lakh Rotaractors in India by September 30, a commitment he made along with co-director and Vice President M Muruganandam, as well as a plan for at least 10 medical missions to Africa. “We have sought the Prime Minister’s support to facilitate regular Indian medical teams to African countries, potentially one or two teams every month,” he said.

We have all benefitted from this organisation and it is about time we give back to Rotary. Let’s now groom the next generation to take on the reins so that Rotary continues its journey.

RI director KP Nagesh echoed the call for stronger engagement with young members. Rotarians should handhold Rotaractors through sports and cultural events, RYLA, picnics and industrial visits, helping them sustain their interest in Rotary, he said. He also addressed the concern over Rotaract dues, pointing out that

TRF trustee AS Venkatesh noted that India’s Foundation contributions had risen from less than \$20 million six or seven years ago to more than \$45 million last year, making India the world’s second-largest giving country. He challenged Rotarians to aim for \$100 million.

Complimenting RC Panaji Riviera’s international service project of setting up an NICU at a hospital in Kano, Nigeria, and training doctors there to handle



President Babalola, his wife Precy, RI VP M Muruganandam with PRIP Shekhar Mehta (next to Precy), PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury and DG Tapas Bhattacharya in Kolkata. PDGs Shyamashree Sen, Ajay Agarwal, Mukul Sinha and Utpal Majumdar are also seen.

emergencies, he said, “I am glad to see India evolve as a donor country from a recipient country. I recall those days when we would carry to the international assembly a bunch of booklets detailing projects that we intend doing, seeking funds from developed countries.”

RID 3192 Governor Ravishankar Dakoju introduced *Dhanyavad* — an India-wide environment and education initiative of planting one million

saplings, setting up one lakh water bowls for animals and birds, and support for 5,000 schools in tribal regions — to the Rotaractors. “Your generation must practise minimalism,” he told them, announcing that he and his wife Paola had pledged 85 per cent of their wealth to TRF.

DG Lenny da Costa pledged 100 new Rotaract clubs, 52 new Rotary clubs and more than 300 Interact clubs in RID 3170.

The Rotary leaders participated in the Independence Day event at the invitation of Goa CM Pramod Sawant.

At Kolkata (RID 3291), Babalola, along with RI Vice President Muruganandam, distributed wheelchairs to 150 physically challenged people after visiting Rotary Sadan, the Children’s Library, Cultural Activity Centre and the Peace Pole. DG Tapas Bhattacharya welcomed the Rotary leaders.

In Delhi, an MoU was signed in the presence of President Babalola, RI VP Muruganandam and director Nagesh between Dakoju and RI districts 3011 and 3012, led by their respective DGs Ajeet Jalan and Amit Gupta.

The MoU creates a long-term framework to support *Project Dhanyavad* in the two districts in accordance with TRF policies. It emphasises continuity beyond individual Rotary leadership terms with joint district implementation, a coordination committee and the involvement of successive district leadership to ensure proper selection, monitoring and stewardship of projects.

In Varanasi, President Babalola, accompanied by RI VP Muruganandam and RI director Basu Dev Golyan, addressed a multidistrict membership summit for Rotarians of RID 3100, 3110, 3120, 3250 and 3261, and appreciated their contributions to TRF. ■



From L: RIDE Basu Dev Golyan, RID 3120 DG Poonam Gulati, President Babalola, Precy, RI VP Muruganandam and his wife Sumathi, at Varanasi.



Graffiti for a cause

Jaishree

The outer walls of the Baiyapanahalli Police Station in Bengaluru have been transformed with vibrant graffiti carrying a simple message against drug abuse: *Beda Bro* (Don't do it, bro), in a mix of Kannada and English. The artwork has become a showstopper, with passers-by, especially youngsters, stopping to take selfies against the colourful backdrop.

The graffiti is an initiative of the Rotary E-Club of Bangalore, RID 3191, and is the club's second such project. The first, created on the walls of the Adegudi Police Station, highlighted

three social issues — women's safety, drug abuse and cybercrime. Professional artists from Kolkata, Mumbai and Bengaluru were engaged for the work.

"We did the first artwork in 2024 after a meeting with the Karnataka Police, who were keen to raise awareness about women's safety in the city. We then came up with the idea of storytelling through powerful paintings that would stay in people's memories long after they had walked past," says Nivedita Dutt, a director of the club.

Her interest in graffiti was sparked few years ago when she visited her son in Ghent, Belgium, and came across an alley adorned with graffiti art. "It looked fabulous. I was instantly struck by the idea of replicating it in India to convey an important message," she says.

More recently, Nivedita approached the Baiyappanahalli Police Station seeking permission to use its walls for another social awareness project. "The police suggested that we focus on drug

abuse, as they have taken it upon themselves to work towards making the city drug-free by 2028. Their tagline was 'Beda Bro'."

Graffiti artist Sayam Porey from Kolkata, who had worked on the earlier project, was brought in again. The new artwork uses a striking collage of images to depict the consequences of drug abuse. "Each image tells its own story of agony, sharp and clear," says Nivedita.

Explaining the choice of graffiti, an art form often associated with rebellion and, in some contexts, illegal wall painting, she says, "Graffiti has always been the artistic language of the rebel and therefore easily catches the attention of the youth. We are using its visual appeal to focus attention on important social issues."

The club plans to create more such murals across Bengaluru. "DGE Harini Ravindranath is keen on taking this initiative to 60–100 walls next year," says Nivedita. ■

Graffiti has always been the artistic language of the rebel and therefore easily catches the attention of the youth.



Their hearts beat for children

Rasheeda Bhagat

If I was asked to quickly name a current single ongoing project that explains the essence of what Rotary is, what it believes in, and what it does to change lives in different corners of the world with help often coming from people who live thousands of miles away, I would choose the *Save Little Hearts* project implemented by RC Thane Premium, RI District 3142. It is doing this with consistent and sustained help from RC Maple Grove, RI District 5950, Minneapolis, US. The two clubs came together two years ago and applied for a global grant. The idea was to fund heart surgeries for infants and other children in Maharashtra, arguably India's most prosperous state. As in other states, here too thousands of children requiring critical heart surgeries are left to wither away, and lead subnormal lives because their parents simply can't afford considerably expensive paediatric heart surgeries.

Coincidentally, if not miraculously, around the same time the grant application was made to TRF, a baby was born to a farmer couple in the Nandurbar district of North Maharashtra. It was a girl child and she was very special because her parents had to wait for 15 years for her arrival. Endless cycles of IVF treatment to get the mother pregnant had put her body



A child recuperating after surgery.

to a lot of pain and stress, while at the same time draining the family's financial resources.

But the parents' joy at the tiny baby's arrival was short-lived, as she was born with a hole in her tiny heart. For this congenital heart defect, the baby needed a heart surgery but the parents were by now totally broke and had no money to get this surgery done.

Unknown to them at that moment, a passionate Rotarian from RC Thane Premium, its past president Ram Bhatnagar, was just beginning an ambitious and

aggressive paediatric heart surgery project to help such children. Titled *Save Little Hearts*, the project set out to get this surgery done on underprivileged babies born with heart diseases. As he explains, "Unless children born with a congenital heart disease like this little girl are operated on as soon as possible, most won't live to see their first birthday. This baby's parents were facing the agonising prospect of losing the child they had desperately pined for. By the time this case came to our attention, she was already two years old."

They waited for 15 years for her arrival. But after endless IVF cycles, she was born with a tiny hole in her heart. Her parents were broke and had no money left for the heart surgery.





From L: Dr Srinivas L, Dr Raj Khankari, RC Thane Premium past president Ram Bhatnagar and club president Sonali Gandre with a child recovering from surgery.

But the positive factor was that despite the hole in her heart putting excessive pressure on her lungs, making breathing difficult, she had survived, but was susceptible to constant bouts of common cold. “Eating exhausted her. Playing was almost out of the question. Without surgery to close the hole, she would lead a short, painful life. The parents, who could not afford the heart surgery, were constantly tormented by the thought of losing their precious daughter.”

Luckily for all concerned, by now the global grant amounting to \$146,000 had materialised, and in April 2026, the child underwent the life-saving surgery at KIMS (Krishna Institute of Medical Sciences), Thane. “In a delicate early morning procedure, Dr L Srinivas, chief paediatric cardiologist at KIMS, inserted a minuscule device through the child’s veins and sealed

the hole in her tiny heart. The hole was barely a few mm big, but it was life threatening.” says Bhatnagar.

Against this specific GG, meant to help 141 children, 420 heart surgeries were done at the KIMS and Jupiter Hospitals in Thane. The Rotarians were able to stretch the funds to help more children because both the hospitals were willing to waive a significant

part of the surgical costs for underprivileged families. Till date, this project has helped do heart operations on a whopping **1,200 children**. This has been made possible by donations from members of not just RCs Thane Premium and Maple Grove, but also other Rotary clubs in their district, and major CSR grants from corporates, says Bhatnagar.

*Eating exhausted her.
Playing was almost out
of the question. Without
surgery to close the hole,
she would lead a short,
painful life.*

There is an interesting story behind why this particular Rotary club — RC Thane Premium — has invested so heavily — both financially and emotionally — into a vital healthcare service for little children. Bhatnagar says that when this club was established in 2014, several of its charter members were doctors. It came



naturally to them to help the club prioritise raising funds for children's heart surgeries on a war footing.

Not only has this club helped fund the surgeries for **1,200 children**; its success rate is a remarkable 100 per cent. In all, an impressive **₹21 crore** has been spent on giving around 1,200 children healthy hearts and a future, with CSR funding coming from Raymond, where Bhatnagar had worked as a top executive, the Aditya Birla group (with help from PRID Ashok Mahajan), and the Japanese corporate Toshio. Members of many Rotary clubs have helped too by donating funds ranging from ₹2,000 to ₹50,000.

He recalls that initially they did not have a lot of funding, but the tide turned when in 2023, Bhatnagar was introduced to Dr Raj Khankari, a member of RC Maple Grove, US, whose origin is from Maharashtra's Malegaon town. His late brother had a

50-year-long association with Rotary. Dr Khankari first explored Rotary's global grants when he was president-elect of his club in 2019. He was driven by a strong desire to give back to India; it was just a question of finding the right collaborators in his native country.

During one of his trips to India, he met Bhatnagar, and till now, Dr Khankari had collaborated with Rotary clubs in Thane on 12 projects, raising nearly **\$1 million** in global grants. He is so committed to doing this crucial community service in his motherland that every year he makes a trip to India to assess the impact of the work that is being done with the funds he is raising. He wants to see for himself what difference those initiatives are making at the ground level.

On one such visit, Bhatnagar, who is the CEO of the JK Trust, a social initiative of Raymond located in Thane, invited Dr Khankari to visit Jupiter Hospital in Thane, where the third member of the trio that is

passionately engaged in saving the lives of children born with congenital heart problems, was working. A well-known paediatric cardiac surgeon, Dr L Srinivas, "is very passionate about saving the lives of children who have heart problems. When Dr Srinivas related heart-rending stories of children who needed urgent help, Dr Khankari was deeply moved and expressed his strong desire to help our cause," recalls Bhatnagar.

Next, Bhatnagar made a detailed presentation to RC Maple Grove about his club's work in funding heart surgeries. Seeing pictures of tiny, undernourished, premature babies on hospital beds, often battling for mere survival, was a real eye-opener for the American Rotarians. They immediately came on board and offered to donate or raise funds for this project. Dr Khankari, a senior official in a major pharma company, regularly visits India; "my updates from this project are eagerly awaited at my club. Every month, when I report that we have completed 30 or 40 children's



Dr Srinivas explains an upcoming surgery to Dr Khankari and Bhatnagar.

surgeries, there is a lot of appreciation,” he says.

Dinesh Mehta, who was RID 3142 DG when the latest GG was sanctioned, said a crucial part of the project was the Rotarians’ hard work in identifying the children who urgently needed this surgery through health camps. “Because they do not have the means, many parents of such children are hesitant to come to Thane because they are terrified of being handed a hefty hospital bill at the end of the operation. They cannot believe that their child will get the entire treatment free of cost,” he says.

The funds raised by the Rotarians cover “every single expense — travel to Thane, boarding and lodging at the hospital, and of course the surgery itself. It has saved the lives of children who needed immediate intervention, including those born prematurely in far-flung corners of Maharashtra, some weighing less than 700gm.” He is happy that a GG meant to cover the surgical cost of some 141 children managed to send 420 children back in good health. “That is the power of collaboration that Rotary believes in,” he smiles.

“Last year, I met a five-year-old boy playing outside his home in a tribal area of Murbad in Thane. His parents told me that when he was very little, he could not eat or sleep well and had no energy to play. Rotary helped fund his surgery.

If a child has come into this world, she has the right to live,” Mehta adds.

There are many other heart-warming stories as well. Bhatnagar recalls that an 8-year-old girl whom Dr Srinivas operated on when she was just seven months old is now a state-level gymnast. “Without this project, she might not have lived past the age of one. This year alone we will be doing 300 surgeries. There are some children who need immediate surgeries and some who can wait 3–4 months. But we never discriminate,” he adds.

One positive fallout of this project is that more clubs are getting involved, as also corporates. “This proves that if you have a great purpose, you can rally people around it,” he adds.



PRID Ashok Mahajan holding a child recuperating after heart surgery at one of the hospitals. Bhatnagar and Dr Srinivas are also present.

RC Maple Grove's focus on funding projects across the globe needs to be put on record. Within Minneapolis, the club funds environmental and educational projects. As several members hail from India and Africa, it was natural for the club's focus to turn toward global challenges. The club has funded a malaria prevention project in Nigeria, provided sewing machines to women in Uganda, and distributed reusable sanitary napkins to women worldwide who lack access to basic menstrual hygiene products.

Dr Khankari is grateful for the partnership with the Thane club. "You get to know wonderful people when you collaborate with another club. Rotarians share one singular purpose, which is to get together to help others. Projects like these build lifelong goodwill and friendship between our clubs," he says.

But the work is far from done. Both Bhatnagar and Dr Khankari want more clubs in their respective districts to step forward and apply for global grants to fund children's heart surgeries. "There are so many people keen to help. They just need to be shown the parts of the world where that help is needed the



most. I get a tremendous sense of satisfaction when I tell my club members about every successful surgery. It brings tears to my eyes to speak to parents who had given up hope that their children would live. It charges my batteries and motivates me to do even more," says Khankari.

For Bhatnagar, this project proves an important Rotary credo — the power of partnership. "This monumental feat was made possible because we successfully combined the global grant with the support of multiple corporate and individual donors who stepped forward to champion our sustainable, high-impact healthcare intervention. By sharing the details of our work with your readers, we want to tell other clubs that here is a blueprint for scaling up global grants, and inspiring other districts and clubs to dream bigger and drive similarly impactful projects in their communities."

Going ahead, this project will continue to provide much needed, critical heart surgeries to more children from disadvantaged families. As both KIMS

and Jupiter Hospitals are very supportive and offer much lower rates, the operations cost between ₹1.5 and ₹2 lakh on an average. On government funds available for medical treatment of BPL families, Bhatnagar says, "Unfortunately many beneficiaries, particularly the labourers who come from other states, do not have proper documents to access these benefits, and that is also one of the reasons we choose them, because they are totally helpless in saving their precious children."

On their immediate future plans, Bhatnagar, who was the joint director for CSR projects for RID 3142 in 2025–26, says that while one CSR grant amounting to \$25,000 is being finalised, the two clubs have applied for one more GG from TRF. "Not only the project team, but the members of both the clubs in India and US are committed to raising funds to continue this project, because of the great need for such heart surgeries in India. According to our estimates, in Maharashtra alone, about 8,000–10,000 children need this surgery every year," he adds. ■

My updates from this project are eagerly awaited at my club.

Every month, when I report that we have completed 30 or 40 children's surgeries, there is a lot of appreciation.

Dr Raj Khankari
RC Maple Grove, US

Nepal's Rotaractors to the rescue

Jaishree

For Suraj Bhandari, the flash floods in Nepal were not a distant disaster. He is from Chitwan, one of the affected areas, and watched with concern as the Narayani River, a tributary of the Trishuli, swelled and damaged crops and property.

As Rotaract secretary of RID 3292, which covers Nepal and Bhutan, Bhandari was also closely involved in the relief response. Following an emergency appeal from the Nepal Prime Minister's Office, he and other Rotaractors, guided by DRR Prakash Sharma Gaire, moved quickly to organise assistance.

"DRR Sharma called for a meeting with the Rotaract club heads in the district to formalise a plan of action," he said. District 3292 has around 6,000 Rotaractors in 192 clubs.

Collection centres were set up in Kathmandu, Chitwan, Bhairahawa and

eastern Nepal. Medicines, infant food, toiletries, groceries, fruits, noodles and biscuits were collected at these centres and sent through the Nepal Army to government relief camps in Rasuwa, Chitwan and Nuwakot.

The floods struck several communities along the Lende Khola and Trishuli river systems after an ice and rock avalanche on the Langtang Lirung peak in the Himalayas caused a sudden surge of water downstream on August 26. Rasuwa, Nuwakot, Dhading, Chitwan, Gorkha and Tanahun were among the affected districts. Roads and bridges were washed away, making rescue and relief operations difficult.

"It was devastating to see entire villages wiped away by the flash floods. In several places we had to walk over building debris and destroyed homes to deliver aid material to people," said Bhandari.



DRR Prakash Sharma Gaire and Rotaract district secretary Suraj Bhandari with flood-affected people.



DG Vishnu Karkee (R) with a Rotarian in front of a house that collapsed in the flash floods.





Household items being distributed at a disaster site.



Two phases of distribution had been completed when he spoke to *Rotary News* a week after the glacier collapse, with a third underway. This phase included tents, gas stoves, dustbins, mosquito nets, blankets, towels and bedsheets for families in Nuwakot.

“We just don’t know where to start and how to console people who have lost their entire homes and all their belongings in the flash floods. Many of them are still searching for their loved ones, hoping that they would hear from or about them soon,” he said.

Google Forms were shared among the Rotary fraternity to enlist volunteers, who were organised into teams for transport, delivery, blood donation and counselling. Rotarians and Rotaractors donated blood at Civil Hospitals,

while an emergency database listed members ready to donate blood in their neighbourhoods when required.

They also assisted in the recovery of bodies washed downstream. Some of these were found along the banks of the Trishuli and others in the Narayani River in Chitwan. “Around 300 bodies were collected and sent to mortuaries,” said Bhandari.

The Nepal Army played an important role in transporting relief supplies to areas where damaged roads made access difficult, while helicopters were used to reach places that could not be accessed otherwise.

As immediate relief continued, the Rotaract office, led by DRR Sharma, began mobilising funds for relief and rehabilitation. Rotarians from outside

Nepal, including India, also contributed. Flyers carrying QR codes were circulated for digital transfers done by overseas Rotarians through the Prime Minister’s Relief Fund.

In coordination with RIDE Basu Dev Golyan, a member of RC Biratnagar, Nepal, Rotary is working with its project partner ShelterBox to provide tents, tarpaulins, water filters, mosquito nets and cooking sets in the disaster-affected areas.

The ShelterBox team in Kathmandu met DG Vishnu Karkee, Dinesh Raj Manandhar and members of the Rotary Nepal District Disaster Relief Committees to assess the needs of affected communities. “Our Rotaractors and Rotarians are working with the team to identify and distribute the kits to the people,” said Bhandari.

DG Karkee said Rotarians visited affected sites on the third day after the floods, carrying supplies identified as necessary by local authorities, the Army and the Police. These included body bags, PPE kits, masks, gloves, medical kits, mattresses, sleeping bags and solar lamps.

“Teams of Rotarians visit the regions daily to assess the people’s needs,” he said. Rotary plans to establish temporary medical centres with a doctor and two nurses in affected localities. Twenty portable toilets with water facilities and filtration systems will be installed. Six motorbike ambulances will be sponsored to serve people stranded in hilly and road-inaccessible areas.

The relief effort is now looking beyond the immediate emergency. “We’ll work on rehabilitation and reconstruction once the government decides on the resettlement areas. We will join hands with the government to build schools and toilets, provide drinking water systems and income-generating projects for the needy,” said DG Karkee. ■



Relief supplies being loaded into a helicopter by the Nepal Army.

He saw God in Rotarians

V Muthukumaran

A late evening phone call at 10pm got PDG Praveen Goyal, RID 3080, out of bed on August 19. Instantly, he started calling Rotarians... all over from Chandigarh to Rishikesh.

In that call, PDG Jeetendra Aneja from Bengaluru gave him shocking details of a road accident in which the parents of Sriram Manchukonda, a member of RC Vizianagaram, and his aunt were grievously injured during their pilgrimage in Rishikesh. It was a head-on collision between their car and an oncoming private bus.

Aneja sent Goyal the details of the mishap and names of the victims on a Rotarians WhatsApp group, along with a video clip he got from PDG M Venkateswara Rao, RID 3020. Rao had called Aneja seeking urgent help on behalf of his district's Rotarian.

"I assured Aneja that all help will be provided to the patients

as AIIMS-Rishikesh director Dr Meenu Singh is a member of our RC Chandigarh," says Goyal. The victims — Srinivasa Manchukonda (80), his wife Nathamma (74) and Rajyalaxmi (75), aunt of Sriram — were admitted to this hospital by an 'unknown' cab driver who called Sriram and informed him about the mishap. The driver also sent him a video clip of the mangled car with his dazed parents in a state of utter shock, and arranged an ambulance which admitted the accident victims at the AIIMS.

Responding to Goyal's late night call, Dr Meenu, a paediatrician, deputed a doctor in the Emergency and Trauma Care ward to examine the status of the 'critically injured' patients, and send her the details. "Within few hours, the health reports were made available to me, thanks to Dr Meenu," recalls Goyal.

Sriram's mother (Nathamma) was discharged from the hospital within

eight hours of the accident. "I owe my lifelong gratitude to PDGs Praveen Goyal, Venkateswara Rao, Rama Rao, both from RID 3020, and Dr Meenu Singh, and other good Samaritans who helped to provide timely treatment to my parents and aunt," says Sriram, unable to control his tears. Their car driver had a lucky escape with minor injuries.

When the deputed doctor wanted all the three critical patients to be admitted in the ICU, "I once again rang up Dr Meenu, and she organised it immediately," says Goyal. Meanwhile, Sriram rushed to AIIMS-Rishikesh the next morning, and throughout his "agonising journey, I was updated about the medical conditions of my parents by RID 3080 DG Rita Kalra, a maternity doctor, and PDG Ajay Madan. They were in constant touch with me."

Also, IPDG Ravi Prakash, a resident of Roorkee, sent a group of three Rotarians, all living in Rishikesh, to take care of the emergency needs of the patients, and "help Sriram in whatever way possible."

However, despite the best medical help, "my father, Srinivasa, passed away on Aug 25, six days after the tragedy. He suffered multiple heart attacks, a fall-out of traumatic stress and organ complications due to the grievous nature of the injuries he sustained in the road accident," he said.

From the time of the accident till the last rites of his father who was cremated in Vizianagaram, "I only saw God in the form of Rotarians... I am indebted to them for their invaluable service," says Sriram, a Rotarian of 10 years. While his mother is safely back home, his aunt is still battling for life in the ICU.

In a touching message Usha Saboo, wife of PRIP Rajendra Saboo, says, "These Rotary stories need to be published so that its humane aspect is widely known and appreciated. May God keep giving us opportunities to serve more and more people." ■





RID 3192 DG Ravishankar Dakoju (fourth from L), his wife Paola and Chetan Navin Kamani, chair of the Rotary Fellowship of Tea Lovers, with the Fellowship members at the Leela Palace, Bengaluru.

A special tea for a special man

Rasheeda Bhagat

It seems like the season of Rotary Fellowships. Suddenly in the space of a few weeks we at *Rotary News* have received a bunch of requests to feature this Rotary Fellowship group or that... First it was the biking enthusiasts and then one of hypnosis and healing, and this month we are talking about a group of tea lovers in Bengaluru, who take their tea fellowship very seriously, with their meetings complete with a tea sommelier!

I didn't know there were tea sommeliers, I joke with Chetan Navin

Kamani, who was recently installed the chair for this three-year-old fellowship. He tells me they recently met at the Leela Palace, where the hotel's tea sommelier "crafted a special blend of tea exclusively for the occasion."

"Oh yes, now there are water sommeliers too," he responds.

Anyway, the tea specially blended for the occasion was named Karmayogi Tea and no prizes for guessing that it was created for the occasion to recognise the immense contribution of time, money and service to Rotary by

Ravishankar Dakoju, who is presently DG of RID 3192.

This special tea was blended by bringing together Oolong tea and Moroccan mint "to create harmony in a single cup," says Kamani, adding, "The Oolong brought depth, refinement and character. The Moroccan mint brought freshness, vitality and energy. Together, they made a rather fitting metaphor for the man himself — depth with purpose, character with conviction, and an ever-fresh energy to keep doing good."

He winds up this generous description of Dakoju by saying: "We all felt that this was gratitude, served in a cup at an occasion to celebrate a life defined by purpose, service and giving." The reference was to Dakoju's major greening project titled *Dhanyavad*.

Lest you want to pick up your phone and order a few packets of the

Karmayogi tea, Kamani explains that this tea was “not picked from a catalogue, nor created for sale. It was created for just one evening and is not commercially available.”

But Dakoju, who is apparently a tea lover himself, created quite a flutter when he said he’d like to buy a few packets! Somehow the fellowship members used the good services of the hotel’s tea sommelier to put together a takeaway package for their special guest!



The specially curated Karmayogi tea paired with grilled Halloumi cheese and sweet fig skewers.

Kamani himself is a tea lover and when I ask him about his favourite tea, I half expect the name of some fancy tea from an exotic tea destination. But what comes the reply: *Masala chai*, our normal typical Indian tea with ginger, lemongrass and mint.

The fellowship has over 500 members, most of them in Bengaluru. A meeting is held every month and about 30–40 members attend it, and at the event different kinds of tea are

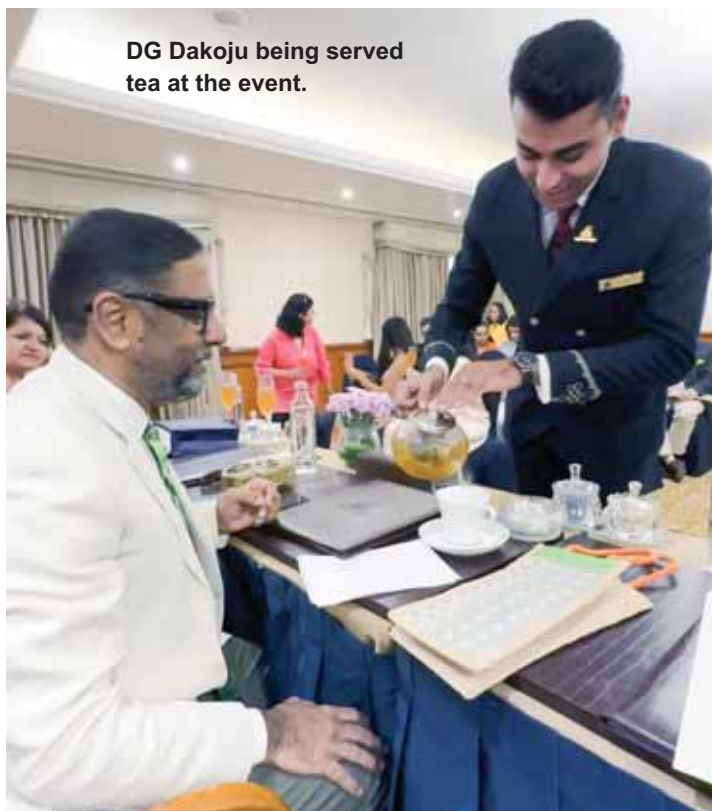
paired with different food courses. Says the tea aficionado Kamani, “At these events we have tasted a whole lot of different teas, right from Turkish teas to Chinese and Japanese teas. The tea sommeliers tell us stories about different kinds of teas, which as you know, range from teas grown in hills to coastal areas. And each tea has its own story... how it was grown, how the leaves were plucked, the special way to prepare it to bring out the best taste.”

So what made them choose Dakoju for creating a special blend in his name? I’d have thought the man is more a dal-rice, tea-kadai cup-of-tea kind of a person? “Because he is so special and known for giving back to society... so we thought we should give back to him a specially curated tea,” says Kamani.

Apart from the Karmayogi blend, other teas served included ginger tea, Yerba Mate, a traditional south American herbal drink, Sulemani tea and Sencha, a refined Japanese green tea.

These tea lovers already have their next fellowship meet planned... apart from a later trip to Darjeeling... at the Four Seasons Hotel to sample the Kombucha tea. As he is so excited about this meet, I Google it and find this on the hotel’s info sheet. “Discover the fizzy, flavourful world of Kombucha. Sample a variety of house-brewed flavours — ginger, berry, citrus and herbal — while learning about the subtle differences in sweetness, acidity and carbonation. Dive into the basics of fermentation...”

Whoever said only wine tasting has a lot of hype and hoopla? Bengaluru’s tea lovers can give them a run for their money. And at that meet, I am sure the cup of these tea lovers will truly run-neth over... ■



DG Dakoju being served tea at the event.



Students in front of the mobile bridge school. RC Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas president Chhaya Navandar, past presidents Kirti Mehta and R K Hegde are seen behind them.



A bridge school for children of migrant workers

Rasheeda Bhagat

The lack of access to education that lakhs of children of migrant labourers in India battle with is a grim reality, made grimmer by the fact that these children miss out on a life altering basic right, that too in metros and the bigger cities where quality educational institutions are located.

These children stay for long periods in mega cities where long duration projects abound, and face language related challenges in getting into local government schools. “Most migrant workers come to cities like Bengaluru from Northern and North Eastern parts of India such as West Bengal, Assam, Bihar as also Nepal. Their mother

tongues are different and hence they cannot join local government schools in Bengaluru, where the medium of instruction is Kannada. Such children always need at least one year of bridging to prepare them for regular mainstream schools,” says PDG of RI District 3192 H Rajendra Rai, who is a trustee of the Samridhdhi Trust, an NGO engaged in the education of underprivileged children, particularly of migrant workers.

As the NGO was looking at the opportunity to set up one more ‘mobile bridge school’ for children of migrant workers living in temporary shanties or makeshift dwellings on the outskirts of Bengaluru city, towards the end of 2025 Rai approached RC

Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas’s then president Deepa Sasidharan and IPP R K Hegde for a possible partnership to set up such a mobile bridge school. “The board of the club immediately agreed to sponsor this worthy project, and past president of the club Kirti Mehta, who has done many projects for the club, coordinated with me and got such a mobile school built in a Leyland vehicle,” he says.

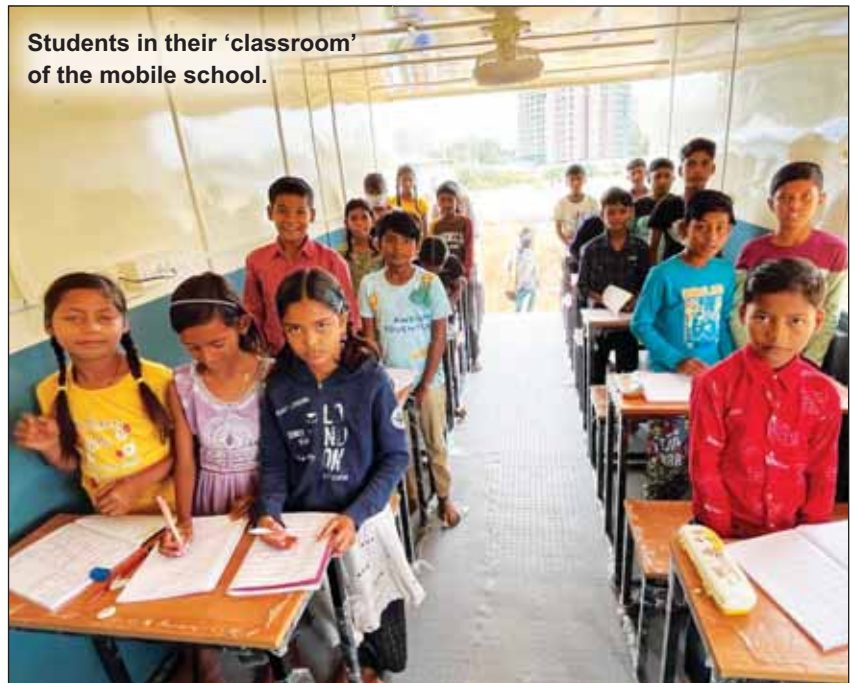
The basic idea, explains Mehta, was to take education to the doorstep of such children. With CSR funding of around ₹10 lakh from the IT solutions provider V2 Solution, “an advocate of literacy and a recurring benefactor of our club projects,” and another couple of lakh rupees raised

by club members, the mobile school was put together in a repurposed and custom-built Leyland vehicle. This was done with the assistance of KHT Agency belonging to past president of RC Bangalore Orchards Kirit Morzaria to suit all the requirements of a mobile school.

The experience of the Samridhdhi Trust, which already runs bridge schools to provide some schooling to out-of-school children and prepare them for admission to regular schools, has come in handy, particularly in providing teachers who teach the children coming to its mobile schools.

The vehicle was fitted with 12 fixed desks and can accommodate 24 children at a time and it supplements the other two bridge schools operating in temporary structures run by the Samridhdhi Trust. The bus also has a 32 inch-TV monitor loaded with software to teach CORE subjects such as Science, Mathematics, Social Studies and English grammar to children from Class 5 to 10. While the parked mobile school is equipped to get power from the local power points, in case local power supply is not easy to access, it also has a back-up power supply though a solar panel mounted on the top of the bus.

What is heartening is that four 'classroom libraries' with books for all age groups are available in the bus so the children can pick up books of



their choice and read them while they are in the bus.

We did the required wiring and have put in lights and fans for the children along with a display board. Luckily Samridhdhi Trust has experienced teachers and they have also been picking up children from slums whose parents go out to work or simply loitering and whiling away their time. Many of them are school drop-outs so they have to be schooled to a certain level before they can be put back in a mainstream school."

Mehta adds that the children of migrant workers sit in the mobile school for a few hours in the morning. While some study for two hours and go away, others, who are more interested, spend more time. These children

bring their own food and in between studies take a meal break. Special care is taken to see that as these are mostly non-Kannada speaking children, a functional knowledge in the local language is given to the children so that they can integrate better in the local regular schools. "They are made to repeat Kannada words regularly, so that they can speak the language with some confidence."

Originally the idea was to take this mobile school to three or four different locations, as quite often Samridhdhi teachers were conducting classes for slum or migrant children in open air spaces, exposing them to the vagaries of the weather. But now that the NGO has got some space from schools, the Rotary bus doesn't need to move around much.

Under this model after 10 months of training the child is helped to get admitted to a regular school. Even after that under the Samridhdhi model, these children are tutored for a few extra hours each evening by these bridge school teachers till they get a proper grounding in the regular schools.



We are told that those who have gone to regular schools in the past have done very well. Some have even gone on to become engineers and other professionals.



Asked if the parents are grateful to Rotary for educating their children, and are cooperative in sending their wards to the mobile school, Mehta says, “Actually we rarely see the parents because Samridhdhi people handle the interaction with parents. But I can tell you the children are very happy to come to our school and enjoy the lessons, and we are told that those who have gone to regular schools in the past have done very well. They have passed out of high school and some have even gone on to become engineers and other professionals.”

PDG Rai says that Samridhdhi, where he is a trustee, provides bridging

classes to about 100 children every year, “before sending them back to regular low-cost English medium schools with the Trust bearing half the cost and the parents picking up the other half.”

On one such visit to a mobile school sponsored by RC Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas, he found “29 happy children in the school and all of them were enjoying their lessons. Their joy and the smiling faces were indeed a very satisfying experience for all of us.”

On the future plans of the club, Kirti Mehta says that as Samridhdhi expands its base, it is looking up to Rotary for more support. Right now, they have the students, but there is a shortage of teachers. Once they find the teachers and approach the club for more support, the Rotarians are ready to put together another bridge school, but this time around, as their partner has managed to get some fixed space from schools to station the bridge school, “we are thinking of doing the next bridge school in a container. We will get a container, refurbish and fit it with the required tables, chairs and

other facilities and put it in a fixed place.” There will be saving in cost as well, as a bus requires registration, insurance, maintenance, road taxes and a driver!

But containers don’t come cheap either; so it will cost the club another ₹10 to ₹12 lakh. But he is confident that the club will be able to raise the money, more so because they have been offered a fixed space by one of the builders.

At the end of the day, as Mehta puts it, the “children are really happy. Instead of whiling away their time indulging in wasteful or undesirable activities, they are learning something and preparing to get into a school.” And the community definitely needs such bridge schools. Apart from migrant workers who come for construction work, in a bustling city like Bengaluru, many other people also come looking for work, such as in the security services space. “There too, when the parents find work in Bengaluru, their children, who were earlier going to school, tend to drop out. They find it very difficult to get admission in a school here. This bridge school will help them get into a regular school at some point, and we will be happy to act as the bridge!” ■



Zoo Day for children

Kiran Zehra

Sixty buses brought 3,234 school-children from schools and institutions across Chennai to the Arignar Anna Zoological Park in Vandalur as part of *Magnum Carnival*, organised by Rotary District 3234 and RC Madras Magnum (RCMM).

The club has been organising this programme annually for the past seven years, taking children from less privileged families each year to various recreational places in and around Chennai. Last year, over 1,000 children visited the zoo under the initiative. This year, DG D Suresh Jain urged the Rotarians to expand the project to include 3,234 children (matching the district's number). "Such picnics give the children new experiences, an opportunity to bond with each other, and learn something new. It is our responsibility as Rotarians to enrich the minds of children, a first step to groom them as better citizens," he said.

The children, wearing green t-shirts carrying the message 'Plant trees; Plant our future,' were welcomed at the zoo by Rotarians, Anns and Rotaractors. "Seeing so many children arrive at the zoo, excited and ready for the day, was wonderful. We wanted them to have a day filled with fun, new experiences and happy memories," said Siddharth Bhaiya, president of RCMM.

The event was flagged off by Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar at the Lok Bhavan. After breakfast, the children spent the morning exploring the wildlife park as part of an educational and recreational outing.

Over 70 Rotarians from RCMM and their family members, along with

60 Rotaractors and 50 district officials and club leaders, volunteered for the programme. The group also included 150 children with special needs, who were accompanied by a family member or caregiver. Akshay Seth was the event convenor.

Lunch was hosted for the young guests at the BS Abdur Rahman Crescent Institute of Science and Technology, located close to the zoo; the students also watched a magic

show at the campus amphitheatre. The college provided 25 buses for transport and 40 Rotaractors from the college volunteered to guide the children.

The total outlay for the event was ₹40 lakh. Fifty Rotary clubs, individuals and Annettes contributed between ₹1,000 and ₹2 lakh, while the district contributed ₹30 lakh. The excess funds will be used to construct toilets in government schools, said club president Bhaiya. ■



Above: Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Arlekar interacts with a student. DG D Suresh Jain is on his left, and RC Madras Magnum president Siddharth Bhaiya behind Arlekar. **Below:** Club members with the students at the zoo.



Rotarians reach out to flood-hit families

Jaishree

Rotary clubs in Assam, Kerala and Gujarat stepped in to support families affected by floods in these states, providing immediate relief as well as assistance to rebuild their homes and lives.

Assam is one of India's most flood-prone states, with nearly 40 per cent of its land vulnerable to flooding. In July, floods affected nearly 1.8 lakh people across the state. Heavy rain and cloudbursts in upstream areas caused sudden surge in tributaries of the Brahmaputra, including the Dikhow and Dhansiri. Sivasagar,



A flooded locality in Aranmula, Kerala.



RC Delhi West president Bidyut Tamuly (second from L) and past president Aroon Roongta (centre) give a cheque to a woman at flood-ravaged Sivasagar, Assam.

Below: Rotarians distribute essential items to flood-hit families in Gujarat.



Charaideo, Jorhat and Golaghat were among the worst-affected districts.

As the rains subsided, a team from the Rotary Club of Delhi West, RID 3011, travelled to Sivasagar in early August to support families whose homes had been damaged. The club gave ₹21,000 each to 16 families to help rebuild their huts. “The money will help them build a tin-roof hut.

The families were identified by the local government,” said past president Aroon Roongta.

The team also distributed groceries, toiletries and medicines, and provided financial assistance to Nazira College for minor repair work. Club president Bidyut Tamuly, a native of Assam, led the initiative with Roongta and club member Anil Tayal.

In Aranmula, on the banks of the Pampa in Kerala, more than three days of heavy rain left large parts of the town inundated, forcing thousands of people into relief camps in schools and churches. RC Kanjirapally, RID 3211, along with RCs Erumeli and Aranmula, provided food and drinking water to those in the camps.

“We had to go by boat to many places as they were heavily inundated,” said Srikumaran Nair, president of RC Aranmula. His own house was flooded, while the district’s assistant governor and his family spent three days on the second floor of their home.

With the rains over and residents returning home, Rotary is now distributing essential household items. Clubs from Trivandrum and Kollam have also supported affected families in Aranmula with blankets, clothes and groceries.

In South Gujarat, Rotary clubs in Surat, Chikhli, Gandevi, Navsari, Valsad and Umbergaon joined hands to reach families in some of the worst-affected areas. The relief effort began with the distribution of dry snacks, drinking water and medicines to families who had been displaced or were struggling to access basic necessities, said PDG Tushar Shah.

As the situation improved, the clubs expanded relief efforts. More than 500 flood-affected families received groceries, tarpaulins, cooking utensils, clothes, sanitation and hygiene material, mattresses, blankets and mosquito nets.

Rotary clubs from Bombay, RID 3141, and NGOs including the Lok-manglam Charitable Trust and Parab also joined the relief effort.

When clubs unite beyond geographical boundaries, it is much more than distribution of relief material; it is an assurance to affected families that they are not alone in this difficult hour, said Shah. ■

Rotary empowers tribal girls in Andhra Pradesh

Subbarao Ravuri

Imagine 640 impoverished girls in a remote corner of Andhra Pradesh opening a computer for the first time and discovering a digital world filled with opportunities for a better education and a better life.

Today, these girls have access to digital educational tools that can help them pursue higher education, compete for university admissions, secure meaningful employment, and achieve greater financial independence — all made possible through Rotary and global grants.

For generations, many girls living in remote tribal areas of Andhra

Pradesh had access to only basic education. Without modern educational resources and exposure to technology, they faced significant barriers to higher education and gainful employment.

The consequences were severe: early marriages, economic dependence, a life of servitude and, in some cases, abuse.

Recognising these challenges, the Andhra Pradesh government established residential schools specifically for tribal children. While the government provides the resources to build and operate these schools, access to

modern digital education and STEM resources remained a major gap. Students were unable to adequately prepare for competitive, computer-based examinations required for admission to higher education.

Rotary decided to help bridge that gap. In 2024, Rotarians from RC Vijayawada Midtown, RI District 3020, in partnership with RC Burlingame and Hillsborough, RI District 5150, executed a GG to establish two digital learning centres and two STEM laboratories at a tribal girls' school and junior college in Vissannapeta, Andhra Pradesh.



The project had a budget of \$90,000; generous support from RID 5150 which contributed \$35,000 in DDF; RID 3020 contributed \$10,000; and RID 5330 contributed \$5,000. The Rotary Foundation provided an 80 per cent match of \$40,000, making the GG possible.

The project was implemented in partnership with the Kakinada Engineering Alumni Trust for Service (KEATS), which worked with the host club to implement the project and monitor student performance.

The initiative also involved the Andhra Pradesh Tribal Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (APTWREIS), the government agency responsible for tribal residential schools, and the Andhra Pradesh Non-Resident Telugu Society (APNRTS), which coordinates the strategic use of resources from Telugu people living abroad.

The Vissannapeta school was equipped with two servers, 80 smart computer terminals, 80 computer tables and chairs, four digital boards and digital educational content, two STEM laboratories for Physics, Chemistry and Biology experimental equipment, and teachers' training.

The impact went beyond computers and laboratories.

The school also faced several infrastructure challenges, including inadequate internet connectivity and power, lack of clean water, and monkeys routinely entering the campus.

These challenges were addressed through an additional \$100,000 in CSR support from Reddy Labs, which helped provide solar power, clean water and protective monkey grilles.

As the Vissannapeta project progressed, the Rotary team realised that the same model could provide educational opportunities to thousands of other tribal students.

These four GGs are worth **\$674,000**. The Rotary investment has been further strengthened by **\$400,000** in CSR contribution from Reddy Labs.

In 2025, RIDs 3020 and 5150, together with KEATS, APNRTS and APTWREIS, launched a second initiative. Another GG worth \$117,000 provided two digital learning centres, two STEM laboratories, nine digital boards and teachers training for a tribal girls' school and junior college in Busarajupalle, benefitting 779 girls.

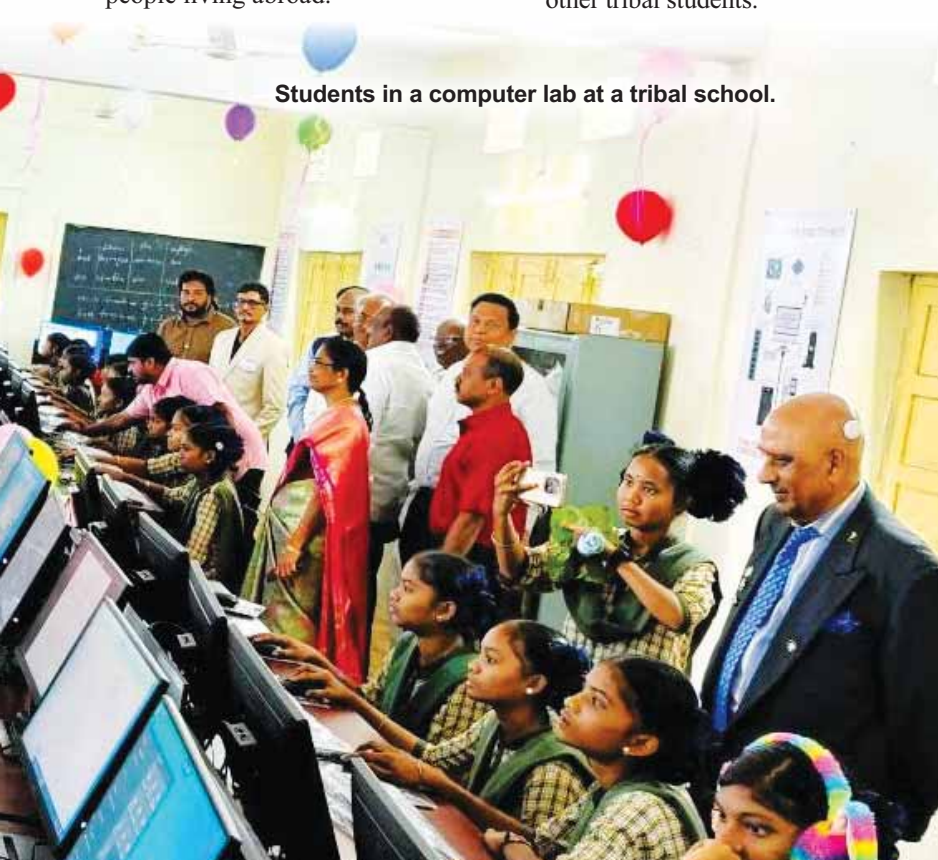
The success of the first project had become a model for expansion.

In 2026, the partnership took another major step forward. Another GG totalling \$250,000 was approved to provide similar digital education infrastructure to two additional tribal schools and junior colleges in Bhadravaram and Paderu, Andhra Pradesh. The project includes the establishment of STEM labs, installation of 14 digital boards, and comprehensive teacher training to strengthen digital learning and improve the quality of education for around 2,000 tribal students.

Also in this year, Rotarians from RIDs 3020 and 5150 secured approvals for another GG (\$217,000) for an additional 1,000 orphan students at the HEAL School near Gannavaram, Andhra Pradesh.

Thus, what began as one project for a single tribal girls' school has evolved into a much broader digital education movement reaching thousands of disadvantaged students.

Students in a computer lab at a tribal school.





Students at the STEM lab.

The Power of Partnership

These four GGs are worth **\$674,000**. The Rotary investment has been further strengthened by **\$400,000** in CSR contribution from Reddy Labs, which supported with essential infrastructure such as solar power, renovation of toilets and dining halls, clean water facilities and other campus improvements. This demonstrates how Rotary's global

grant model can leverage strategic partnerships and significantly multiply the impact of every dollar invested.

Together, these initiatives have provided digital education to more than 4,400 students, who have demonstrated improved performance in maths, physics, chemistry and biology. The girls are now regularly using the computer and STEM laboratories

and are demonstrating greater enthusiasm and confidence about their future. They face an opened door to higher education.

Through the power of GGs, Rotary is opening doors to education, opportunity and a better future for thousands of young people in Andhra Pradesh.

The writer is PDG of RID 3020

A GG-funded brain centre in TN

Team Rotary News



RI Vice President M Muruganandam inaugurates Craniofacial Centre at Scudder Memorial Hospital, Ranipet, TN. Also seen are RID 3231 DG T S Ravikumar (3rd from L) and DGE T Sivakumar (R), PDG J K N Palani and IPDG V Suresh.

A Craniofacial Centre was inaugurated by RI Vice President and director M Muruganandam at the Scudder Memorial Hospital, Ranipet, in Tamil Nadu through a global grant project (₹1.5 crore) of RC Arcot Fort, RID 3231. The medical project was done in

partnership with RC Sarasota Sunrise, Florida, US, RID 6960 and was supported by 13 other clubs as co-sponsors.

PDG Jawarilal Jain also supported the funding of the brain centre with a directed gift endowment. The high-tech medical centre will provide

specialised care for children and adults with complex craniofacial conditions including birth defects, injuries and tumours affecting the head, skull, face and jaw. Speaking on the occasion, Muruganandam said, "the facility will not merely provide medical treatment, it will bring hope, dignity, confidence and a better quality of life to countless individuals and families."

He congratulated the host club and lauded DG T S Ravikumar for taking up the GG project.

Earlier, he inaugurated a dialysis unit set up by RC Usilampatti, RID 3000, at the local government hospital, and unveiled a Rotary welcome board put up by RC Theni Central Gems at Theni, near Madurai, to enhance the public image of Rotary in the southern parts of Tamil Nadu. ■

Stitching livelihoods

V Muthukumaran

Empowering rural women is the prime focus of RID 3212 DG Gandhi Krishnan. Earlier, as DGE, he had declared his intention of distributing over 1,000 sewing machines during PELS (presidents-elect learning seminar) for 120 incoming club leaders in Feb 2026.

All the 124 clubs across the seven revenue districts, right from Ramnad in the north to Kanyakumari down south are involved in executing the sewing machine project. “Rotarians collect the name of beneficiaries through field work, compile a list which is then forwarded to the governor,” says Biju Fidelis, district secretary, RID 3212.

As no vocational training is being given by the clubs, “we ensure that those selected are adept in tailoring, and can earn a livelihood by making good use of the sewing machine. Hence, Rotarians shoulder the responsibility of identifying the right beneficiaries after verifying their

vocation, skills, economic status and family details,” he says. The first set of 360 machines were distributed at a TRF seminar in Tirunelveli, “and we will complete the remaining two phases by December-end,” assures DG Krishnan. “Financial independence and livelihood for women at the grassroots level will create a ripple effect; when a woman earns a regular income, her family finances stabilise, the education of children is secured, and self-reliance grows.” The project worth ₹60 lakh is funded by Rotarians.

DG Krishnan says it is all about “building resilient communities with the sewing machines as rural households are pitched on an upward growth trajectory, benefiting society as a whole.” Some of the beneficiaries reflect the social mobility view of the governor: A middle-aged divorcee, Muthulakshmi, along with her daughter, is living with her aged parents in Srivilliputhur (taluk) in

south TN. As the sole breadwinner, “I found it very difficult to meet family expenses working as tailoring instructor in a company. Now with my own sewing machine I supplement my income to meet our monthly needs.”

Another heart-rending case is that of Mariammal (43) from Kattalai village in Tirunelveli district. Life is a daily struggle for her, after she lost her husband seven years ago, and with no children, “My 70-year-old mother and I were reduced to an impoverished state... though I know tailoring, lack of a sewing machine put me out of livelihood. Now that I got this brand new machine, I am looking up to earn a decent income.”

Pink autos

DG Krishnan has applied for a global grant (₹3 crore) for distribution of 124 pink autos in three phases. Rotary clubs will conduct driving classes for the beneficiaries who will be given auto licence after training. “While sewing machines are given to the underprivileged who know tailoring, for pink autos we will identify widows, destitute and dependent women and train them before delivering the vehicles to them,” adds Krishnan. ■

DG Gandhi Krishnan (4th from L) hands over sewing machines to women. Also seen: (from 2nd L) PDGs Muthiah Pillai, B Arumugapandian, Chinnadurai Abdullah, RID 3234 PDG J Sridhar, DGE Ebenesh Bensam and RID 3203 PDG B Dhanasekar.



Devastated by Taliban... forgotten by world

Rasheeda Bhagat

The essence of the book *The Vanishing Girl of Kabul* (Hachette India) by the award-winning journalist Zahra Joya (and co-authored by Amie Ferris-Rotman) is captured in these lines. “The Taliban’s oppression was never simply about clothing or schooling. It was about erasing an entire gender from public existence. It was about institutionalising misogyny as a governing principle... a way to rule through control, fear and the destruction of possibility. Once you normalise misogyny, the rest of the system is easier to break and then control.”

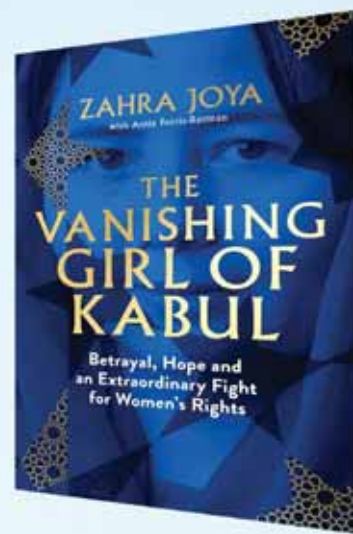
This book is yet another heart-breaking and gut-wrenching account of the fresh wave of cruelty and violence against Afghan women after US troops walked out of the country in 2021, offering a gift-wrapped nation to the Taliban. Despite their thinly disguised lies at international platforms, including in India, that the Taliban 2.0 regime would allow girls’ education

and independence to women, ‘as allowed under Islamic law,’ Zahra tells us the ground reality is the exact opposite.

Her narrative is sprinkled with horror tales of the brutalisation.... kidnap/capture, thrashing, torture, forced marriage and rape of innumerable girls and women. Amie, a veteran British-American journalist and former Reuter correspondent in Kabul, tells in the intro this book is Zahra’s story. She had first met the young girl, with no knowledge of English, but a passion for reporting, in 2016 at one of her training sessions in Kabul.

Belonging to the minority Hazara community of Shias, Zahra grew up in Bamiyan and during Taliban’s first regressive regime, attended school dressed as a *bacha posh* (girl who passes for a boy), as her family mourned the birth of girls... till the son finally arrived. Once they shifted to Kabul, she stealthily worked for a news agency, unknown to her parents even while studying. She started her own news agency *Rukshana Media* in 2020, a year before the Taliban returned.

As news came of the Taliban abducting journalists, military interpreters and government employees, many artists, musicians, Youtubers and journalists went into hiding. Zahra fled her house, took refuge with friends and relatives, but masked, covered and facing grave danger, continued to send news from Afghanistan to foreign media, including *The Guardian*, which carried her reports.



Within a week it became evident that people like her, “an entire generation of dream chasers who were now abandoned by the world,” would have to flee Afghanistan just to survive. Initially, hundreds of Afghan women marched on the streets protesting as it became evident that their rights and freedom were being taken away, but with little success. With help from Amie Rotman, who apprised the British ambassador in Kabul about the threat to Zahra’s life, the journalist escaped from Kabul, along with her three sisters, brother and niece, packed with a few hundred refugees, in a British military plane.

The rest of the narrative, written in a simple, engaging and deeply moving style, is about the siblings making London their home. While Zahra, the eldest, continues to report on the atrocities and violence against Afghan

Title : The Vanishing Girl of Kabul
Authors : Zahra Joya; co-author Amie Ferris-Rotman
Publisher : Hachette India
Pages : 288
Price : ₹799

women, as she has numerous sources back home, her younger siblings get an education. Her reportage is focused on the brutalisation and dehumanisation of Afghan women.

Soon recognition and awards come pouring in. In 2022 she visits the US for the first time to receive an award from the Gates Foundation. Here she meets Nobel Laureate Malala Yousafzai — “she and I shared a common enemy in the Taliban.” After her speech, when she is asked if there is any hope for the women of Afghanistan, Zahra can barely mask her anger and bitterness at the manner in which the US “had abandoned Afghanistan and moved on. They seemed to have forgotten that their embassy in Kabul no longer operated, that it was their own officials and soldiers who left it charred and singed,” she responds.

Zahra’s seething anger at the shameful role the US regime played

throughout the Doha negotiations where the Afghan government had no role or voice, runs across this narrative, and shows the deep resentment Afghans, particularly its women, harbour in their hearts for being ‘betrayed’ by the Americans whom they had trusted.

This book makes a compelling, even though disturbing, reading for a graphic and authentic account of the sexual violence the Taliban continue to inflict on Afghan women. Bahar, who is studying management in Iran, returns home to celebrate Nowruz, is detained at the border by the Taliban, who take her into a room, call her a “prostitute, western slut,” thrash, strip and rape her repeatedly till she passes out. She wakes up to find one vertebra fractured, and needs three months treatment.

As Bahar and other rape victims contact Zahra to tell their stories...

the Taliban were now going into homes, raping mothers and daughters, including little girls... the journalist herself suffers from acute trauma and frequent nightmares. But as she hammers out more such horrendous tales of brutality, the climax being a deliberately recorded video of a rape as the Taliban are now threatening victims that if they complain to anybody these videos will be uploaded on social media... more brave women come forward to tell their stories. The international media carries her reports; the atrocities against women are collated and put up before the ICC (International Criminal Court) at The Hague.

As you turn the last page, you can hear the bloodcurdling screams of Afghan women imploding the rest of the world... are you simply going to turn your backs on us, leaving us at the mercy of the Taliban? ■

Women Rotarians take to the pitch

Team Rotary News



Leading up to National Sports Day on August 29, RC Raipur Cosmo Divas, RID 3261, hosted a two-day Rotary Interclub Fellowship Women’s Premier League, bringing together women Rotarians from four clubs — Raipur Queens, Raipur Elegance, Bhilai Pinnacle and the host club.

The cricket league combined competition with camaraderie, as teams displayed determination and sporting spirit on the field. RC Bhilai Pinnacle emerged champions, with RC Raipur Elegance as runners-up.

“Beyond the runs scored, wickets taken or matches won, the league will be remembered for the unfiltered joy it

brought to everyone — the batswomen, bowlers, wicketkeepers, fielders and the audience. We celebrated being Rotarians more than ever during these two days,” said Shilpa Chopra, secretary, RC Raipur Cosmo Divas.

The event also brought a new member joining RC Raipur Cosmo Divas soon after the WPL. ■

The first challenge at the three-day Rotary Youth Leadership Award (RYLA) camp in Akola, Maharashtra, had little to

do with leadership: “The students had to give up their phones and share rooms with students from other schools. For teenagers accustomed to friendship within their own school, this was an unfamiliar start. More than 100 students from Classes 9 to 12 were asked to work together over various activities. There was a lot of fussing, but at the end of the three days these kids were asking why the camp could not continue for a few more days,” says Mohit Agarwal, member of RC Akola Mid Town, RID 3030 and the RYLA coordinator.

Students took part in a fireless Master Chef contest, pitched imaginary products, performed on stage, and attended sessions on leadership, communication, teamwork, yoga, stage presence, and worked together on different challenges, he says. The three-day RYLA programme, called *Metamorphosis*

Can three days teach teenagers to lead?

Kiran Zehra

2026, cost ₹8,500 per student, with the club subsidising the fee to ₹5,000.

Agarwal is reluctant to call three days transformative. “Three days are definitely not enough. We were not trying to turn teenagers into finished leaders in 72 hours. Instead, we had designed activities to get students to participate, listen to one another, work in teams and take responsibility for solving problems.” The programme used a

mix of presentations, videos, demonstrations and stage activities.

Agarwal says “the central idea

behind the programme was that leadership does not necessarily mean being the person giving instructions. First, you’re supposed to be a good listener. Leadership is the ability to understand a team, communicate and bring out the best in them.”

For Sheetal Gandhi, an educationist and corporate trainer who coordinated all the sessions at the camp, “small changes were more important than any dramatic overnight transformation.” She noticed that some students were reluctant to speak during the first session. By the next session, some had begun participating. “That decision — whether



Students participating in a fireless Master Chef contest.



RYLA King Rishon and RYLA Queen Khyati along with Rotarians and other RYLA participants.

to raise a hand, speak before a group or take part in an unfamiliar activity — can itself be the beginning of change.”

The camp also put these young people into a setting where they could exchange ideas with one another. “Imagine the possibilities created by 100 students connecting. Students were not simply receiving information from trainers, they were engaging with dozens of peers with different ideas, experiences and ways of approaching problems.” That peer interaction, she believes, “can be as important as the formal sessions.”

So how long do the effects of a three-day RYLA last? I ask her. She says, “The answer lies in what happens after the students return home. The

camp should not be seen as a standalone experience. If these 100 students can be brought into Interact or Rotaract, and continue to be part of leadership programmes, this follow-through could determine whether the three-day experience becomes more than a brief break from school. The friendships formed at the camp, the confidence to speak up, and the experience of working with unfamiliar people have a better chance of lasting if students are given a platform to practise those skills again.”

Agarwal says that while schools may offer leadership opportunities to only a handful of students, RYLA gives every participant a chance to take the lead. “It is a brilliant idea to have these students join Interact and

Rotaract. We will have to see what can be done,” he says.

The RYLA was aimed at “students from English-medium schools and came with a fee. The next RYLA, planned for October, will focus on students from rural and lower-income communities. We plan to use trainers and speakers who can conduct sessions in Hindi. So that students can engage in a language they understand more comfortably,” he says and adds that the rural programme “will provide an opportunity to test whether the same model works when the participants, language and socioeconomic circumstances are different.”

The programme included sessions by Harssh Poddar, an IAS officer and leadership trainer who studied at the Harvard University. Saurabh Bothra, founder of Habuild, conducted a meditation session, teaching the students techniques to prepare mentally before an activity and to wind down afterward. Ashish Deshmukh, a local MLA, addressed them on how to face challenges as a leader.

Rishon and Khyati, who won the RYLA King and RYLA Queen titles, were given an opportunity to host their own podcast organised by the camp. “We discussed leadership and the way young people increasingly view it not as the achievement of one individual but as the result of a team’s collective effort,” says 15-year-old Khyati. ■



Students engaged in a game.



Rotary Olympiad for special children

V Muthukumaran

It was a fun-filled Sunday for over 1,000 special children at the Rotary Olympiad, an athletics meet for the differently-abled hosted by RI District 3233.

Every child is a winner in this Olympiad, said District Youth Service director Vinod Nair. The participants raced against each other, stretching every limb beyond their physical limitations, with enthusiasm and raw energy to touch the finish line, even as hundreds of Rotary volunteers, teachers and parents cheered for them from

the sidelines. All of them were given medals and certificates. There were 240 individual athletes, while others were from schools, homes, NGOs and institutions for special children across Chennai.

Delivering his address at the inaugural, TN health minister KG Arunraj urged the community to “extend favourable conditions and facilities for those with special needs to live a normal life. Competitions like the Rotary Olympiad will help in fulfilling the aspirations of these children.” He

cited the incident of an aged couple to show the value of special children who care for their parents despite being neglected by them. Two-year-old Deepak, a special child, was left at a special home in Haryana when the parents found him to be disabled. Later on, after decades, Deepak, as a member of a US handball team, won a big tournament in Los Angeles, bagging a huge cash prize. Coming to know of his real parents, he paid the medical expenses for his aged father undergoing medical treatment in India.

The state government is drafting plans to set up a one-stop centre at every block (taluk) and early intervention centres at district headquarters to identify children “with disabilities so that we can provide them treatment, counselling, training etc to help them join mainstream avenues as early as possible,” said Arunraj. “Every special child has talent, and we have to change our outlook towards them to create an inclusive society.” Karthick Krishnan was the project chair.

Last year, a modest programme titled ‘United Chennai’ at the same venue brought together 150–200 special children. “That event motivated us for this Rotary Olympiad which will be made an annual event with the participation of district clubs,” said DG Shriram Duvvuri. In the coming months, other cultural events are lined up for motivating children with special needs by the district clubs, he said.

The district clubs will be fitting AED (automated external defibrillator) devices in 64 ambulances soon to provide emergency services to heart attack patients, he said.

All the 90 clubs in RID 3233 have put in some efforts in this programme. While some Rotarians took part as volunteers, others sponsored a part



A child is being helped by volunteers.

of the event’s expenses, said Nair. Speaking to *Rotary News* later, he noted that, “the Olympiad will be an eye-opener for government officials and the public to make sure that proper facilities are in place for special children aspiring to become national-level athletes.”

In Western countries, governments take care of all the needs and daily challenges of special children for their lifetime, so that they realise their full potential. “We must create such

In Western countries, governments take care of the needs of special children for lifetime. We must do the same in our country.

Vinod Nair
director, District Youth
Service



Tamil Nadu health minister KG Arunraj interacts with a special child. On his right is RID 3233 DG Shriram Duvvuri, on his left are District Youth Service director Vinod Nair (behind), event chair Karthick Krishnan and Imthyas Basha (R).

an ecosystem or adequate facilities for these children in our country too,” added Nair.

V Srinivasan (17), gold medallist in badminton, and A Sandhya (18), bronze medallist in badminton, at the National Special Olympics (2025) were given citation awards. Guruprasad Swamy, afflicted with cerebral palsy and autism, and working as an assistant manager in a commercial bank was honoured for achieving success; while an elderly mother Bama S was given a citation award for raising her special child to the level of a bank officer overcoming intellectual disabilities. ■

A friendship that went beyond the Convention

Kiran Zehra

Many things at Booth 635, set up by Neeraj Bhatnagar, a member of RC Delhi South East, RID 3011, at the 2026 Taipei convention, caught Ma Yun's attention. Incoming president of four-year-old RC Taipei Twin-Star, RID 3482, the "beginner Rotarian," as Yun calls herself, found herself intrigued by the work of RC Delhi South East. The environmental initiatives, community projects and "especially *rotariansforautism.com*," an initiative that grew from a request

from RC Madras, RID 3234, two years ago to conduct awareness sessions and seminars on autism in Delhi. Bhatnagar then expanded the idea into a platform that brought together five Rotary clubs from Chennai, Sri Lanka and Australia. Today it has developed into a Rotary-led AI ecosystem for autism, mental health and inclusion.

He saw the Taipei convention as an opportunity to take the initiative to a larger Rotary audience. "We wanted people to know what our club is doing and see how they could become part

of it," he says. In 2023, he attended the RI Convention in Melbourne, Australia, as an ESRAG (Environmental Sustainability Rotary Action Group) volunteer. Next year at the Singapore convention, he put up two stalls at a cost of ₹5 lakh. One featured onemillionmindfulactions.com, "encouraging convention-goers to take small environmental actions, even something as simple as watering their houseplants and record the action with a photograph." The second featured an energy-consultation stall



showcasing green technology developed by his club member Ajay Gupta that converts solid waste into green coal for use in power plants. At the Taipei convention, he hosted a break-out session on Climate Belongs To All (www.climatebelongstoall.com - a global Rotary platform supported by 54 Rotary districts bringing together clubs and members to engage on climate action). The session featured eight speakers from across the world and 400 Rotarians attended it.

He noticed that the conversations at the convention had changed over the years. "People were not just looking at projects; they were discussing them and asking how they could participate."

Yun wanted to understand how she could participate in different Rotary initiatives. She asked Bhatnagar about the projects, the club and ways in which Rotarians from different countries could work together. "Neeraj has the experience of attending five conventions and being part of 14 Rotary Action Groups (RAGs). His knowledge about Rotary is remarkable," says Ma Yun. After the Taipei convention, Ma Yun joined *climatebelongstoall.com* and joined three RAGs.

When Bhatnagar was packing to leave the convention, Ma Yun walked him all the way to the main gate. "Hundreds of people meet you at a convention, but very few people walk you to the gate. There was something genuine about it," says Bhatnagar.

In July, Mamta Shekhar, principal of PM Shri Kendriya Vidyalaya, Faridabad, approached RC Delhi South East with a request for two drinking water coolers. The school has more than 1,100 students, and they were having difficulty accessing clean drinking water. The club had earlier worked with the school on a water-conservation project and had also helped set up a medical room.



Neeraj Bhatnagar with Ma Yun.

This time, Bhatnagar saw "an opportunity to bring his new friendship with Ma Yun into the picture." The two had continued to discuss Rotary initiatives after Taipei, and the school project offered a simple way to turn those conversations into collaboration. "I knew the water cooler project would happen anyway. But I thought, why not make it an international collaboration?" he says. He prepared a flyer for the project and suggested that the name of RC Taipei Twin-Star also be included. It was not a global grant project; there was no request for a financial contribution; RC Delhi South East would bear the entire ₹1.5 lakh cost of installing the two coolers.

The two clubs therefore did not share the cost, "We shared the project. For me, collaboration is not about who puts in how much money. It is

about creating a sense of ownership together," he says. The result was two 150 LPH drinking water coolers, providing four taps for the students, teachers and staff, and an international collaboration without money.

Bhatnagar wanted to demonstrate that an Indian Rotary club could include a foreign Rotary club in a service project simply as a gesture of partnership and friendship. He also hoped it would encourage a more inclusive approach to international collaboration and create a stronger identity for Indian Rotary clubs. "Ma Yun has promised to replicate the gesture," he says and adds that "1,100 students now have access to clean drinking water and both our clubs have an international collaboration. One built not on a financial transaction, but on a friendship that continued after the convention ended." ■

As part of the Rotary Inter-city Synergy Exchange initiative of RID 3191, Rotary Bengaluru Malhar organised the *Rotary Raithara Sammelana*, an agriculture conference that brought together nearly 600 farmers from across Karnataka, connecting them with agricultural scientists, entrepreneurs and startups.

The event, inaugurated by the then DG BR Sridhar, focused on empowering farmers through knowledge sharing, sustainable practices, emerging technologies, and rural entrepreneurship opportunities. A live demonstration showcased how drones can be used for crop monitoring, precision spraying, nutrient management and efficient farming. A wide range of topics relevant to modern agriculture, including natural farming, microgreens, mushroom farming, beekeeping, soil health management, agricultural entrepreneurship, and AI in agriculture were covered.

RID 3191 hosts Rotary Agriculture Conference

Team Rotary News

A major highlight was its focus on field-oriented learning and technology adoption. Farmers were introduced to emerging technologies that can improve productivity, reduce costs, and make farming more sustainable, said club president VJ Sajeew.

Speakers also focused on the need to reduce excessive dependence on chemical fertilisers and external farm

inputs while promoting soil health, biodiversity, water conservation, and environmentally responsible farming methods. The discussions addressed the impact of global economic and geopolitical developments on agriculture. Participants learned how disruptions in international supply chains, fluctuations in fertiliser availability, and rising input costs

RID 3191 IPDG B R Sridhar's wife Rekha.





IPDG BR Sridhar (L) and Rotarians watch a drone demo, along with farmers at the agriculture conference. RC Bengaluru Malhar president V J Sajeev is seen third from right.

can directly affect farming communities. Experts dwelt on local ecosystems and promoting sustainable farming.

Raitha Sangha, UAS Alumni Association, and the RCs Bengaluru Upkar, Bengaluru HSR, Attibele Sarjapura, Ramanagaram, Bengaluru

JP Nagar, Bengaluru Palmville and Bengaluru Spandana supported the event which was part funded by the district grant. ■

Singapenn marathon promotes HPV vaccination

Over 3,000 women and girls took part in the Singapenn Marathon in Chennai, to raise awareness about cervical cancer prevention and women's safety. The event, spearheaded by Nallammai Ramanathan, was organised by RC Madras Central, RID 3234, and Inner Wheel clubs of the district, along with Tamil Nadu government's newly-formed Singapenn Special Force.

K Bhavaneeswari, Inspector General of Police and head of the Singapenn Special Force, encouraged women to use safety resources such as the 1091 helpline, and PDG SVRM Abirami Ramanathan spoke about the need for HPV vaccination to prevent cervical cancer.

DG Suresh Jain, PDGs Vinod Saraogi, J Sreedhar and N S Saravanan and DGN Ravi Sundaresan were present along with the club president Sridhar Krishnaswamy, Singapenn Committee members from RC Madras Central and Inner Wheel members. ■



K Bhavaneeswari, Inspector General of Police, flags off the marathon. Also seen (from R): DG D Suresh Jain, PDG Vinod Saraogi, Nallammai Ramanathan, Rtr Meenakshi Periakaruppan, PDG Abirami Ramanathan and RC Madras T Nagar past president Meenakshi Periakaruppan.

Strengthening Rotary in Northeast

As a provider of medical service, "I see a plenty of scope for Rotary to expand both in membership and community initiatives across the eight Northeastern states and the northern parts of West Bengal," says Dr Asim Adhikary. Following a consultation with RI director M Muruganandam, a Group-5 network was formed comprising himself, IPDG Kameswar Elangbam, DGE Danny Dutta, DGN Pallavi Maji and DGND to work on 'growth strategies.'

With 97 clubs having 3,600 members as on July 1, Adhikary eyes a 10 per cent net membership growth, and wants to form 10 new Rotary clubs. "We found that 50 per cent of clubs are in the Amber zone (members: 26–50); 35 per cent in Red (25 and below); and 15 per cent in Green zone." In the next three years, 40 per cent of Amber clubs will be moved to the Green zone; and all the Red clubs will migrate to Amber by strengthening their membership.

At least 12 autism awareness campaigns will be held at the club halls and village centres in which counselling will be given to over 1,000 parents of special children. "We will provide multispecialty assistance to the parents in this ₹1.5 lakh worth project funded by a district grant and Rotary District 3240 Foundation." In tie-up with hospitals, HPV vaccination drives (CSR grant + members: ₹60 lakh) will be held for 5,000 school and college girls. As happens every year, over one lakh saplings will be planted by the clubs, says Adhikary who joined Rotary in 1999. His TRF target is \$400,000.



Asim Kanti Adhikary
Gynaecologist
RC Bolpur-Santiniketan
RID 3240

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran



Joshy Chacko
Mech engineer
RC Perumbavoor Central
RID 3205

Focus on healthcare

During his installation, Joshy Chacko launched 10 GG projects worth ₹8 crore across RI's focus areas. He aims at a net member-

ship growth of 350 taking the count to 4,100 by June next year. "I will form 10–15 new clubs this year, taking the figure to 120 by the end of my term," he says.

Project Surya (CSR grant: ₹2.2 crore) will distribute 600 smart canes, 600 smart glasses, and offer 'digital training' in computer courses to 2,000 visually-challenged youth. In a novel initiative, *Project I Bleed*, a fully-automated CLIA system will be installed (GG: \$36,000) at the Government Hospital, Kochi. "The modern procedure will screen for early diagnosis to prevent heavy menstrual bleeding, thus benefitting 3,000 women a year," says Chacko. A digital mammography, along with two dialysis machines, will be set up at the Government Hospital, Perumbalam, an island off Kochi, (GG: ₹1.25 crore), and these facilities will reach 9,500 patients a year at this rural hospital.

A latest digital x-ray machine will be installed at the A P Varkey Mission Hospital, Mulanthuruthy (GG: \$62,000), "benefitting 4,500 patients a year and they will have less exposure to radiation." He aims to collect \$1 million for TRF.

Joining Rotary in 2008, Chacko organised small medical camps for his club, became AG in 2012–13, and then served as District TRF vice-chair for six consecutive years. He was instrumental in doing many GG projects of his district clubs, "the happiness of serving others motivates me to be active in Rotary," he smiles.

Largest RI district aims big

With a lot of pride, R Subramani points out “we are the largest RI district in the world in terms of membership, and the challenge is that while doing community projects we have to keep in mind the demographic mix in our eight revenue districts which have a large rural population.” He wants to charter 50 new Rotary clubs and induct 2,500 Rotarians, thus pushing their number to around 240 and close to 10,000 respectively by June next year.

Already, 41 new clubs were formed and 1,500 new members were inducted in August. “We are continuing with some existing projects for the last four years: 50 gender-segregated toilet blocks for all types of schools (GG: ₹3.5 crore); and 10 community toilets (GG: ₹1.5 crore) in rural pockets will be built. Smart classrooms will be set up at 100 special schools for the differently-abled children (GG: ₹1.6 crore), says Subramani. “Digital learning will make education a joyful experience.”

Under a mega greening drive, 5–6 Miyawaki forests will be created by planting over 2.5 lakh saplings (CSR grant: ₹2.5 crore) across the revenue districts. For TRF-giving his target is \$2 million. Having joined Rotary in 2011, Subramani takes “great effort to do impactful service projects, and the success of each such initiative motivates me to do much bigger projects,” he smiles. .



R Subramani
*Hotelier, RC Tiruchirapalli
Diamond City
RID 3000*

A human milk bank (GG: \$45,000) is coming up at a charity hospital in Patna; while four dialysis centres (each GG: \$40,000) will be set up at either a government or charity hospital across the revenue districts.

DG Anu Narang
RID 3250



Anu Narang
*Restaurateur
RC Dhanbad
RID 3250*

10 Ekal Vidyalayas being adopted

Rotary is like an extended family to Anu Narang, as “I enjoy every moment of my active presence in this organisation.” Having joined in 2002, it is the friendship at the district, national and global levels that keeps her motivated to continue her service to the community, smiles Anu.

Starting her tenure with 120 clubs and 4,500 members on July 1, she aims at a 10 per cent net membership growth by forming 10 new Rotary clubs. “I also hope to start 25 Rotaract clubs, induct around 650 new Rotaractors, and charter 100 Interact clubs in schools,” she says. A human milk bank (GG: \$45,000) is coming up at a charity hospital in Patna; while four dialysis centres (each GG: \$40,000) will be set up at either a government or charity hospital across the district. One of her pet projects is installing at least 10 breastfeeding cabins (₹5 lakh) at railway stations, bus terminuses, and shopping malls with contributions from club members.

Push carts will be donated to around 100 roadside vendors (each ₹20,000) with an aim to enhance their retail business. This initiative is funded by members. At least 10 Ekal Vidyalayas, rural basic schools run by a single teacher, will be adopted by clubs to fund a host of classroom improvement projects through a mix of district grant and club donations (₹3–4 lakh).

Her target for TRF-giving is \$1 million. For Anu, “networking with my Rotarian friends across the zones helps me to reach out and serve the less privileged all through our service projects,” she adds. ■

RID 3250 gives hope to the disabled

Kiran Zehra

Preety Kumari, a 20-year-old student from Dhanbad, returned to the Rotary Gerry Powell Limb Centre just a week after receiving her artificial limbs at a camp organised by RC Dhanbad, RID 3250, in the first week of August 2026. Born without legs, Preety had hoped the prostheses would help her “walk more confidently.” The technicians at the centre guided her through the fitting and rehabilitation process. Today, she says she can pursue her master’s degree by “walking to college instead of using a wheelchair.”

The club has been running the Gerry Powell Limb Centre at Jeevan Jyoti School in Dhanbad since 2008. Artificial limb fitment camps conducted over three days at regular intervals by the centre has so far provided prosthetic limbs to over 5,000 beneficiaries, says club president Kanav Bali. Repairs, replacements and adjustments are also done at the camps.

Beneficiaries are assessed and measurements are taken at the centre, “following which they return a couple of days later to receive their artificial limb,” says Bali. The centre



Above: Members of RC Vikramshila Pink at their self-defence training project.



A member of RC Dhanbad interacting with a physically-challenged man at the Rotary Gerry Powell Limb Centre.



Right: Truck drivers get their eyes tested at *Project Ujala* of RC Bokaro Steel City.



Below: Members of RC Giridih Couple on a sapling planting mission



DG Anu Narang inaugurates a breastfeeding booth set up by RC Patna Millennium at the railway station.

is supported through donations from five Rotary clubs in the region. Individual Rotarians also sponsor limbs, each costing ₹2,500.

Information about the camps is circulated through Google Forms, which Rotary members share through flyers, WhatsApp statuses, Instagram posts, and their professional and community networks. Posters are also displayed in villages and on autorickshaws traveling through rural areas. Prospective beneficiaries submit an online form along with photographs for initial assessment. “Those whose injuries are too recent for fitting are asked to return once the healing process is complete. Otherwise, the project aims to provide a limb to everyone who visits the camp and is medically ready for fitting,” says Bali.

The club’s latest initiative, *Umeed Ki Kiran* (Ray of hope) - *Free Artificial Limb Project*, supported by a global grant of ₹48.13 lakh, has so far provided 213 artificial limbs to people with physical disabilities across Bihar and Jharkhand, and was locally implemented in partnership with RCs Ramgarh City and Nawada Rajshree. RIDs 1180, 1210, 1110 and

1100, Rotary Jaipur Limb UK, RCs Wolverhampton and Wellington, RID 1210, were the international partners.

The club had conducted a prosthetic limb camp last year, in partnership with the Steel Authority of India, through a CSR grant of ₹16 lakh. It benefitted 128 people.

More from RID 3250

RC Bokaro Steel City under its *Project Ujala*, organised a eye check-up camp for truck drivers at the SAIL Stock Yard highway. Spectacles were given to those who had defective eyesight.

RC Patna Millennium set up *Project Mamta*, a breastfeeding booth on Platform 1 of the Patna Railway Station, providing women with a private and dignified space to breastfeed.

RC Vikramshila Pink organised *Mukaa Maar*, a self-defence training programme for 100 girls. The training was conducted by Usha Vishwakarma and members of Lucknow’s Red Brigade.

RC Giridih Couple launched a Miyawaki plantation drive, planting 880 trees across 2,000 sqft land. The initiative aims to create a dense native forest and a green space in the city. ■



RID **2981**

RC Nagapattinam Holytown

Relief assistance worth ₹1 lakh each was given to seven families affected by a fire mishap at Vadugacherry village. The essentials included utensils, clothes, blankets, groceries, mats and pillows.

Rotary  PEOPLE OF ACTION

Club matters



RID **3012**

RC Ghaziabad Vasundhra

Large commercial umbrellas were given to street vendors to shield them from harsh sun and rain. Prince Agarwal and Ayushi Agrawal were project chairpersons.

RID **3020**

RC Rajahmundry River City

An RO water plant (500 litres) worth over ₹2 lakh was installed at the SKVT Government Degree College, Rajahmundry, which will benefit 1,000 students. Principal B V Thirupanyam thanked the club.





RID 3030

RC Nasik West

Around 100 students at the Nashik Association of Blind School attended a two-day Mobility Workshop conducted by Swagat Thorat, the Braille Man of India. DG Rajesh Patil inaugurated the event. The project cost ₹30,000.

RID 3000

RC Karur Young Gen

Fifty people attended a medical camp to mark World Hepatitis Day (July 28). Dr S Sathasivam and his team urged the participants for early screening of hepatitis virus. Karur Gastro Foundation was the co-partner.



RID 3070

RC Jammu City

A drugs awareness event was held through a skit at a shopping centre, along with informative sessions, educate the public. They were urged to adopt a healthy, drug-free lifestyle.



RID 3150

RC Guntur Aadarsh

Scholarships worth ₹1.5 lakh were given to 15 college students. The funds were raised through a fundraiser, and colleges were urged to grant tuition fee concessions to beneficiaries.

Let's embrace CSR funds

Ashok Kantoor

In 2021–22, the Rotary CSR India Grant model was launched to use corporate social responsibility (CSR) funds of companies to do community service projects.

The results achieved so far are encouraging. Total CSR collections, including cash contributions from clubs, have increased more than fivefold—from \$4.02 million in 2021–22 to \$20.92 million in 2025–26. Considering the aggregate TRF contribution in Zone 4,5,6 and 7 of \$45.39 million, the CSR contribution of \$20.92 million last year represents 46 per cent of total contribution. Thus, CSR funds have the potential to become a really significant sources of funding for Rotary projects in India.

For 2026–27, we should set an ambitious but achievable target of mobilising over \$42 million in CSR funds, a 100 per cent growth over 2025–26. The estimated CSR funds available in this Rotary year are ₹59,600 crore, equivalent to around \$5.21 billion. Against this enormous pool of corporate funding, Rotary's current mobilisation represents only a very small proportion.

The challenge is not the availability of funds, but creating awareness on preparedness, capability and outreach among Rotary clubs. At present, only a few RI districts in India are aggressively pursuing CSR grants. While some RI districts have started making progress, most of them are yet to develop a successful and sustained CSR programme.

Why are many districts and clubs not pursuing CSR funds aggressively? The principal reasons are: Lack of adequate awareness about the Rotary CSR India Grant model; a perception that CSR grants are complicated and

difficult to obtain; little CSR awareness and training programmes at the district level; and many clubs don't have a charitable entity that is registered under relevant laws and sections of Companies Act to avail CSR funds for their service projects.

Also, there is lack of a dedicated resource person or team to guide clubs through the CSR process, and many clubs have little exposure to the successful CSR projects already being implemented by Rotary across India. Some Rotarians also display lack of confidence in approaching corporates and presenting their club projects professionally. These challenges can be addressed through structured training, mentoring and support for club members.

Proposed strategy

To achieve our mobilisation target for this year, CSR fundraising must receive a level of visibility and organisational attention comparable to that given to other TRF programmes like global and district grants.

CSR funding receives limited time and attention. In many Rotary programmes like Disha, only 15–30 minutes are devoted to CSR projects. This needs to change; CSR funding should be treated as a major strategic avenue

for Rotary in India. A two-pronged strategy is proposed: First, create widespread awareness and capability through district-level CSR seminars; and second, form a dedicated CSR Resource Team in districts to provide continuing support to Rotary clubs. These two initiatives, along with the support of RISAO-CSR team and the Rotary CSR National Committee, can create a nationwide CSR movement.

Every district should organise a CSR seminar as a practical workshop enabling Rotarians to understand how to actually secure CSR funding. Resource persons from the RISAO team and the CSR National Committee should be invited to guide, motivate and support the districts. The District Resource Team should facilitate and support the mechanism, not take away the ownership of CSR fundraising from the clubs.

Every club must be encouraged to identify → Prepare → Approach → Follow Up → Secure → Execute → Report. This should become the basic CSR cycle for Rotary clubs, and will enable the organisation to move from a largely opportunity-driven approach to a structured and measurable CSR fundraising programme.

Rotary has several inherent advantages when approaching corporates, and these strengths need to be presented more effectively to the corporate sector. The key is to expand CSR fundraising from a relatively small number of successful districts to a much larger number of districts and clubs across India.

The writer is a past governor of RID 3011, and convener, Rotary National CSR Committee

CSR fundraising must
receive visibility and
organisational attention
comparable to global
and district grants.

Equipping science labs in schools

RC Bikaner, RID 3053, provided science laboratory kits worth over ₹9 lakh to six government senior secondary schools in Bikaner, enabling students to conduct practicals in physics, chemistry and biology. The initiative targeted schools that had science faculty and laboratories but lacked essential equipment.



IPDG Nisha Shekhawat (third from L) with club members at a school lab.

Promoting menstrual hygiene

RC Indore Uptown, RID 3040, distributed around one lakh sanitary napkins to students of government girls' schools and residents of government girls' hostels under its *Swachhta Sankalp* initiative. The drive promoted menstrual hygiene.



A student receiving a pack of sanitary napkins from a club member.

Dental hygiene for students

RC Payyanur, RID 3204, in association with the Indian Dental Association, organised a mass teeth brushing campaign which had a participation of 650 students. Dental professionals demonstrated proper brushing techniques and promoted lifelong oral health habits through competitions and interactive sessions.



A dentist demonstrates proper brushing techniques to students.

A greening drive

A planting drive was conducted at IIM Sambalpur by RC Sambalpur, RID 3261. Over 1,200 fruit-bearing and medicinal saplings were planted under the Miyawaki method.



Club president Chinmay Satpathy planting a sapling on the IIM Sambalpur campus.

Membership and TRF Summary 2026-27

Top 20 Districts worldwide in Rotaract membership

Rank	District	Zone	Country	Clubs	Members
1	3000	5	India	151	7,532
2	3233	5	India	70	5,800
3	3292	6	India	193	4,750
4	3220	5	India	95	3,708
5	9213	22	Uganda	148	3,369
6	3141	4	India	128	3,188
7	9214	22	Tanzania	120	2,679
8	3192	7	India	88	2,039
9	3206	5	India	106	2,038
10	3150	7	India	54	2,032
11	3080	4	India	86	2,016
12	9104	22	Ghana	68	1,951
13	3131	7	India	103	1,907
14	3234	5	India	73	1,906
15	3191	7	India	84	1,855
16	3170	7	India	138	1,738
17	9010	22	Algeria	134	1,679
18	3203	5	India	76	1,539
19	3300	10	Malaysia	38	1,503
20	9216	22	Eritrea	78	1,461

Zonewise Ranking - New member addition

Rank	Zone	Members
1	5	4,513
2	4	3,264
3	7	2,905
4	6	1,898
Total (net growth since July 1)		12,580
Rest of the world total (net growth since July 1)		20,412
World total (net growth since July 1)		32,992

Rotaract, Interact, RCC membership as on September 2026

Zone	Rotaract		Interact	RCCs
	Clubs	Rotaractors	Clubs	
4	666	12,210	2,125	2,093
5	921	26,724	2,160	1,751
6	595	9,848	2,383	2,519
7	700	12,662	2,386	1,595

Districtwise Ranking New member addition

Rank	District	Zone	Members
1	3000	5	1,357
2	2981	5	751
3	3011	4	571
4	3141	4	556
5	3080	4	506
6	3233	5	410
7	3131	7	408
8	3203	5	383
9	3170	7	381
10	3191	7	366
11	3250	6	348
12	3182	7	338
13	3020	7	317
14	3192	7	286
15	3142	4	285
16	3181	7	268
17	3150	7	265
18	3231	5	265
19	3120	6	261
20	3234	5	260
21	3132	7	250
22	3292	6	242
23	3030	6	241
24	3060	4	222
25	3212	5	215
26	3206	5	201
27	3012	4	190
28	3055	4	186
29	3291	6	184
30	3070	4	177
31	3240	6	169
32	3056	4	163
33	3053	4	163
34	2982	5	155
35	3110	6	146
36	3220	5	137
37	3204	5	136
38	3090	4	135
39	3211	5	132
40	3262	6	127
41	3205	5	111
42	3040	4	110
43	3261	6	101
44	3100	6	79
45	3160	7	26
Total			12,580

Top 10 Districts - TRF Giving

Annual Fund

Rank	Zone	District	Annual Fund (\$)
1	7	3150	235,585
2	4	3141	156,662
3	7	3131	132,781
4	4	3142	111,046
5	4	3080	109,373
6	4	3060	93,391
7	6	3250	87,527
8	6	3120	85,642
9	6	3291	84,364
10	7	3132	81,121

PolioPlus Fund

Rank	Zone	District	PolioPlus Fund (\$)
1	5	3234	8,584
2	7	3170	8,354
3	7	3150	7,449
4	7	3020	7,289
5	4	3141	6,889
6	6	3292	5,908
7	7	3181	4,317
8	4	3142	4,281
9	6	3240	4,117
10	6	3291	3,673

Endowment Fund

Rank	Zone	District	Endowment Fund (\$)
1	6	3291	57,646
2	4	3080	52,083
3	4	3053	50,000
4	5	3233	40,373
5	7	3150	38,592
6	6	3120	34,425
7	5	3212	30,000
8	7	3131	26,471
9	4	3141	26,263
10	6	3250	21,798

Zone Ranking in Implementing 10:20:30

Formula for New Clubs

Rank	Zone	Rotary	Rotaract	Interact
1	5	41	24	165
2	4	33	24	65
3	6	18	39	87
4	7	8	45	86
Total		100	132	403
Target		500	1,000	1,500

Top 20 Giving Districts in India for 2026–27

Rank	District	Zone	Total Contributions (\$)
1	4	3141	961,605
2	7	3150	352,997
3	7	3191	250,585
4	4	3080	216,060
5	7	3131	205,503
6	4	3142	186,680
7	6	3291	151,551
8	6	3250	138,842
9	7	3132	137,083
10	6	3120	122,119
11	4	3060	113,077
12	5	3203	111,211
13	5	3234	98,121
14	4	3011	96,201
15	7	3020	81,111
16	4	3053	79,713
17	5	3205	77,298
18	7	3170	71,012
19	7	3192	65,609
20	5	3233	59,411

Zonewise Ranking - CSR Credits

Rank	Zone	District	CSR (\$)
1	4	3141	489,277.33
2	4	3142	69,791.67
3	7	3132	54,533.68
4	7	3150	53,694.17

Making a difference

Team Rotary News

Village adoption project at Cuddalore, TN

RID 2981 DG K Vaithianathan inaugurated a bunch of welfare programmes worth ₹2.78 lakh that were completed by RC Cuddalore Mid-Town at Sangeevirayan Koil under its village adoption project.

Projects like pond rejuvenation, tree planting, livelihood support and welfare assistance drives that included distribution of 300 chicks, deworming tablets and iron boxes would benefit more than 500 villagers.

An eye-screening camp was also conducted, and a CCTV camera was installed at a government school in the village. Club president T Ramalingam, charter president and past AG Pa Rajendran, AG T Ramesh and others were present at the venue. ■



DG K Vaithianathan (6th from L), along with club members, at the village adoption project.



Former Union minister Meenakshi Lekhi (3rd from L) with members of RC Delhi South East.



An E-cart donated to Delhi hospital

Former Union minister Meenakshi Lekhi handed over an E-cart donated by RC Delhi South East, RID 3011, to VMCC and Safdarjung Hospital with the aim to provide a hassle-free and convenient transport to patients within the hospital premises.

The E-cart will benefit elderly patients and those with mobility issues finding it difficult to walk distances. “The patient-friendly vehicle is one more step by the club to ease the journey of patients by making a difference in their experience of care and treatment at the hospital,” says club president Sandeep Chopra. ■

Taking Rotary to the Himalayas

With the aim to promote Rotary in the Himalayas, a road trip was undertaken by PDG Bagh Singh Pannu, RID 3090, and MS Bholowasia, a Rotarian, after seeking blessings at Gurdwara Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Sahib, Patiala, in Punjab in June 2026.

The Rotary awareness trip displayed a banner to 'Save water, plant trees and Say no to plastic' at iconic sites — Lepcha La Pass on the Indo-Tibet border; Hikkim Post Office — the world's highest functional PO at the height of 14,567 feet; and on the Chicham bridge, the highest suspension bridge (13,596 feet) in Asia at the Spiti Valley, Himachal.

Also, the Rotarian duo visited Komic village, home to the highest monastery; Tabo and Dhankar monasteries; 1,000-year-old Kamru Fort, Sangla; Chitkul, the last village; Khab bridge, where Sangam and Sutlej rivers merge in Spiti; 500-year-old Gue Mummy Stupa; and Roula Cliff, Kalpa (9,052 feet). The road journey was conceived by RC Faridkot past president SPS Sodhi with the support of other clubs in RID 3090. ■



RID 3090 PDG Bagh Singh Pannu (R) and MS Bholowasia with Rotary banner at Lepcha La Pass on the Indo-Tibet border.



Rotarians with a mortuary freezer box.



A CSR grant for freezer boxes

With a CSR fund of ₹20 lakh from Omsairam Steels and Alloys, Jalna, RID 3132 has distributed mortuary freezer boxes to 28 Rotary clubs (one each) across the 11 revenue districts of Maharashtra to serve their local communities.

Each club has handed over the freezer box to a local NGO after an agreement so that "the facility could remain available to the community whenever it was needed with no charge to the beneficiary family," said PDG Suresh Saboo.

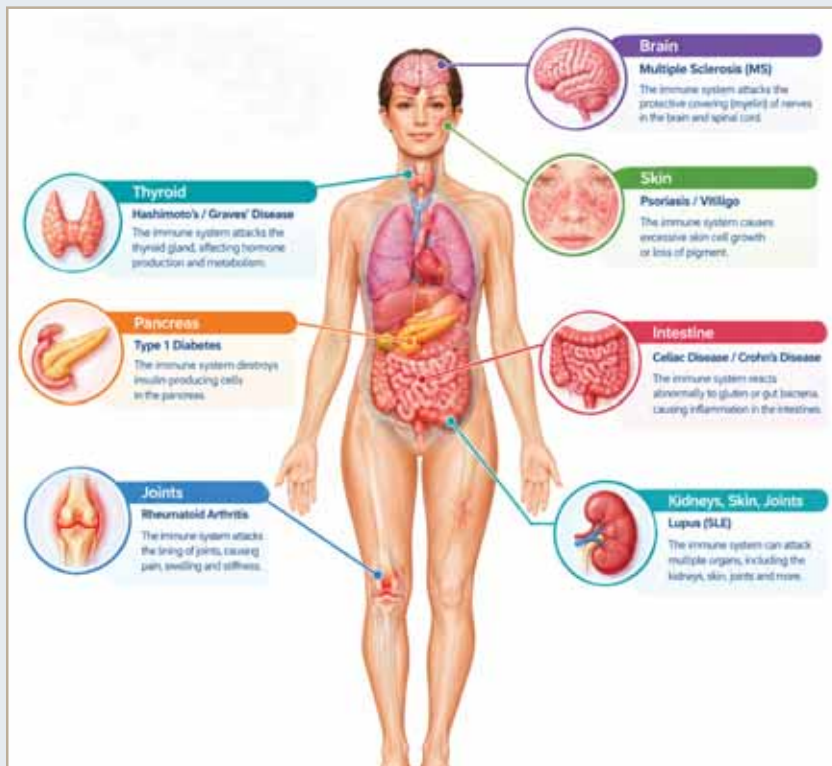
Moody Cool Panel, Aurangabad, the vendor, came forward to provide lifelong support for the freezer boxes. After eight months of follow-up, it was found that a total of 481 corpses were preserved by 28 freezer boxes across the revenue districts of RID 3132. ■

Understanding Autoimmune Disease

Gita Mathai

Our bodies are designed to fight disease, whether from a viral or bacterial infection or an injury that causes tissue damage and bleeding. As soon as the body is attacked, its army of white blood cells (WBCs) rushes to the affected area. Some WBCs engulf and destroy invading organisms, while others release protective chemicals that help eliminate viruses and bacteria. The body also activates clotting mechanisms to stem blood loss following tissue damage.

Sometimes, however, the body's own army can turn against itself, rather like soldiers turning around and attacking their own country, or a football goalkeeper kicking the ball into their own goal. In autoimmune disease, the immune system fails to distinguish adequately between 'self' and a foreign invader. It begins to attack the body's own tissues.



This is not as rare. Autoimmune diseases collectively affect 8 per cent of the population and can occur at any age. More than 100 autoimmune diseases are recognised.

Around 70–80 per cent of people affected by autoimmune diseases are women. The reasons are complex and probably involve genetic, hormonal and environmental factors. Women have two X chromosomes, whereas men generally have one X and one Y chromosome. Differences in X-chromosome activity, along with the effects of hormones such as oestrogen, may partly explain women's greater susceptibility.

The perceived 'invader' may be part of the body's own skeletal system,

nerves and brain, blood vessels, endocrine glands, digestive system or skin. Common autoimmune diseases include rheumatoid arthritis, systemic lupus erythematosus, myositis, psoriasis, dermatomyositis, scleroderma, vasculitis, ulcerative colitis, atrophic gastritis, type 1 diabetes, and Hashimoto's thyroiditis.

Autoimmune symptoms can vary and be nonspecific, depending on the system the body targets. If the joints are attacked, there may be pain, swelling and stiffness. If the insulin-producing beta cells of the pancreas are destroyed, type 1 diabetes develops. The attacks can also occur in waves, with long or short symptom-free intervals between episodes. This may

70–80 per cent affected by autoimmune diseases are women. The reasons involve genetic, hormonal and environmental factors, and the two X chromosomes women have.

cause patients to erroneously attribute a flare-up or remission to an unrelated event, such as a dietary indiscretion or the use of herbs and supplements.

A person may feel weak and tired for no obvious reason. At first, there may be no specific signs such as skin changes, muscle weakness, swelling, or pain. This can make the diagnosis difficult and may lead to ‘doctor shopping’ while searching for a diagnosis or permanent cure.

Environmental factors can also influence the risk of autoimmune disease. Living in an urban environment with prolonged exposure to air pollution, diesel fumes, or industrial pollutants may contribute to chronic inflammation. Cigarette smoke is particularly harmful, and passive smoking may also increase exposure to these toxins.

Autoimmune diseases are not usually inherited in a simple manner, where a single gene is directly passed from parent to child. Instead, they may involve a polygenic predisposition, similar to that seen in type 2 diabetes. Having siblings or first-degree relatives with an autoimmune disease does not mean that you will automatically develop one. Even among identical twins, if one develops an autoimmune disease, the other may remain unaffected. A genetically susceptible person often needs an environmental or biological trigger. Infections, particularly some viral infections, may trigger an abnormal immune response.

Obesity may contribute because excess body fat can promote persistent low-grade inflammation. Diet also supports overall health. A balanced diet containing fresh fruits, vegetables, whole grains and adequate protein is preferable to one dominated by highly processed foods, excess sugar and trans fats. However, no single food or special diet can prevent or cure all autoimmune diseases.

Diagnosing an autoimmune disease can be challenging because no single test identifies every condition. Blood tests such as ESR (Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate) and CRP (C-Reactive Protein) measure inflammation but do not identify its cause. The ANA (antinuclear antibody) test looks for antibodies that react against components of the body’s own cells. A positive ANA alone does not establish a diagnosis, as positive results can occur even in healthy people.

More specific tests may be required. Rheumatoid factor (RF) and anti-CCP antibodies can help diagnose rheumatoid arthritis, while anti-dsDNA and extractable nuclear antigen (ENA) antibodies may help diagnose lupus and related disorders. X-rays, ultrasound scans or MRI scans may be used to look for joint and tissue damage. Occasionally, a tissue biopsy is necessary to confirm involvement of a particular organ.

Treatment depends on the disease and its severity. Non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) may relieve pain and inflammation. Corticosteroids such as prednisone can rapidly suppress severe inflammation and are often used during acute flare-ups. Disease-modifying medications such as methotrexate can control abnormal immune activity and prevent progressive tissue damage.

Newer treatments include targeted biological drugs and monoclonal antibodies. These act on specific components of the immune system rather than broadly suppressing the entire immune response. They have transformed the treatment of several autoimmune disorders.

If an autoimmune disease destroys the body’s ability to produce an essential hormone, clinicians must replace it. People with type 1 diabetes require insulin, while those with autoimmune hypothyroidism may require thyroid

Physiotherapy is important when joints and muscles are affected. It helps maintain mobility, balance, flexibility and muscle strength.

hormone replacement. In selected severe autoimmune disorders, treatments such as intravenous immunoglobulin (IVIG) or plasma exchange may also be used.

Physiotherapy is important when joints and muscles are affected. It helps maintain mobility, balance, flexibility and muscle strength. Continue the exercises taught by the physiotherapist regularly. Walking, yoga, tai chi and appropriate strength training can also help maintain physical fitness and independence.

Many autoimmune diseases cannot be permanently cured, but they can often be effectively controlled. They may have cycles of flare-ups and remissions, sometimes lasting for years. Early diagnosis, appropriate medication, regular follow-up, a balanced diet, avoiding smoking, adequate sleep, and regular physical activity can help prevent complications and maintain quality of life.

A positive attitude, adherence to treatment and remaining physically active are important cornerstones of successfully living with an autoimmune disease.

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



RID **3160**

RC Vijayanagar Heritage

School bags were distributed to 150 students at Papinayakan Halli village. This will reduce the financial burden of families, and motivate children with school essentials.



Club matters



RID **3212**

Rotary District

RID 3090 PDG Bagh Singh Pannu visited 14 Rotary clubs to install RI founder Paul Harris' busts following an invitation from IPDG Dhinesh Babu. Around 290 Paul Harris busts have been installed across India.

RID **3233**

RC Madras West

DG Shriram Duvvuri inaugurated a computer lab with smart TV (₹22.5 lakh) at the Government HS School, Perumbedu village, Ponneri, through a CSR grant from Hyundai Autoever India. It would benefit 330 students.





RID 3240

RC Manipur

Around 120 fruit-bearing trees were planted at the Rotary Bhavan and Poirei Nawakol Children's Home with the mission to create a greener and healthy environment. Eatables were distributed to over 30 children at the special home.

RID 3170

RC Belgaum South

Sports shoes were distributed to students at the Government High School, Halasi village, in partnership with the Behere Foundation. Sanjeev Naik and Ann Ratna Behere were project chairpersons.



RID 3250

RC Patna City Samrat

E-rickshaws were given to two persons for self-employment in the presence of DG Anu Narang and PDG Sandeep Narang. Also, cycles were donated to five underprivileged students. PDGs Sanjeev Thakur and Bipin Chachan were present.



RID 3291

RC Ballygunge

A health check-up camp was held at the Sukh Sansthan Briddhashram. The initiative brought comfort, care and hope with medical care to the senior citizens.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



Food for thought and cooking for the planet

Preeti Mehra

Both urban and rural regions need access to clean cooking solutions to bring down air pollution.



Since the onset of the Israel-US-Iran war, every neighbourhood has been worrying about or contemplating the shortage of LPG or cooking gas and the slowing down of its delivery to households in the future.

Some families quickly bought an induction stove to use alongside the LPG gas stove, others invested in an air fryer, both connected to electricity and giving out zero emissions upfront. Of course, it is another matter that the majority of electricity generated in our country relies on coal, a dirty fuel. As most of us know, electricity generated from renewable energy is the best and cleanest alternative.

But then, there is a paradox. Whenever we talk about global warming or reducing our carbon footprint, our primary focus is on urban India. And when

remedial action taken is cited what is talked about is the successful propagation of LPG as a clean fuel for cooking.

Indeed, urban homes have a host of clean fuel options for the kitchen. So, you have piped gas in some cities, electric hot plates, air fryers and cooking ranges that work on electricity. Among the urban poor LPG has become popular and has replaced firewood, coal and wood as the cooking medium.

Access to LPG has also spread deep into rural areas. However, three recent studies released by the Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) have found that formal access to LPG has not kept pace with the growing informal market which is currently fulfilling the demand.

Formal access means having an authorised gas connection which ensures periodic replenishment of

empty cylinders by a government recognised provider. But there is a thriving grey market in gas cylinders patronised by those without a gas connection.

The studies are quite comprehensive. They bring data from over 2,200 rural households across six states, over 1,100 households in informal settlements and over 1,000 migrant workers across 10 cities.

According to the CEEW studies, in rural India gas cylinders are often bought from kirana stores, roadside dealers or unauthorised distributors at a premium. This unregulated supply comes with the risk of cylinder explosions and fires. The study underlines the need for a clean-cooking policy to solve sustained usage, affordability, formal access and last-mile delivery.

Let's take a peep at the difference in the cooking gas scenario between urban



and rural regions, as urban areas also have an informal LPG market.

Among urban informal settlement households, the study shows, LPG usage is far higher, at 70 per cent exclusive use, but 31 per cent of those without a formal connection were turned away for lacking documentation such as proof of address. As a result, 11 per cent of those surveyed buy cylinders informally, paying ₹1,040 against a retail price of ₹803, a price which prevailed at the time of the survey.

Among rural households it is different. The report says, “Among rural households, 73 per cent used LPG in the previous 90 days, but only 23 per cent use it exclusively; half still rely on firewood as their primary fuel, and just 47 per cent of LPG users receive doorstep delivery, leaving refill cost and last-mile logistics as the binding constraints.”

This primarily means emissions from cooking fuel would be significantly higher as those using firewood is substantial. And unfortunately, the move to provide clean cooking stoves or solar cookers to rural India has been limited to just a few pockets of the country, with LPG being seen as the only viable solution. But in that too there hasn't been the kind of streamlining needed in distribution of LPG across the country that would help to significantly clean the air and see that the affordability factor plays out right.

So, what is the link between clean air and the system of cooking adopted by households? If you are cooking with traditional biomass, wood, and other solid fuels, there will be higher emission of pollutants in the air. Long term exposure to these pollutants results in all kinds of health risks including respiratory diseases, cancer, oxidative stress, and cardiovascular diseases. Unfortunately, about 70 per cent of our population still depends on solid fuels for cooking. Studies in the past few years have indicated that biomass fuel burning for cooking accounts for up to 40 per cent of India's air pollution and causes around 800,000 premature deaths annually.

Comments made by two Fellows from CEEW referring to the three studies are pertinent and need to be paid attention to by the authorities.

Prarthana Borah said, “Clean air is inseparable from how people cook, work and live. These studies show that providing an LPG connection is only

the first step. If families cannot afford regular refills, migrants are not aware of formal connections under PMUY, or cylinders do not reliably reach rural homes, households remain exposed to polluting fuels. India's clean air agenda must therefore look beyond access to whether clean cooking is affordable, reliable and used sustainably.”

Abhishek Kar, also made an important point, “Clean cooking policy now has to move from connection numbers to sustained use. For rural households, refill affordability and doorstep delivery matter most; for urban poor households, documentation and payment innovations like micro-payments are needed; and for migrants, additional subsidy and awareness are the missing links. For example, a majority of migrant LPG users buy informally, paying a per-kg premium of more than 20 per cent over general users who can afford a full formal cylinder. These lived realities must guide the next phase of clean cooking action.”

And what is the price that consumers would find affordable? The three studies have somewhat the same findings: at least 80 per cent of surveyed rural households, urban informal settlement households and migrant workers said that they would transition to exclusive LPG usage if they could buy a refill at ₹400 for a 14.2 kg LPG cylinder. The median willingness to pay was ₹500 across the three groups. However, both figures quoted by those surveyed are below the current effective subsidised PMUY cylinder price of ₹642 (at the time of the study, now it is much higher).

Cooking fuel too is a pollution issue, but more often than not it is swept under the carpet. But with unrestrained urbanisation, industrial pollution rising and our rural areas and small cities facing unprecedented growth, clean cooking fuel for all citizen categories must be taken seriously.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

Majority of migrant LPG users buy informally, paying a per-kg premium of more than 20 per cent over general users who can afford a full formal cylinder.



Let's take the night train ...

Monisha Rajesh shares the delights and discoveries of travelling by sleeper all over the world.

If you like to travel, Monisha Rajesh's latest is for you. If you like trains, in fact, if you prefer to take it nice and slow, looking out of the window, and are not intimidated by conversations during which you can sometimes lay bare your soul to strangers, then her first two books, *Around India in 80 Trains* and *Around the World in 80 Trains*, are up your street. And if you love, simply love train travel, her latest, *Moonlight Express: Around the World by Night Train*, is absolutely the best thing you could read. It's a journey in itself around the world, in the course of which it's very likely that many unknown, undisturbed corners of your consciousness will be shaken awake forever. (Incidentally, her first two books found passing mention in 'Weaves of Words,' WW, February 2024.)

The word 'hemmablind,' for instance. Bed down on "the Dovre railway, a 300-mile stretch from Oslo up to Trondheim. From there ... transfer onto the Nordland railway and ride the



Sandhya Rao

500-mile line to Bodø — pronounced *boo-der* — just north of the Arctic Circle". We know about the northern lights of the Arctic Circle, the aurora borealis. Our geography textbooks also tell us that countries like Norway, New Zealand and Greenland have a dense cross-section of fjords, narrow and deep inlets from the sea. Monisha, berthed on the Nordland line, crossed 293 bridges thanks to the fjords, between sleep and wakefulness, engages in conversation with the pony-tailed Ludwig from Sweden now living in Norway. "The winter is long and it is dark," Ludwig tells her, "but we have a really nice twilight for four hours every day, it's punk and orange and you have the Northern

Lights as well." At this, Monisha sits up because she's chasing the aurora borealis. Lights all the time? "Most of the time," says Ludwig. Looking thoughtful, he continues, "We have this expression *hemmablind*. It's a Swedish word, it's like 'home blindness'. You don't have it in English? It means when you stop noticing the beauty of something where you live."

Monisha who is British writes: "I couldn't imagine what was naturally so beautiful in the UK that I'd become used to it, but perhaps that was Ludwig's point." Precisely. Such a profound observation garnered from a casual conversation. That was one little ray of light finding its way into my brain. *Moonlight Express* lit up my mind and heart with many, many slender rays; sometimes it reinforced an understood but perhaps insufficiently acknowledged fact. When Monisha and photographer Marc Sethi are travelling on assignment on the Shalimar Express two months after Norway, Sethi rips his one and only pair of trousers. A fellow



traveller, Mohan, offers him a pair of his own. Commenting to Monisha that he cannot imagine someone in London lending him their trousers, Sethi goes off to change. There, Monisha writes: “I wondered for a moment if our foreigner vibes had made Mohan more inclined to help, but overall Marc had a point. There was a unique spirit of generosity about Indian train travellers. Whether it came to sharing food, shifting to make space, or offering advice — unsolicited or otherwise — the railways usually brought out the best of human nature.”

Those of us who have taken and still take trains know this for a fact. Many of us have also forged friendships with strangers we met on train journeys, apart from ‘kindly adjusting’ to the nth degree particularly in the unreserved compartments of old: there was always, always room for one more person.

The book begins on what is perhaps the best-known train, the Orient Express, marking its 140th anniversary. We learn that the Paris-Istanbul (then Constantinople) connection originally began as a sequence of journeys by train and ferry and rolling stock. The last meant detached carriages being loaded on to ferries and then re-attached at the other end to continue the journey! The original (and the rescheduled) service was stopped in 2009, but luxury services such as the Venice Simplon-Orient Express and the Orient Express La Dolce Vita run by private operators are available at certain times of the year.

Overnight travel makes stopovers for exploration and recreation that much more comfortable. The Dacia (dat-sya) takes Monisha from Vienna to Bucharest, Romania, where she takes a break. The word ‘bulldozing’ in the chapter ‘Bucharest to Sofia,’ caught my eye. It appears that a powerful earthquake in 1977 had devastated Bucharest, after which “President Ceausescu set about bulldozing Bucharest’s beauty to



ruddle, demolishing entire neighbourhoods, schools and synagogues, replacing them to Soviet bleakness.

To my amazement, however, I discovered that a number of monasteries and churches had been preserved at the time by engineers who’d dug beneath them and laid railway-style tracks that allowed the buildings to be rolled away to safety!”

With curious and curiosity-inducing names such as The Caledonian Sleeper, The Royal Scotsman, The Good Night Train, The Silver Meteor, The Andean Explorer and The Santa Claus Express, the trains take us on journeys that dip into history, geography, politics, society, food, fashion and attitudes. Sometimes comfortable, sometimes peculiar — as when passengers are literally folded into capsules or hatches in the hi-fi Nightjet from Vienna to Hamburg — sometimes noisy, sometimes eerie, on these journeys made in good company you learn about each other in two days what you didn’t know in years.

Midnight Express easily ranks among my top three travel books, the other two being *Chasing the Monsoon* by Alexander Frater and *Land of the Dawnlit Mountains* by Antonia Bolingbroke-Kent. The vivid, lucid, nuanced writing takes the book far beyond people and places. It is free, frank, generous and feeling. Monisha

was in Ankara, having arrived on The Ankara Express and scheduled to proceed to Kars on The Dogu Express, when Turkey experienced two of the most destructive earthquakes in recent times: “The region was already home to refugees from north-west Syria, many of whom were living in makeshift accommodation, and the brutal cold was exacerbating the punishing conditions in which rescue teams were attempting to pull out survivors. I couldn’t understand the depth of my grief. I had no family or friends in the region, but hearing the primal screams of parents, their faces contorted with pain, was making me unravel.”

Other experiences are magical, some are eye-openers. In Sicily, her husband gets to sit reverentially on Don Corleone’s chair (remember *The Godfather*?) and her two little girls get to play in an extraordinary promenade in Parco della Salute: “It was fitted with ramps in the playhouse, had a large swing to accommodate a wheelchair, and inclines on the merry-go-round. Palermo’s history of inclusion (of Arab and Greek culture) was still going strong.”

This last comment makes me realise that this book is for everyone because it encompasses the senses, the elements, life itself.

So, in that spirit, here’s a quiz. This is a list of names, mostly rivers and a couple of lakes. Follow them on a world map and discover some places Monisha Rajesh’s train journeys took her through and to: Olt. Prahova. Yantra. Danube. Iskar. Küçükçekmece. Kizilirmak. Çalti Suyu. Karasu. Torneträsk. Exe. Teign. Almond. Firth of Forth. Tay. Spey. Urie. Messina strait. Spree. Vorma. Mjøsa. Lågen. Gaula. Nid. Ranfjorden. Saltfjorden. St Mary’s. Potomac. Van Sciver. Kachimayu. Urubamba. Titicaca.

Open your third eye now.

The columnist is a children’s writer and senior journalist



The age of the armchair experts

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



Have you ever wondered why educated Indians love to talk authoritatively about things they know nothing of? When such an issue comes up, which is quite often, why don't they just say "sorry, it's a technical subject about which I know nothing, so I will keep my mouth tightly shut?" Has this tendency become even greater after the internet came along and started dispensing half-baked knowledge and more recently, more harmfully, AI and social media? I think only very few would disagree that more people talk more nonsense now than ever before.

It's not uncommon to see someone talking ignorantly about all sorts of issues that require a lot of expertise. Like the Constitution, for example. People just rabbit on about it without knowing the first thing about it. NGO activists are particularly good at it. Or foreign policy which is another subject on which everyone has an opinion, usually an ignorant one.

Health and medicine are another example. My utterly well-meaning 82-year-old sister, with no knowledge of medicine or human anatomy whatsoever, routinely lectures me on my health and even prescribes medicines. Fortunately, these are all homeopathic ones. She says she doesn't believe in allopathy even as she swallows Crocin etc, and puts eye drops into her ageing eyes. That's not all. She has a friend, also in her 80s, who used to think she was an expert on the stock market. The two of them would routinely buy useless stocks and lose money, though fortunately not much. Whenever I told them to cease and desist from homeopathy and the stock market they would tell me I was a fool. But they have stopped dabbling in the market now.

There are others I know who hold forth on statistics and econometrics without any expertise in these fields. Zero. Zilch. I asked one of them

once, just as I asked my sister and her friend, what made them so sure they were right. It's a gut feel, they said. Gut feel? About statistics and econometric methods?

Once, during the course of a formal dinner, I told a woman I was a journalist. Whereupon I was given a long lecture, in a grating voice, about how journalists should do their jobs. I asked her what she did and her reply was "Nothing. I am a diplomat's wife." I am sure she also told her husband how to do his job. He had retired from a very senior position.

The same thing happens in sports, too, cricket especially. Men, women and even children have become total experts without having played the game except in the street with a tennis ball and a washing board. Sunil Gavaskar summed it up very well many years ago when he asked a particularly irritating journalist, "How many centuries have you scored?" Gavaskar has scored 35. The odd thing is that when India wins there are no comments. It's only when it loses that they get into full flow. Nor are there ever any comments on the opposing team's performance when it wins. No one bothers with it.

A world-renowned economist also once expressed his frustration. "How come," he asked, "everyone feels free to comment on economic policy but no one comments on aeronautical design?" And that's the crux of it. Economics is a highly specialised discipline, requiring a lot of technical knowledge. Yet it's a no-holds-barred, free-for-all.

The late Italian novelist, Umberto Eco once had this to say: "Social media gives legions of idiots the right to speak when they once only spoke at a bar after a glass of wine, without harming the community... but now they have the same right to speak as a Nobel Prize winner. It's the invasion of the idiots." ■

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