



Rotary News

India

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Inside



12

A dream sighting of the Big 5 in Africa



22

The best chapter of Rotary yet to be written



34

Chennai Annets scale Kilimanjaro



42

A silver jubilee celebration through service



54

Chandigarh Rotarians transform a village



60

Grooming space scientists

Important Announcement Revision in Subscription Rates

Dear subscribers,

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

The new annual subscription rates are:

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

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

We encourage Rotarians to choose the e-version.

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

Editor

Rotary 
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Magazine

An inspiring profile of RIPN Pandya

Wow! What an introduction of RI President Nominee Dr Bharat Pandya and his family. I was overjoyed as your conversation with him kept me spellbound. We both joined Rotary in 1989; that year had the theme *Enjoy Rotary* given by the then RI President Hugh M Archer from the US. For me, whosoever serves his own community and those elsewhere and builds friendship globally *Enjoys Rotary*. This fits into the personality of Dr Pandya, a cool and ever-smiling person.

Here are some of his quotable quotes: “A good surgeon must have an eagle’s eye, a lion’s heart, and a lady’s hand,” he had once told me. Dr Pandya’s other quotes: In surgery, decisions are based on analysis, knowledge, evidence, boldness and integrity. I have carried this forward to Rotary; I often talk about three phases in life: learn, earn and return. Rotary gave me the chance to return, even while I was still earning; I’ve gotten far more from this organisation than I could ever give back — and now I intend to keep giving; To me, the essence of Rotary can be captured in two words: hope and opportunity. Hope that a newborn child will be protected from polio through Rotary’s polio eradication efforts, and our communities can be



made better... and the opportunity we have as Rotarians to fulfil that hope. We look forward to a meaningful and glorious Rotary year under his leadership.

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

Congratulations to Dr Bharat Pandya who has been nominated RI President. His 37 years of dedicated and relentless services in Rotary has elevated him to this august office. Seeing one more Indian in this post makes us proud;

his spouse Dr Madhavi also deserves appreciation as she supported him in this journey. Let us wish him all the very best — Dr Pandya is the right person coming to the right post.

S Mohan, RC Madurai West — D 3000

In the interview with RIPN Pandya the boxed item, *Attributes of a good leader*, was insightful. The comment by PRIP KR Ravindran about Pandya is profound. India has seen exponential growth of Rotary in the recent past, be it in membership or TRF contribution. I’m sure with the incoming leader, we will see progress in stewardship issues too.

Nester Sequeira, RC Panaji — D 3170

Kudos & criticism for Edits

In her October edit, Rasheeda Bhagat explained that integrity is one of the most prominent qualities in RIPN Bharat Pandya. As Clement Stone, the self-made American billionaire, philanthropist and self-help author, once said, “Have the courage to face the truth. Do the right thing because it is right. These are the magic keys to living your life with integrity.”

*KMK Murthy
RC Secunderabad — D 3150*

Kudos for the brilliant Editor’s Note (October issue) on the topic of integrity

and corruption, that presents before us the sombre spectacle of sordid affairs in our present-day society. Man’s insatiable desire to amass wealth has given rise to corruption. Corruption is despised all over, yet practised universally. We get immense pleasure in jumping traffic lights, queues, and breaking rules.

Anybody who holds any power in the government, uses this power to convert it into cash. Corruption is definitely eating away the vitals of our moral fibre. I believe that about 10 per cent of the population which controls our country is really corrupt.

And it is this 10 per cent that gives a bad name to the entire country. It is time the remaining 90 per cent raise their voice.

The example of RIPN Bharat Pandya comes as a breath of fresh air. He is adored by one and all ‘as a leader of impeccable integrity.’ Integrity is the walking stick of life; our actions should match our words; even when no one is watching. You have rightly said: Honest and truthful ones sleep better at night.

*Subhendu Mohanty
RC Bhubaneswar
Excellence — D 3262*

LETTERS

The Editor's Note titled *The aspiration for education* (Aug issue) says volumes. The recent incidents leading to protests over leaked exam papers, and police action on protesting students across the country awakened the authorities from their slumber and when the situation went out of control, remedial measures followed.

But in fact, a solution is still not in sight and this is disturbing. Middle-class parents with economically weak backgrounds are still waiting for a miracle. As the edit says *pate kaat ke bachchey ko padhaya...* parents sacrificed their basic needs including food to educate their children for a better future. This is really touching. And now, with AI being in the hands of only a few tech savvy persons, it raises even more troubling questions on social and economic equality and progress for all.

TRF trustee chair Jennifer Jones message titled *Care without borders* is related to social equity. She is concerned about healthcare remaining uneven across countries and communities, and talks about the relevance and value of TRF across borders, and moving closer to a world where no one is left behind.

Abhay Kishore Sandwar
RC Dhanbad Midtown — D 3250

With reference to the October edit, we as an NGO built on fellowship and friendship should stay politically neutral with our thoughts, actions and words and avoid our ideology creeping into our actions. The October edit started with honouring RIPN Bharat Pandya for his integrity, but soon drifted into various topics. I believe these human rights, corruption and happiness indexes are generated through unfair means and are not truthful. By saying that every vote matters, Gen Z on the roads etc, are

we not indirectly endorsing the (NEET paper leak) protests? We as an NGO should be free from any political and ideological influence and focus on our core value of service and fellowship.

Murali Krishna RV
RC Moodabidri — D 3181

A captivating journey of RID Nagesh

The inspiring and thought-provoking cover story, titled *Let's take Rotary to greater heights*, by Rasheeda Bhagat captured eloquently the Rotary journey of RI director KP Nagesh. I was deeply moved by his extraordinary journey and the manner in which his experiences have been presented. His life story is much more than a record of achievements — it is a powerful reflection of determination, courage, resilience and perseverance. The challenges he encountered and the way he transformed them into opportunities offer valuable lessons for all of us.

What makes the article particularly inspiring is the message that with the right attitude, commitment and perseverance, one can overcome difficulties and continue to move forward with purpose. His journey is especially meaningful for the younger generation, who can draw great motivation from his experiences.

Kudos to the editor for bringing this inspiring story to the readers of *Rotary News* in such a graceful, engaging and

thought-provoking manner. Stories like this truly enrich Rotary literature. A wonderful piece of writing and a great source of inspiration.

Colonel (retd) Vijayakumar
RC Alleppey Greater — D 3211

The message from TRF trustee chair Jennifer Jones (Sep issue) on 'Make polio history' is rejuvenating. It is the duty of Rotarians to reassure everyone on World Polio Day (Oct 24) that they are committed to ending polio. I think the answer for her quiz is Penguins.

P Mohankumar
RC Madras Pallava — D 3234

Thank you for the wonderful article *Managing arthritis* by Gita Mathai. A great moment for PRIP Rajendra Saboo and all Rotary family as a Chandigarh school is named Bhavan's RK Saboo Vidyalaya.

RC Bombay Airport has taken up a great project of providing life-saving heart surgeries to over 625 children born with congenital heart diseases. Kudos to the project team.

Chinmaya Mahapatra, RC Rajdhani
Bhubaneswar — D 3262

On the cover

A cheetah photographed in the Maasai Mara - Serengeti region.

Picture: N Ramakrishnan

We welcome your feedback Write to the Editor:

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

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WHATSAPP MESSAGES WILL NOT BE ENTERTAINED.

More members, more impact

Change within ourselves is the first step toward the impact we seek to make in the world.

I remember my first encounter with Rotary. I saw a Rotarian on television. I was a teenager with my thoughts elsewhere, when suddenly my full attention was on this man. I did not know it then, but that moment would change my life.

That is the thing about impact. We often imagine it as something we create out there, in a community we visit or in a project we fund. But that impact is brought about through the change within us, as well.

Increasing our impact is the first pillar of Rotary's Action Plan, and it asks us not only to do good but to do good that lasts and can be measured. It means choosing sustainable, needs-based projects over comfortable ones and asking honestly whether a project will still be serving people five years from now without us in the room.

When I say we must *Create Lasting Impact*, I do not mean impact that fades once the ribbon is cut or the well is dug. I mean the kind of impact that changes the person doing the work as surely as it changes the person benefitting from it. Rotary changes all of us. It changed a teenager watching a television broadcast. It has changed millions of Rotarians and Rotaractors since 1905. And it will keep changing people, long after this Rotary year, if we do the work now to make sure it can.

That work starts with membership. Impact scales with people. Every hand we add is another hand that can dig a well, teach a child to read, deliver a vaccine, or simply show up for a neighbour in need. As we approach our 125th anniversary in 2030, our goal is to reach 1.25 million Rotarians and 125,000 Rotaractors worldwide. That is not a number for a banner. It is a measure of how much more good we can do together, and how many more lives, including our own, Rotary still has the chance to change.

I have often challenged you to do better than your best. Growing our membership is where that



challenge lives most urgently. Invite the colleague who keeps asking what Rotary is about. Welcome back the member who drifted away. Partner with the Rotaract club down the street. Every one of those conversations is a small act with lasting consequences.

We have 125 years behind us and a great deal of work still ahead. Let us build the kind of Rotary that keeps changing people the way it changed me, one member, one project, one act of service at a time. Together, let us *Create Lasting Impact*.

Yinka Babalola

President, Rotary International



Finding positive stories to tell

In a world torn apart by strife, violence and war, where the young are raising serious concerns about their future, where the education systems are inadequate or ill-equipped to meet emerging challenges and where cold-blooded, relentless genocide is taking place in one part of the world, one is desperate to tell a positive story.

To read such a story I turned to *The Better India* magazine... the 'media for good news and positive stories.' Its latest cover story and accompanying picture brought an instant smile as it shows women seated before an array of handbags, baskets and other household items made from what appears to be cane or straw. But the text says that 150 Andhra women from Krishna district are "turning a harmful water weed (hyacinth) into handbags, home décor and income." Kalpana, a local artisan, is deftly converting this harmful and troublesome weed, that rapidly spreads and chokes waterways, and is removed and thrown away, into baskets, lampshades and more. It fetches her a substantial daily income of `500-700. The rest of the story explains how this weed was converted into an income-generating activity for women... something that fits right into a Rotary focus area.

Actually one doesn't even need to look so far for positive stories. Our inboxes at *Rotary News*, and the subsequent articles in your magazine, also relate so many positive stories of hope and optimism generated by Rotarians across the world, and particularly in India, through their community welfare projects. Take the case of the Rotary Club of Bombay Bay View, featured in this issue (Page 42), where the club members are celebrating their silver jubilee by doing 25 iconic projects. The ones that particularly gladden the heart relate to the welfare of our soldiers posted in the challenging

terrain of Kashmir. The members have provided solar lighting in dark areas near the LoC, put up an exclusive gym for them, and have won the hearts of 1,200 jawans by giving them *rakhis*, thus wrapping them in a bond of affection and caring. As one of the members put it: "This was to assure them that they are not alone; 1,200 women are thinking of them, and saluting them for protecting the nation."

Takes me back to that morning 30 years back in the *Indian Express* where I was then the Chief of News Bureau, and had a touring British couple walking in to tell "a positive story". They said in their country and ours, they found the newspapers full of negative stories, and had come to relate a story of how an Indian Airlines pilot, Captain Shamsheer Singh, had skilfully landed an aircraft on a single engine on the challenging runway at Port Blair. The man could tell because he himself was a pilot; "most of the passengers won't know how quickly and brilliantly their captain had acted to prevent a crash when one engine failed, and had saved their lives. But I could make out and later confirmed it in a chat with the Captain," he said.

I wrote that story, and had a grateful Captain Singh calling to thank me, and that association turned into a long and valuable friendship, till he sadly passed on last year.

Yes, candles do help to dispel the darkness... till more darkness is created by the evil forces around us. But with Diwali just around the corner, let's keep lighting those little *diyas* of hope...

Happy Diwali!

Rasheeda Bhagat

Rasheeda Bhagat

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Director speak



Nobody builds a bridge alone

Whenever I ask a club to tell me about their best project, nobody begins with the amount they spent. They begin with a person or a place — a newborn saved in a neonatal ward, a pond restored, a child back in class, a government school for girls that finally has clean washrooms. The figures come later, almost as an afterthought. I think that tells us what giving really means to a Rotarian.

There is an episode in the *Ramayana*, found in our regional retellings rather than in Valmiki's original. As the *vanaras* hauled boulders into the sea to build the bridge to Lanka, a squirrel kept dipping itself in the water, rolling in the sand, and shaking the grains among the stones. Some of them laughed at it. Rama did not. He lifted the squirrel into his hand and stroked its back. The squirrel could not carry a boulder. It carried what it could. When the bridge stood, it was made of both, sand and boulders.

Our Foundation is built the same way. No single Rotarian pays for a neonatal ward, a restored pond, a child's schooling, or washrooms in a government girls' school in a district far from their own. What happens is quieter than that. Your contribution leaves your hand, joins thousands of others, and comes back as a grant that someone you will never meet puts to work. You may never see the village. The village will never know your name. But the work gets done.

This is why I find the word 'donation' inadequate. A donation is something you give away. What we do through our Foundation is closer to taking responsibility for a problem too large for one person, one club or one district to solve alone, and agreeing to carry our share of it.

The ways are already familiar to you. The Annual Fund, Endowment Fund, PolioPlus Fund, and increasingly CSR partnerships, which in India hold far more promise than we have used so far. Choose whichever suits your capacity.

The choice matters much less than the decision to give at all, and to keep giving.

I remember thinking it was too small to be of any use when I opened my account with TRF with \$100, 25 years ago. I was wrong. What mattered was not the size of that first cheque but that I kept adding to it, year after year. That account now stands at \$475,000.

To a young Rotarian or Rotaractor reading this: do not wait until you can give what you consider a respectable amount. Give now, give what is comfortable, and let the habit grow with you. The Foundation has lasted more than 100 years on exactly this arithmetic.

Nowhere is this truer than in our fight against polio. It is now 47 years since Rotary took up this cause, beginning with a single immunisation project in the Philippines in 1979. Together with our partners, we have helped reduce polio cases worldwide by more than 99 per cent. Today, we are only a few miles from the finish. These last miles are the hardest and the costliest, and they will be covered the same way the bridge was built — one contribution at a time. Please stand with the End Polio mission, as a club and as an individual. We have come this far together. Let us not stop now.

November is Foundation Month, and we will hear a good deal about targets. I urge you to hold a different picture in your mind this year. Somewhere a bridge is being built — against polio, illiteracy, disease, against the distance between what people need and what they can reach. You may not be able to carry a boulder. Carry what you can. Keep giving!

M Muruganandam

RI Vice President, 2026-27

RI Director, 2025-27

Message from TRF Trustee Chair



Seeds of peace

Recently I met Selu Polley, a Ugandan police officer and a member of the 25th class of Rotary Peace Fellows at the International Christian University in Japan.

Growing up next to the Nakivale refugee settlement in southern Uganda — one of the oldest and largest in the world — Selu knew some of its residents. Now he hopes to focus his peace fellowship research on Nakivale, to prepare him to serve his own community.

That conversation took me back to my own visit there in 2022 and reminded me that the seeds of peace

can spring up where we least expect them.

Nakivale is home to more than 286,000 people who have fled conflicts in the Democratic Republic of Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, and elsewhere, many of them women who walked for days and often weeks to reach safety.

Their stories will stay with me forever.

Every single one told me her husband had been murdered. Several had lost children to violence, hunger, or exhaustion. Through immeasurable grief, their presence was steady, dignified and resolute.

When I asked what they needed, not one asked for money. Not one asked for food or shelter. They asked for opportunity. They wanted the chance to build small businesses so they could feed their children and send them to school. Their request was simple and powerful: Help us create something that will last.

To that end, I have been working with Paul Mushaho, a first-cohort graduate of the Rotary Peace Center at Uganda's Makerere University, who started Nakivale's first Rotaract club. With support from The Rotary Foundation, we are funding a sewing room where these women can learn a trade, earn an income, and build stability. Through those clubs, young people in Nakivale see themselves not as survivors but as leaders.

As we celebrate Rotary Foundation Month in November and embark upon the 25th year of Rotary Peace Fellows, remember how far the Foundation has come, and the work of the more than 1,900 peace fellow alumni.

The journey to peace is begun by leaders like Paul, strengthened by the Nakivale women who refuse to give up hope, and carried forward by peace fellows like Selu.

Peace is not an abstract concept. It is an action, built one opportunity at a time, often by those who have endured the unimaginable and still choose hope. Through The Rotary Foundation, we can choose hope alongside them, and help it grow into something that lasts.

Jennifer Jones
TRF Trustee Chair

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Message from TRF Trustee



Let ‘impact’ be our mantra

An opportunity to serve is one of the main reasons why many join Rotary and is also the main purpose of staying on in Rotary. This opportunity comes in many forms and the more significant of them comes through The Rotary Foundation. The magic unfolds when we leverage the full power of our Foundation.

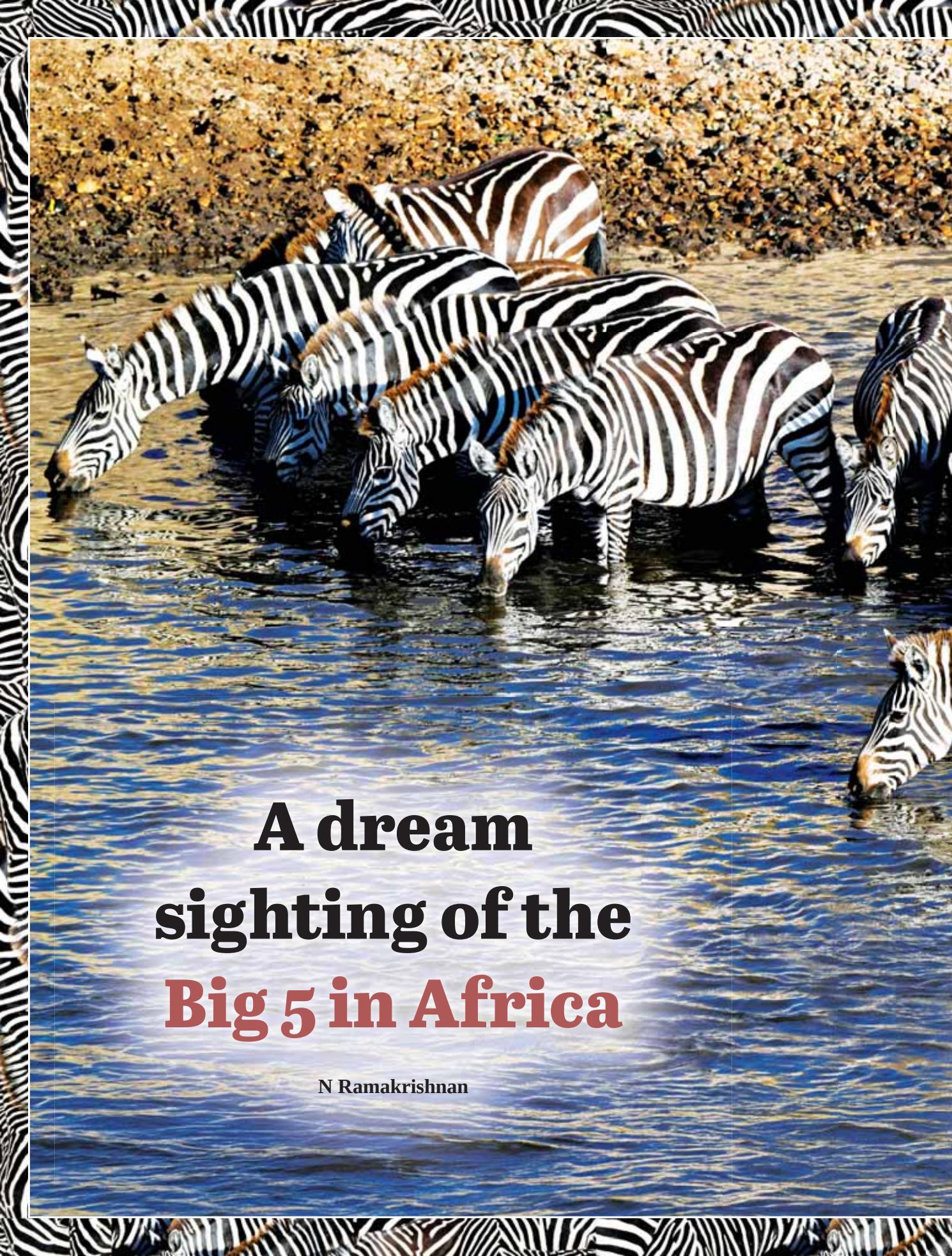
There is a menu of options our Foundation provides for our members to take advantage of. The range of projects carried out by our members varies from one’s keenness to just serve, to a larger goal of solving a community’s problems. While each of those acts is important, it is necessary to focus on the *impact* of our work.

Polio eradication is an instance where we attempted to solve a problem rather than just serve. The greater our desire to move from a ‘serve’ to a ‘solve’ mindset, the greater is likely to be our impact. Organisations world over are measuring impact rather than outcome and it is time we moved too. We have been reporting the money spent on projects and at times even man hours spent on it — with or without assigning a value to it. Rarely do we report the impact.

I urge clubs and districts to start focusing on the impact of our projects. How many lives have been changed and to what extent. How long will the effect of our work last. Will it be merely useful or will it be transformative. Will generations to come, benefit from it. These are the questions we need to ask ourselves while we plan a community service project.

Going forward, let our mantra be *impact*, and a lasting one too!

AS Venkatesh
TRF Trustee

A photograph of a herd of zebras in a savanna setting. Several zebras are standing in a shallow waterhole, drinking. The water is clear and blue, reflecting the sunlight. The background is a dry, yellowish-brown landscape with sparse vegetation. The zebras have black and white stripes, and their heads are lowered into the water. The overall scene is peaceful and natural.

A dream sighting of the Big 5 in Africa

N Ramakrishnan



Maasai Mara and the Serengeti. They conjure up images of prides of lions, herds of elephants, zebras, giraffes, cheetahs and leopards. The opportunity to see one of the predators hunting a prey. Not to mention the wildebeest crossing, a spectacle by itself, made more exciting by the prospect of watching waiting crocodiles catch zebras or wildebeests.

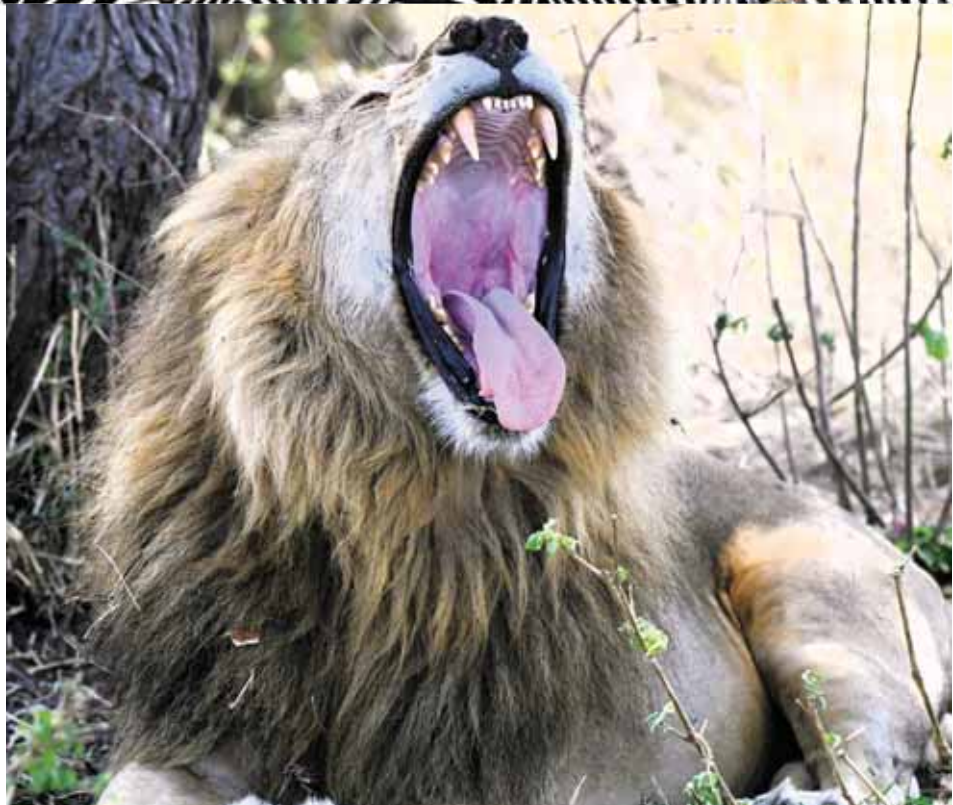
This is what a group of 10 of us were hoping for when we heard about an imminent crossing on the walkie-talkie chatter and our drivers took us to the river bank on the Maasai Mara side. We were excited and anticipated some action. There was a herd of zebras and wildebeest grazing above the slope to the river.

A small herd of zebras was at the water's edge, quenching their thirst from what appeared to be a quiet

Mara. The 10 of us were on the other side, watching eagerly from two re-modelled Toyota Landcruiser 4x4s, the makeshift roofs were open, almost all of us were standing on the seats craning our necks to catch a glimpse of the zebras and wondering whether they would cross the Mara. Unfortunately, this herd was more interested in quenching its thirst than crossing over to the other side — from Serengeti to Maasai Mara. The zebras climbed back

up the embankment and started grazing. We were disappointed. We were hoping that the zebras would cross the river and that would lead to a large number of wildebeests that were grazing following suit.

It was tranquil. The animals were not making much noise. Only the humans were. The wind was strong. Small birds, mostly bee-eaters, twittered, flitting between tall blades of grass to small bushes. Nothing seemed to have changed. But not quite. The crocodiles that feed on the chaotic crossing of the zebras and wildebeests had sensed the presence of the animals and moved close to where the zebras had come down for a drink. From our vantage positions on the other bank, we could see through our binoculars the crocodiles waiting motionless in the





water. If you had not seen them gliding across the water, you would have mistaken them for rocks. Now that the zebras had walked up the embankment and started grazing again, should we head to another location to spot predators or should we wait? Thankfully, we decided to wait.

Then came the action. Four zebras came down the embankment and decided to cross the water, one leading and the other three, a few feet behind. There were frantic voices from our jeeps — warning the zebras not to cross — and before we knew it, a waiting crocodile had its meal. The first zebra, which appeared to be walking with supreme confidence believing that the coast was clear, walked straight into the fearsome jaws of the crocodile. The struggle was brief. There was only one victor — the crocodile, which dragged the zebra under the water and away to a more secluded spot, to be joined by a couple of other crocodiles, to savour its meal. A few of

us hoped there would be more crossings and more kills. A few felt sorry for the zebra. But that is the cycle of life. Nature is brutal. One animal has to be killed for another to survive.

We saw a few wildebeests crossings during our 10-day trip to Maasai Mara, Serengeti and Ngorongoro, with one herd having at least a few hundred wildebeests crossing over. It was a majestic sight. The wildebeests are classified as one of the Ugly 5 animals in the African savanna; the others are the warthog, vulture, spotted hyena and the Marabou stork. They have their own reasons for crossing the Mara; they are either following the rain or blindly following the lead animal, which is most often a zebra that acts as the band master. Or a large number of them have gathered at the water's edge and are constantly being pushed from behind for space by the newcomers, so they start crossing the river. The large number of vehicles with tourists, most capturing the action on their mobile phone cameras and a quite a few like

me, with digital cameras and telephoto lenses, crowd the waterfront waiting for the animals to cross. The park rangers do their best to regulate the crowd. Vehicles are not allowed near the banks if a crossing looks imminent. Once the animals start crossing the water, all hell breaks loose. Literally. The drivers make a dash for vantage positions for their passengers to get a better view of the crossing.

The wildebeest crossing is just one of the splendid sights in Maasai Mara and Serengeti. You get to see at least four of the Big 5. The Big 5 are the lion, bison, leopard, elephant and rhinoceros. I cannot understand how they could leave out the cheetah from this list and include the bison. But that is matter for another discussion altogether. In our case, we saw the first four in Maasai Mara and Serengeti and got a good glimpse of a herd of four rhinos

from a distance at Ngorongoro. Having been to quite a few tiger safaris in India, I am always enthralled by tigers and, even after watching lions at close quarters in the wild for the first time, I still believe that tigers are more majestic and mesmerising when compared to lions. But that doesn't mean I did not get excited seeing lions at different locations, including a pride getting ready to hunt a herd of wildebeest, which unfortunately did not happen, when we were waiting here. The lions know they are kings of the jungle; quite a few sauntered within a few feet of our vans, including a male with a majestic mane. Others sat on their haunches and lapped up water from the puddle that had formed on the roadside thanks to an overnight shower.

The landscape was dry and open, unlike most of the tiger reserves in India. It was the dry season and the vast expanse of Serengeti plains were open grassland with the occasional tree in the distance providing a striking contrast to the landscape. There are





different types of antelopes such as the Thomson's Gazelle, Impala, Coke's Hartebeest, Eland, Grant's Gazelle, Bush buck and water buck, grazing, always on the alert for a predator. At least on two occasions, elephants came within touching distance of our vans, including a large bull elephant with huge tusks at Ngorongoro. They didn't care about the humans. They walked noiselessly, feeding on whatever they fancied. It was their home. The humans were intruders.

The first zebra, which appeared to be walking with supreme confidence believing that the coast was clear, walked straight into the fearsome jaws of the crocodile.

In Ngorongoro, the crater that was formed by a volcanic eruption over two million years ago, you get to see the flamingos, both the Lesser and the Greater varieties, sifting through the water in the lake for algae, which is their main food and which also gives them their colouration. The Maasai Mara, Serengeti and Ngorongoro are rich in bird life, but only hardcore bird watchers like me will be interested; most people want to sight the larger animals. The van drivers, who are also guides, have to undergo courses to qualify as guides. They are excellent at spotting the animals in the distance and constant walkie-talkie chatter alerts everyone about where a predator has been sighted or a crossing is about to start.

The mad rush then begins to get the best possible position. For many, it is a trip to tick off one more item on their bucket list, but for nature and wildlife lovers like my wife and myself, it was a lifetime experience. Something to be savoured for a lifetime. The photographs will help, of course! I could have just sat gazing at the grassland all day, even if I hadn't spotted a single animal.

If you have the money and can put up with back-breaking rides in the Land Cruisers and are prepared to wait to spot the animals, the trip is indeed worth it.

Our trip started in Nairobi, from where our drivers Amos and Isaac drove us in Land Cruisers to our first resort in Maasai Mara. From there, we took two bush flights in small Cessna aircraft to get to Serengeti, where we were picked up by our drivers Gilead and Philip, who spent the rest of the tour with us till dropping us off at the Kilimanjaro airport to head home with great memories. The highways were excellent, and we found more people obeying traffic rules on the highways than in India. The conversation right from the time we left Nairobi was whether we would see the cats or a crossing. All that our helpful guide would say was, wait and see. Thankfully, we waited and saw all that we wanted to.

The writer is a Chennai-based independent journalist

Pictures by Ramakrishnan

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Rotary supports budding archers

Kiran Zehra



Girls training at the Magadh Archery Foundation's training centre in Gaya.

At three, Adarsh Kumar made his first bow and arrow from sticks he gathered with his uncle in Usas, a small village in Bihar. Inspired by the *Ramayana*, he would imagine himself as Ram or Lakshman, “taking aim at tree trunks and rocks.” When he was seven, his uncle introduced him to local archery competitions, turning a childhood pastime into much more. “I had no professional equipment or formal training back then. I just enjoyed shooting arrows,” he says. Today, at 17, Adarsh is a national level archer who won a gold at the 2025 national championship.

After his father, a government schoolteacher, died, Adarsh moved to Gaya, where he joined the Magadh Archery Foundation's training centre. His mother works as a government clerk. Support from the Foundation and RC Gaya City, RID 3250, has

helped him continue both his education and sporting career. The club arranged his admission to the Nazareth Academy in Gaya, and is paying his school fees, allowing him to focus on archery without giving up his studies.

The support was given to Adarsh as his performance improved. He won a bronze in an under-14 state-level competition in 2022, followed by gold and silver medals in the under-17 category in subsequent years. In 2025, he added another gold to his record at the national level. He is not the only young archer making progress at the centre. Poonam Singh (15), has been selected by the Sports Authority of India (SAI) as one of 10 archers from across the country for a specialised training camp in Turkey. RC Gaya City has also facilitated admissions at the Kendriya Vidyalaya school for state-level champions Ranveer Raj and Saloni Raj, training at the archery centre.

“The club’s support allows young athletes to pursue sports without giving up their education. Their success depends not just on winning medals, but also on access to schooling, family support and the resources needed to continue training,” says archery coach Jai Prakash.



Adarsh Kumar (R) with archery coach Jai Prakash.



PDGs S P Bagaria (sixth from L), Sanjeev Kumar Thakur (on Bagaria's left), and members of RC Gaya City with students to whom they gifted bicycles.

In 2022, he had approached the club's executive secretary Ratan Kumar for help in developing the archery facility in Gaya. Kumar, who was a state-level cricketer, approached his club and a trust was established to manage the initiative. The local government sanctioned an open ground for the training centre where the club helped construct a shed. PDG Sanjeev Thakur then donated ₹50,000 to the centre; PDG SP Bagaria gifted bicycles to 12 trainees. In 2025, the club contributed ₹1.51 lakh for the development of the archery ground and other facilities.

Club members have also sponsored jerseys, while the club and the Foundation provided bows, water bottles and backpacks to the students. On International Women's Day, new bows were presented to two young girl archers, Saloni and Vaishnavi Karan. "Such support matters because archery is an expensive sport. A professional

bow-and-arrow set can cost as much as ₹5 lakh. The centre sponsors basic sets costing ₹40,000, and only one student so far has received a set worth ₹80,000," says Kumar. For families "who must weigh the cost of equipment against school expenses and other household needs, such purchases can be difficult to manage. Providing equipment allows children to train."

The centre currently trains 86 children, aged three to eighteen, many from underprivileged backgrounds. "Selection is based on a child's interest and potential, along with consistency in attendance and performance," says the coach.

The centre has an Interact club since 2025. Interactors save small amounts of money in piggy banks and use the savings

for social causes. They have taken part in tree planting activities and organised celebrations on Teachers' Day and Holi. The Interact club is supported by club members Raj Kumar Dubey, Dr Ratan Kumar and Vijay Bhalotia. Kumar points out that "the intention is to help young people see themselves not only as athletes receiving support, but also as members of a community in which they can contribute."

Prakash, who is a Level Two qualified archery coach with the Bihar State Sports Authority in Patna, received the Bihar Government's Best Coach Award in 2024 and 2025, each carrying a cash prize of ₹2 lakh. "He used part of the award money to buy equipment for the centre. Under his guidance, Gaya emerged the overall champion at the Raja Karna State-Level Archery Championship in Patna in 2024. Competing against 400 archers, the Gaya team won nine gold, eight silver and 10 bronze medals. Confident of winning the Best Coach Award again this year, Prakash says his bigger dream is to see his students win an Olympic gold medal. Kumar describes the centre as a "champions centre. Watching them practise, I am sure an Olympic medal is a certainty," he says with conviction.

At a state-level school championship in Bhagalpur, Magadh region archers from the centre won 21 medals (nine gold, six silver and six bronze, across three age categories). At the Mini National Archery Championship in March 2026, the Foundation's archers won two gold and one bronze medals.

The foundation hopes to send three students to South Korea for specialised archery training. As the cost is high, the club is seeking support from Rotary clubs in India and South Korea. "Young archers need regular coaching, good equipment, opportunities to compete and financial support to travel," adds Kumar. ■



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The best chapter of Rotary yet to be written **Bharat Pandya**

Rasheeda Bhagat

There are moments in life when words seem inadequate; 37 years ago, when I joined Rotary, little did I know it would take me on a journey and a point where I will be standing here as the 2028–29 RI President. I am deeply touched and humbled by the words of appreciation, wisdom and blessings that each panelist and speaker has shared.”

With these words Rotary International President-Nominee Bharat Pandya greeted Rotarians at a glittering event titled *Abhinandan* organised in Mumbai to felicitate him. He thanked convenor and PRID Raju Subramanian (he and his wife Vidhya, were later

From L: PRID Raju Subramanian, Vidhya, RIDE Basu Dev Golyan, Kumud, Amandeep, RIDE Gurjeet Singh Sekhon, Nayantara, PRID Ashok Mahajan, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, PRID P T Prabhakar, Madhavi, RIPN Bharat Pandya, PRIP Shekhar Mehta, RID K P Nagesh, PRIP K R Ravindran, Vanathy, RID 3141 DG Rajan S Dua, Preeti, Amita, PRID Mahesh Kotbagi, past TRF Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty, PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury, Kanchan and RID 3142 DG Nilesh Jaywant.



announced the Presidential aides for 2028–29) and governors of RI Districts 3141 and 3142 Rajan Dua and Nilesh Jaywant, for hosting the meet attended by 750 members.

An experience that remained etched in his memory was when as a young Rotarian, and only doctor in his club then, he was put in charge of the just started PolioPlus programme. As he “became involved, went into the dark areas of the slums, convincing parents, immunising children by putting two drops of polio in their mouths, that experience touched and changed me.”

Gradually, he realised that in Rotary, service is not an abstract concept or a phrase “but it has a human

face... the smile of a child, the worry of a parent, the gratitude of a mother. It is the dignity of women whose lives change because they were empowered by Rotary, and some Rotarian cared for their kids.”

Years later, thanks to PRID Ashok Mahajan, Pandya served on the National PolioPlus Committee when India became polio-free. “Every role, every responsibility taught me something. And I realised that leadership in Rotary is not about standing in front of the people and getting their applause, but standing with them. It is about listening and understanding, bringing people together, and most importantly, remembering that positions in Rotary are temporary, but the impact of the

work we do can last for years and decades. It was Lao Tzu who once said, ‘the good leader is one who people follow, but the wise leader is one who, when the task is accomplished, people will say, we did it ourselves.’”

Pandya added that his constant endeavour in Rotary had been “to build more leaders and not more followers. When I look back, I realise that I have got far more from Rotary than I could ever give back. It has given me friendships of people whose friendship is worthwhile, opportunities to learn and grow, and the privilege of working with outstanding people and leaders. I am a proud Rotarian because Rotary has continued to expand my horizons leading me to a different way of thinking and a better way of living.”

He was acutely aware that he was following distinguished leaders who had led Rotary, including five from our zones. People like Raja Saboo, Kalyan Banerjee, K R Ravindran and Shekhar Mehta had left their mark on the organisation.

Both “humbled and excited by the opportunity to lead Rotary,” he thanked his parents and elders in his own Rotary family for mentoring and guiding him. He particularly thanked his club (RC Borivli) and District 3140 (now 3141 and 3142) because “I am a product of RID 3140” for their faith, trust, support and encouragement. “But above all, I thank the person who my nephew Shyam called the wind beneath my wings, my mentor, my guide and best friend, my wife Madhavi.”

Thanking all Rotarians for their service to Rotary, the President-nominee said all opportunities in Rotary come with responsibility and they should discharge their



From L: PRID Raju Subramanian, RIPN Bharat Pandya, Vidhya Subramanian and Madhavi Pandya.

responsibilities by remaining focused, learning from the path the ants take, not getting a wee bit distracted by obstacles in their path. “They have a single focus on reaching their objective. Focus has great power,” he said giving the example of a laser which is very weak source of energy, having only a few watts of energy, but when focused, even this small bit of energy can cut a piece of glass or drill a hole in a diamond, the toughest substance known to man.

Going ahead, in the years to come, all of them, including himself will have to focus on three important aspects — people, impact and trust. “The most important asset that we have are our members; they are the strength of Rotary and we have to focus on them to reach the goal of 1.25 million Rotarians and 125,000 Rotaractors by June 2030.”

Coming to impact, quoting a saying from our ancient texts about the importance of mitigating the sufferings of people, Pandya said this is the

essence of Rotary service. At present, Rotary service was limited to “the number of projects we are doing, how much money we are spending. But our service has to solve the problems of the people, change their lives and create lasting, measurable impact in the community first.”

Talking of trust, he said it was the greatest asset Rotarians had; in today’s world, when institutions are increasingly coming under focus for improper practices and losing trust, “Rotary has to remain that organisation that still inspires trust... in our leadership, our integrity and stewardship. Trust that every rupee donated and given to Rotary will be used well, wisely and effectively.” Again, quoting from Indian scriptures, Pandya said, “The only thing that walks back from the tomb along with the mourners and refuses to be buried is the character of a person, which outlives him/her and can never be buried.” Character builds integrity, integrity builds trust and trust is the foundation of leadership.

Rather than celebrating his nomination to the post of RI President (2028–29) he underlined the need to celebrate all Rotarians who were giving their talent and time to Rotary, and the single question was “not what Bharat Pandya is going to do as RI President, but what are we going to accomplish together in this journey of 2028–29.”

Today, our zones are really shining in Rotary, there is a strong and steady membership growth, younger leaders are emerging in India where outstanding community service is being done with TRF support. For several years now India has been No 2 in Foundation giving and last year we had crossed the \$45 million mark.

As “PRIP Shekhar Mehta always says, we are the Kohinoor as far as service projects are concerned. And yet something is amiss; election disputes and conflicts come into focus.

Remember, it is okay to disagree, but we have to learn to disagree without becoming disagreeable as PRIP KR Ravindran says.”

If they all worked together with focus and harmony, they could build in our zones a Rotary “each one of us can be proud of — cohesive, forward-looking and effective, which is ready to take centre stage in the Rotary world, while remaining true to our core values. That is my wish from each and every one of you. I believe firmly that the best chapter of Rotary is yet to be written.”

If together they can write this chapter with “courage in our minds, compassion in our hearts and integrity in our action, years later, people may not remember who had led Rotary in 2028–29, but they will remember the good work that we did through Rotary... the children we immunised, the lives we were able to change, and the opportunities we were able to grasp to fulfil the hope of our community and our world.” He ended with a quote from Robert Frost: “The woods are lovely, dark and deep. But I have promises to keep and miles to go before I sleep.”

Congratulating Pandya for his nomination, PRIP Ravindran recalled that when he had first met the man almost 15 years ago at the silver jubilee celebrations of his club, he found him to be a “man of contradictions, slight in stature, but tall in significance, with the gentlest of manners, but conviction of steel underneath, slow to claim credit, but quick to accept responsibility. Never the loudest man in the room, and yet the room agrees with what he says. And I think that is a rather useful quality to have when you are President.”

Ravindran said the RI Presidency “is not a promotion you got; it’s not even the top of a ladder that you are climbing. It’s a very different job. And nothing you’ve done up to now prepares you for it. I know, because people like me have done this job.” There will be times when he’ll have to put “the institution ahead of his own popularity. And that day will cost you something. A President must be willing to explain a hard decision, own it afterwards and take it through the organisation.”

On the great cost cutting he had done at RI during his presidency referred to by PRID

Subramanian, Ravindran said when he had asked the RI staff to cut costs, they had in turn asked what senior leaders like him had done to cut

costs. “So I cut my travel cost from \$1.2 million to \$700,000. And I stopped all spouses coming for (Board) meetings. Because we’ve got to do what we’re telling them. And they delivered \$3.5 million of savings.”

Cost cutting involved difficult decisions; like when he was in Africa and a governor organised a meeting with the then US Vice President Joe Biden, he skipped it as it involved travel from Africa, where he was, back to the US.

He told Pandya that though the 18 months he still had to prepare for his job seemed a long time, it wasn’t so.

“The time will go very, very quickly.

Interspersed with things that we never bargained for. A war somewhere, a disease, an earthquake, or a programme which you never planned for. Sometimes your travel is cut. Holger Knaack as President never stepped out of his house because of Covid. These are things nobody can imagine. Then you



The Bharat I know

Madhavi



Dr Madhavi Pandya

Addressing the meeting, Madhavi Pandya, Bharat's wife, wondered that when the organisers asked her to speak on the topic 'The Bharat I know,' "did they expect me to say that he is smart, dashing, handsome? Yes, for me he is. But he is much more. He is caring, compassionate and above all a total family man."

She revealed that her husband is the first general surgeon and second medical doctor in RI's history to be nominated to its highest post. "His training and practice as a surgeon have influenced his values. Surgery is about intuition, judgement, precision, evidence-based action, teamwork and ethical approach. He brings the same set of skills

to everything he does in life. People often ask me, how does it feel to have your husband as President Nominee? My answer is: It's wonderful of course. There is pride, there is happiness and there is gratitude."

But along with all this, there was also the quiet realisation that the journey that had brought them here had involved so many people, so many experiences and so many years of commitment. She believed that he had come to this position largely due to the "support from his family, blessings from his parents and elders. My two daughters Nidhi and Sashmi have given their family time and supported us fully," Madhavi added.



have to respond to issues that come up suddenly." Like a past RI President, a close friend of his, making speeches against the RI staff and publicising them. When a discussion didn't help, he had to give him a strict warning, and "he stopped talking to me."

Some of his tips for Pandya:

- Plan your year, but also leave some room for what you did not plan.
- Decide now, before you begin, two or three things that you want to do and be remembered for.
- You will be surrounded by people who agree with you, nod their heads. Work hard to find those who disagree with you, listen to them, because they could one day save you from yourself.
- The presidency is very lonely. Turn to old friends who have nothing further to gain from you, who are not looking for a designation, job or title.

Ravindran then advised the Rotarians about what they could do for the RIPN. Stop harassing him for assignments; take that pressure off him. Save him



RI President Nominee Dr Bharat Pandya and Madhavi with past RI presidents Kalyan Banerjee, Shekhar Mehta, K R Ravindran, and Vanathy.

from hassles by conducting elections in a proper manner. Help meet TRF and membership goals.

He added that credit also had to be given to Madhavi for her support

in helping Pandya reach the top post at RI. He was confident that Pandya would excel in this position, “not because you’ve got a prodigious memory, or because of your resume, but because you are a decent and a kind man. That probably will be your most important qualification.”

His parting shot. “Remember that from July 2028, Bharat does not belong to Bharat. Bharat also belongs to Nigeria, Brazil, Japan, Germany, Scandinavia, and everyone else, in as much as he belongs to Borivali. Let’s give the world to this president.”

Congratulating Pandya on his nomination PRIP Kalyan Banerjee said India had got its first ever RI President in 1962, the second came 30 years later, the third after 18 years and the fourth took 12 more and the fifth had come in just 8 years. Of course, in between “we did have a person (Sushil

Gupta) whose brilliance was about to break the sequence until he unfortunately left the assignment unfinished.”

The constantly reducing gap between RI Presidents from India highlighted that Rotary’s search for “outstanding leadership comes increasingly from South Asia, specifically India.

Though Bharat is not the first president from India, there is something very special about him. All the other former Rotary presidents from India have been from Kolkata in some way or the other, but he is the first one from Mumbai.”

But of course, it was not the region but the attributes of the man that were important in his selection. “We have been hearing of his excellence, deep thinking, prolific knowledge, down to earth leadership, and of being a patient listener and a spellbinding orator. He does not always go for the glitter or the grandeur but is there always smiling helpfully, and I look forward to another great memorable year of leadership in Rotary from him.”

From July 2028, Bharat does not belong to Bharat. Bharat also belongs to Nigeria, Brazil, Japan, Germany, Scandinavia, and everyone else, in as much as he belongs to Borivali. Let’s

give the world to
this president.

K R Ravindran
Past RI President

Offering his felicitations, PRIP Shekhar Mehta said Pandya's nomination was an honour not only for him but the entire Rotary movement in India. "But it was expected and we all knew that it would come because it was very well deserved. You had every quality that is required to become RI President."

He was a calm person, always poised, graceful, with a huge depth of knowledge. He had a great memory and was an outstanding orator. Apart from all this, it was his humility and simplicity that made him an outstanding leader. This is just the perfect combination.

Mehta said this was "one of the most exciting roles anybody can get anytime. Very few heads of states get the opportunity that you are getting. In these three years, the number of countries you will visit, the love and affection that you will get is going to be absolutely incredible. You are going to be the representative of 1.4 million people from across the world in an amazing organisation."

And this organisation, Rotary, was working on big goals and issues that world leaders grapple with, such as illiteracy, health, jobs for people, empowering people, particularly girls, and water and sanitation issues.

Mehta said he was confident Pandya's year was going to be yet another shining year in Rotary's history. In return, for his hard work, he would get the love and affection of 1.4 million people... "that is the dividend you'll be getting over the next three years for all the hard work you have put in over long years in Rotary."

He urged the current and incoming RI directors from our zones to work hard to take the membership in this region to 200,000. "As I've always said, we are the Kohinoor of Rotary;

It was a no contest



PRIDs Anirudha Roychowdhury and Raju Subramanian.

PRIDs Anirudha Roychowdhury and Raju Subramanian, members of the Nominating Committee that selected Bharat Pandya, gave an interesting account of how the process of nominating an RI President works. It included continuous interactions and inputs from one particular section of RI, followed by an online orientation on how they should evaluate the application letters from the nominees. Said Roychoudhary, "Having gone through the process I should compliment the communication, structural governance and the democratic spirit of

RI. I distinctly remember the two specific instructions the Nominating Committee got from the RI general secretary — be very sensitive while interacting with each and every one of the applicants and choose the best of the six candidates."

Subramanian added that when the time to choose came it was evident that Pandya was one of the best candidates for the job, "being far superior among the best people. The others were not a match. As one Nominating Committee member later told me during dinner, there was no competition at all."

we do amazing service projects and our TRF contributions are outstanding. And with a new leader from our region, we can really work wonders."

Video and written greetings and messages of congratulations sent by RI President Elect Larry Lunsford, Trustee chair Jennifer Jones, past RI

Presidents Rajendra Saboo, Gordon McNally, Stephanie Urchick and general secretary John Hewko were displayed/read out.

Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Earth Detox board game being launched. From L: PDGs Chella Raghavendran, Y Kumanan, DG R S Maruthi, District Priorities director A M Ramakrishnan, PDG Rajasekhara Srinivasan, Ramanarayana and RC Nemmara president Ramadas.



A green twist to Snakes and Ladders

Jaishree

Remember Snakes and Ladders? A M Ramakrishnan, a member of RC Nemmara, RID 3206, has given the familiar board game an environmental twist. Called *Earth Detox*, the game rewards eco-friendly behaviour and penalises practices that harm the environment.

Land on a square that says, “I throw my garbage outside my home,” and you slide down two rows through a snake. But if you land on “I plant saplings in my neighbourhood,” you climb a row up the ladder. Each of the 100 squares carries a positive or negative environmental message, moving players up or down the board according to their dice roll.

“The idea was to adapt the familiar game of Snakes and Ladders into an environmental learning experience. Every square on the Earth Detox board represents an environmental action or message. Responsible behaviour

takes players upwards through ladders, while undesirable environmental practices send them down through snakes,” explains Ramakrishnan, who has served for several years in environment-related roles, including as a WASRAG ambassador, WINS chair and district chair for river protection.

The idea took shape when RID 3206 DG R S Maruti outlined his vision of ensuring that every Rotarian understands and embraces responsible environmental behaviour. The challenge was to take this message beyond conventional campaigns and create something that Rotarians, their families and communities could engage with and remember.

“When DG Maruti set out his environmental vision, the challenge was how to take that message beyond a conventional campaign and make it something that Rotarians, their families and communities could engage

with, remember and act upon. Thus was born the Earth Detox board — a behavioural-change game designed to carry the environmental message to people through participation and fun,” says Ramakrishnan.

Officially launched by DG Maruti at a membership seminar, the game is now being circulated as a PDF among Rotarians, Rotaractors, Interactors, schools, housing societies and other community groups. Players can download and print the board, paste it on cardboard and start playing.

“The idea is to initiate conversations on environmental care and bring about a mindful attitude among people,” he says.

Inter-school competitions in the board game are being held across the district. Club members also play the game after their weekly meetings, keeping environmental awareness on the agenda in a simple, engaging way. ■

Abhinandan



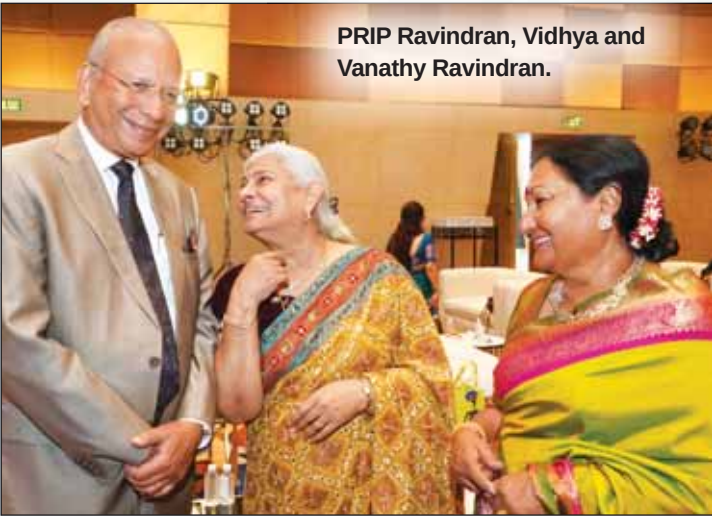
RIPN Pandya and Madhavi greet PRIP Kalyan Banerjee as PRIP Shekhar Mehta and RI Director KP Nagesh look on.

Right: RIPN Pandya and Madhavi welcomed by PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury, past TRF Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty, PRID Mahesh Kotbagi, Amita, Vanathy, PRIP KR Ravindran and RID Nagesh.

RI President Nominee Bharat Pandya and Madhavi greet their newly appointed aides PRID Raju Subramanian and Vidhya.

Right: RIPN Pandya and daughter Dr Nidhi.





PRIP Ravindran, Vidhya and Vanathy Ravindran.



Above right: RIPN Pandya with PRID Subramanian.

Below: From L: Amandeep Sekhon, RID Nagesh and RIDE Gurjeet Singh Sekhon.



From L: PRIP Banerjee, PRID PT Prabhakar, Madhavi, RIPN Pandya and PRIP Ravindran.



Vanathy and PRIP Ravindran.



Nayantara and PRID Ashok Mahajan.



PRID Prabhakar, past Trustee Vahanvaty, PRID Kotbagi, Amita and PRID Roychowdhury.



RIPN Pandya and Madhavi.

Below: RID 3141 DG Rajan Dua (L) and RID 3142 DG Nilesh Jaywant.



RIDE Basu Dev Golyan and his wife Kumud.



Pictures by Rasheeda Bhagat and
Rtn Prakash Patel

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

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Protect . Preserve . Prosper

Chennai Annets scale Kilimanjaro

Jaishree

At 2am, the mountain was dark, the wind biting and the summit still hours away. For Ovium, a Class 10 student of The School KFI, Chennai, and three other Annets aged 13–18, the

final ascent of Mount Kilimanjaro was about to begin. The peak lay somewhere ahead, and they had to keep walking through the cold. “Whenever the climb became overwhelming, I would say to myself: take ten steps, then ten more,” recalls Ovium.

The group summited Kilimanjaro, Africa’s highest mountain at 5,895m, during May 14–18, 2026. They were accompanied by Lakshmanan Krish, Ovium’s father and husband of Rtn Vidya Raghu, who has considerable trekking experience.

Having completed the Everest Base Camp trek in 2022, Ovium suggested Kilimanjaro when the family was discussing another mountain expedition. His father agreed, and three other youngsters joined the plan — Tamizh Iniyan (18) and Tamizh Inban (14), sons of Rtn Senthil Palaniswamy, and Ayaan (13), son of Rtns Anjali and Praveen. The Rotarians are members of RC Global Nexus, RID 3234.

With board examinations approaching, Ovium had to balance training with schoolwork. During the summer holidays, he went to the gym regularly and worked with a personal trainer to build strength and endurance. A week before the expedition, Krish took the children to Gokarna, Karnataka. “We made it a fun activity — running along the beach and climbing the surrounding hills. It helped build our endurance,” says Ovium.

The mountain, however, presented challenges they had not anticipated. The group had expected strong winds on summit day, but the preceding days were difficult too. While crossing a valley, powerful gusts swept down the surrounding slopes, making it hard for them to walk steadily. They took shelter behind rocks to recover before continuing.

Ovium recalls one particularly cold lunch stop in the valley. The group was served hot potato stew with meat, but the wind made it difficult to eat. “The food became ice cold in an instant; I managed only a couple of spoonfuls before giving up,” he says.

On summit day (May 18), the group set out at 2am, hoping to cover

From L: Ovium, Tamizh Iniyan, Ayaan and Tamizh Inban.



as much ground as possible before daylight revealed the peak. “When you can’t see the peak, you just keep walking, walking, and then you get there. In daylight, it looks so high that it can demotivate you,” he says.

As the sun rose, fatigue began to set in. Ovium focused on taking ten steps at a time, while his friends encouraged each other to keep going. “We were all together, helping each other get up the mountain. The Tanzanian music our guides played also helped keep our spirits up,” he recalls. Strong winds made the cold more intense despite multiple layers of clothing.

Krish had prepared the youngsters for the demands of the trek by giving them three basic instructions: get adequate sleep, eat enough and stay hydrated.

“No browsing through the phones at night, because you need adequate sleep to prepare for the long trek the next day. Eat what you like, because the energy comes from carbohydrates,



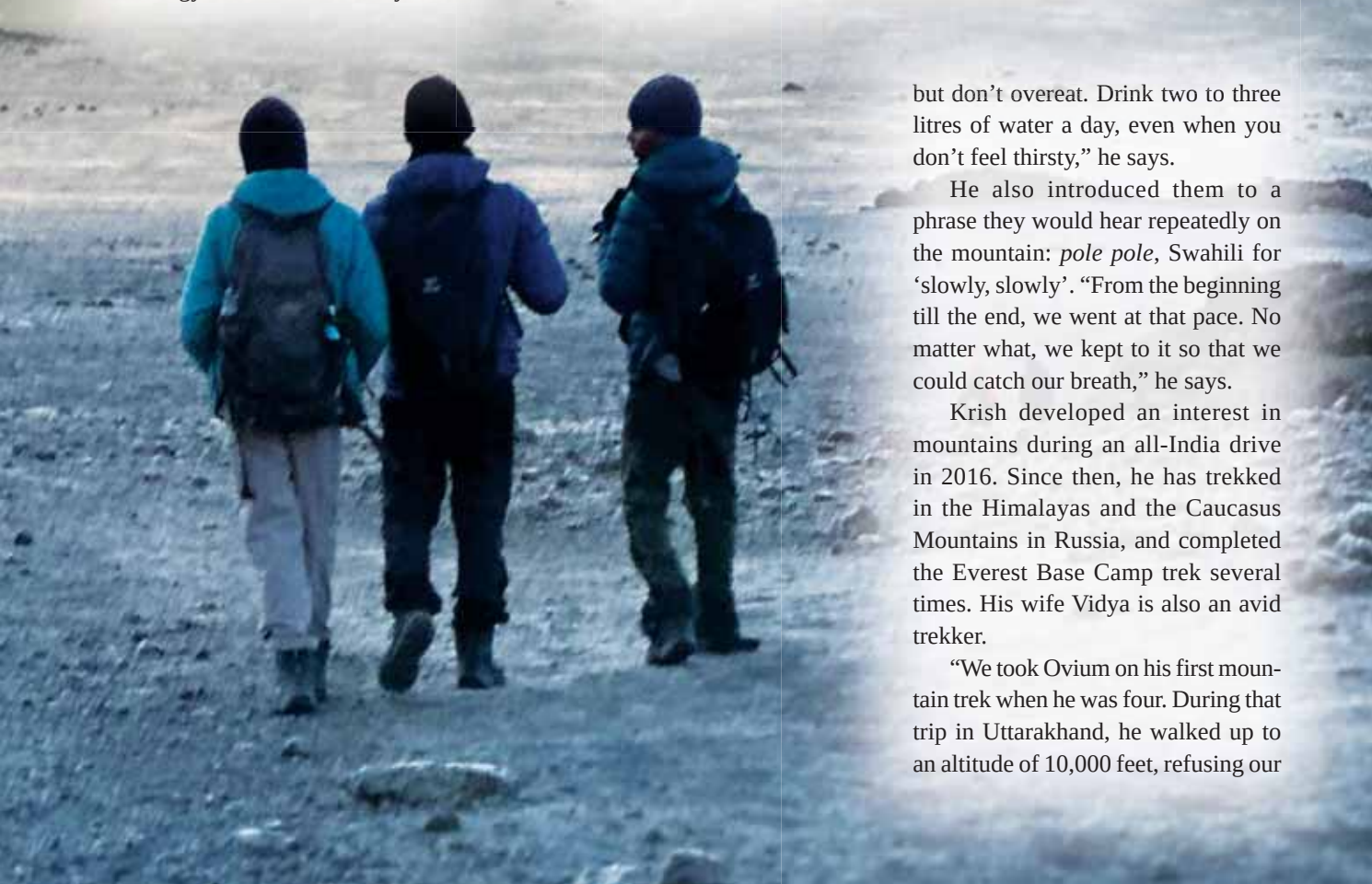
Inban, Iniyan, Ovium and Ayaan on a wildlife safari after the Kilimanjaro trek.

but don’t overeat. Drink two to three litres of water a day, even when you don’t feel thirsty,” he says.

He also introduced them to a phrase they would hear repeatedly on the mountain: *pole pole*, Swahili for ‘slowly, slowly’. “From the beginning till the end, we went at that pace. No matter what, we kept to it so that we could catch our breath,” he says.

Krish developed an interest in mountains during an all-India drive in 2016. Since then, he has trekked in the Himalayas and the Caucasus Mountains in Russia, and completed the Everest Base Camp trek several times. His wife Vidya is also an avid trekker.

“We took Ovium on his first mountain trek when he was four. During that trip in Uttarakhand, he walked up to an altitude of 10,000 feet, refusing our



offer to carry him through the difficult sections,” he says with a smile.

For Krish, the Kilimanjaro expedition was an opportunity to see how the youngsters would respond to a demanding experience away from familiar surroundings. He was pleasantly surprised by their independence and sense of responsibility. “People told me I would have a tough time managing four children. But I did not have even a single minute of managing them. In fact, they managed me very well,” he says.

Admiring their willingness to persevere despite the difficult weather and terrain, he says, “I appreciate these boys for making the choice to defy the odds in terms of wind, weather and terrain. It’s a mountain — much stronger and bigger than us. Most of them had limited trekking experience, but I admire their grit and determination.”

After the trek, the group spent two days on safari, observing wildlife. The expedition cost \$3,000 per participant. The five climbers were supported by a 22-member crew who prepared their meals, carried their bags and guided them along the route. “I chose the



The Annets hold the club flag atop the Kilimanjaro.



Lakshmanan Krish (L) with his team of trekkers on a lunch break.

members carefully and didn’t want to cut corners and suffer,” says Krish.

For Ovium, the expedition remains “an unforgettable experience”. He hopes to climb Mount Elbrus in Russia or Mont Blanc in the Alps next.

Ayaan describes the climb to Kibo as the second-hardest part of the expedition, with the final ascent proving the most challenging. “There was a point where the incline was, I think, around 70 degrees, and walking there was the hardest part,” he recalls. Physical demands notwithstanding, he found the whole experience “amazing”.

At the summit, the youngsters planted the RI District 3234 flag, taking it to the top of Africa’s highest mountain. ■

Raising the bar in RID 3262

V Muthukumaran

Odisha Governor Hari Babu Kambhampati presented the Times Icon Award at Bhubaneswar to RID 3262 IPDG Manoj Kumar Tripathy for transforming communities with impactful service projects across the district. “It was a proud moment for all our 120 Rotary clubs and over 4,000 Rotarians spread across 25 revenue districts of Odisha,” says Tripathy, a member of RC Shri Jagannath Dham.

During his tenure, he notched up several milestones for the district — a first ever CSR programme; a Guinness Record-making sand art for world peace; inducting the district’s first AKS member; and *Project Madadgar* that distributed household

appliances to rural women. Three global grant projects (`2.1 crore) were done — a diagnostic centre (\$50,000) was set up in Puri; Rotary Jaleswar Eye Hospital (\$65,000); and a Phaco machine (\$48,000) was donated to the Rotary Balasore Eye Hospital. “We contributed \$6,000 from our DDF for a global grant project by RID 9216, Kenya — a food distribution drive, at an impoverished region in Ethiopia,” he says.

Odisha minister for forest and environment Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia commended Tripathy and his clubs for distributing sewing machines, wet grinders, hearing aids, artificial limbs and wheelchairs to over 1,000 rural women under *Project Madadgar* in a single day. Tricycles and prosthetic limbs were distributed

to 2,500 amputees under *Mission Sakshyam*, and an advanced life support ambulance was provided to the Rotary Balasore Eye Hospital through a CSR grant of \$50,000 from IOCL.

Sleeping Buddha

In a week-long programme, a sleeping Buddha (144ft x 53ft) was created in sand art at the Kalinga War Memorial near Daya river in Puri that saw a footfall of 10 lakh visitors. “The Buddha art with a tagline: *We do not want war, we want peace*, entered into the Guinness Book of Record, boosting our public image across the state,” says Tripathy. State revenue minister Suresh Pujari complimented Rotary “for promoting global peace when the world is torn by major conflicts affecting humanity.”

Tripathy had inducted 173 new members and chartered five new clubs; “our clubs would have done 250–270 mega service projects worth `12 crore during my tenure,” he adds. For TRF-giving, he had contributed \$262,000, inducted the district’s first AKS member, added 12 new Major Donors, 565 new Paul Harris Fellows and 31 new Paul Harris Society members. “I have also instituted two Endowment Funds for \$25,000 each,” he smiles.

Having joined Rotary in 2002, Tripathy is of the view that “long-term, sustainable projects are the key to improve the livelihoods of marginalised people. Also, public image initiatives must be done regularly for the larger public to understand what Rotary is all about with its global footprint.” His wife Madhusmita was RID 326 Inner Wheel chairperson last year. ■



Odisha minister Ganesh Ram Singh Khuntia distributing sewing machines, wet grinders, wheelchairs and hearing aids in the presence of PDG Manoj Kumar Tripathy (3rd from L) and his wife Madhusmita.

When Rotarians sway to music through a Fellowship

Rasheeda Bhagat

Many Rotarians are passionate about music beyond intense interest in enjoying music and bathroom singing. “Some of us are singers ourselves, a section also performs in some capacity at music shows, but only a handful manage to do so. But most of us don’t get opportunity or platform to sing for some kind of an audience. For such people the International Fellowship of Rotarian Musicians (IFRM) is the best forum to share their talent with others interested in music,” says Ravi Chakravarthi, past president of Rotary Bangalore South Parade, RI District 3191.

This fellowship was started in 1972 in the US, says the IFRM website “to

promote and encourage the use and appreciation of music in Rotary Clubs by Rotarians in our society and, thereby, to encourage world understanding”.

It was chartered in India for the first time in 2010 in RID 3190, by a Bengaluru-based Rotarian Nagesh Siddhanti.

The website says the objective of IFRM officers and members is to take a leading role in extending the “cultural and educational use of music in Rotary through group singing, musical entertainment, and the fostering of music projects around the world. IFRM arranges and publishes the annual RI Presidential Theme Songs, furnishes musical leadership and performances at events at all Rotary levels.”

The core activities of IFRM include singing, dancing, playing instruments, live orchestra performances, etc. Over the last four decades, officers and members of the fellowship have taken a leading role in extending the cultural and educational use of music in Rotary through group singing, musical entertainment, and the fostering of music projects around the world.

Padmanabhan (Paddy) Iyer, its global chair says IFRM brings together an international collection of Rotarians, Rotary alums, spouses and friends to explore together the joy of music through participation in musical activities. From listening to performing, the fellowship provides a “stage for engagement in the love of music. We are working on a new

From L: PDG Kailash Jethani, regional chair, IFRM Vapi chapter, PRIP Kalyan Banerjee, IFRM global chair Padmanabhan Iyer, IFRM Vapi secretary Amisha Mehta, its chair Rupal Damani, RID 3060 DGN Vipul Patel.





IFRM Regional Coordinator (Zone 7) Ravi Chakravarthi (centre, black shirt) with RID 3191 IFRM members at a music event in Bengaluru.

Rotary Songbook. Throughout the year, we connect on an active website, social media, and we even have a zoom virtual choir IFRM Sings, Newsletters Stacatto and Music Notes to keep Rotarians informed about IFRM and its members.

It's an opportunity to meet music loving fellow Rotarians and make friends around the world at a

three-year membership fee of \$35, says Chakravarthi, who within a few months of joining Rotary in 2020 opted for this fellowship. He is now its regional coordinator.

He says that after 2010, when IFRM came to India, "for about 7–8 years, nothing much happened and it didn't go beyond RID 3190. But later Paddy

Iyer, a Rotarian from Thane, took it to RID 3142, and became the vice-chair of IFRM India and started working on expanding its footprint in India. A lot of restructuring was done and today this fellowship has really grown in India to many other districts, has 54 chapters and about 1,800 members in India alone. Iyer is presently the IFRM global chair.

In Bengaluru, which has over 85 IFRM members, there is a meeting once a month, "either in a hotel or some other place... and there is music, singing, food and enjoyment for about 5 or 6 hours."

A typical IFRM event, often held on Sunday mornings, is attended by about 40–45 people and Indian film songs from Bollywood as well as South Indian films are sung. Most of the time the singing is done on karaoke, but twice a year live music is also organised.

"Basically, the idea is to give an opportunity to all the members to sing for others and it is great to sing to live music. When you talk about Rotary and fellowship, this is particularly one place where we can all connect with our passion for a particular interest, which is music," he says.



That this fellowship is immensely popular in India can be seen from the fact that out of about 3,400 IFRM members worldwide, 1,800 or over half, are in India.

Asked if they also give expression to classical or Carnatic music as they are based in Karnataka, Chakravarthi says at the beginning of this year, a new chapter for classical music has been chartered. “But as of now, we are not asking our members to perform classical music because very few members are trained in classical music.”

The Bengaluru chapter also organises sometimes concerts for a couple of hours where professional singers perform. While they are yet to come to Chennai for the famed December music season, “we did organise in

December 2024 a two-day outing to Lonavala, where all IFRM chapters were invited, but only a few attended, with over 100 people joining.”

In June 2026, this chapter organised a South Zone IFRM Idol contest, which was attended by about 40 members from eight different chapters across South India. Also, the district — which recently split from 3190 into 3191 and 3192, had expanded in the last one year; adding six more chapters of the fellowship to the earlier two chapters. In all, now there are eight musician fellowship chapters in these two districts.

Though he doesn’t have the exact numbers Chakravarthi estimates about one fourth of the 1,800 members in this fellowship in India are women. He is happy to share that women

actively participate in fellowship meetings. “We encourage them to do so, because we need female singers for duet songs.”

The latest IFRM chapter to be chartered in India was at Vapi, RID 3060 in August 2026. DGN Vipul Patel, who is one of the key players in the formation of this IFRM chapter, along with PDG Kailash Jethani, who will be regional chair of this IFRM chapter, named Sur Maitri, said they were very happy to welcome past RI President Kalyan Banerjee as a lifetime member of the chapter with 75 members. He said the members of the fellowship plan to





IFRM members performing at a Rotary convention.

meet every quarter. “Our RI district is very big so we are planning to organise events in different parts so that most of the members have an opportunity to participate and enjoy an evening of music, dance and singing.”

At the first event of the chapter held in Surat on Oct 3, Gujarat’s very vibrant Garba culture was introduced and it turned out to be an event filled with magical and traditional music and dance of the region.

Patel said the very spirit of IFRM was centred around the belief that where words fail, music speaks, where hearts are divided, music unites. “Today we celebrate much more than an organisation... a beautiful idea born in 1972 that music can become a universal language of friendship, fellowship and world understanding. For over five decades IFRM has brought together Rotarians and music lovers across borders, cultures and continents.”

Jethani said the true magic of IFRM was that you didn’t have to be a professional musician to belong, you simply had to love music.

Paddy Iyer who participated in the charter meet said the programme was beautifully organised and “full of joy, fellowship and wonderful music. We enjoyed some amazing performances and soulful songs, making the evening truly memorable.” ■

A cancer awareness run in Bengaluru

Team Rotary News

Over 500 participants including students, youth, Rotarians and Rotaractors joined together to create awareness on cancer, and spread the message of peace, healthy living, and community bonding at the sixth edition of Rotary 5K Cancer Awareness Peace Run on Gandhi Jayanthi (Oct 2) in Bengaluru.

The annual run was hosted by Rotary Bengaluru Jalahalli,



RID 3192 DG Ravishankar Dakoju (third from R) inaugurating the Peace Run.

RID 3192, in partnership with the Indian Cancer Society, St Claret College, and the college Rotaractors. DG Ravishankar Dakoju and DGN Renukeshwarswamy S R jointly flagged off the 5K Run in the presence of college principal Thomas

Thennadiyil, Dr S Pavithra from the Indian Cancer Society and club president Neil Rajan. National swimmer Chitra and Pentathlon World Championship silver medalist Dhairya Naveen were honoured by the Rotary club. ■

A silver jubilee celebration through service

Rasheeda Bhagat

This Rotary club in Mumbai has a great record when it comes to innovation in service; it has over 150 members and is celebrating its silver jubilee this year with a simple but catchy theme: *Bayview Cares*. We are talking about the Rotary Club of Bombay Bay View, RID 3141, which has a history of doing some significant and innovative projects.



With the objective to celebrate its special year through all the 12 months, the club leadership has informed its members that this year, while celebrating their birthdays, they might consider adding an extra element to the celebration — contribute `2,500 to support a meaningful community initiative being undertaken by the club. The idea is simple and the philosophy is summed up in one line: By adding just one extra seat at your birthday

table, your modest contribution will help fund kits, material and outreach activities across the 25 curated service activities planned to celebrate its silver jubilee.

Past president and present PR director of the club Rackhee Mehta, who devised this idea and programme says, “we wanted our silver jubilee year to be not just a celebration of 25 years of service, but an opportunity to reimagine how members experience Rotary.”

During these 25 national and international event days, the club leadership hopes to reinforce this credo in its members: Do one good thing today, no matter how small, and watch how deeply it changes the person you become. This “one good thing” can include invaluable experiences such as visiting institutions, interacting with communities, preparing kits, creating handmade messages, sharing professional knowledge with young people or participating in hands-on activities.

The service projects specially undertaken for National Doctors’ Day included a group of members celebrating the occasion at the Cama & Albless Hospital, interacting with doctors, engaging with MBBS students, resident doctors and faculty “and celebrating the compassion behind the white coat.”

World Population Day was observed with the club members reaching out to vulnerable women and children through two initiatives at the Stree Mandal and Navjeevan Centre, involving the distribution of umbrellas, school bags, stationery and wellness kits, along with an afternoon of interaction and celebration with children.

Next, the club organised the programme *Salute to the Sea* on

Independence Day with 50 members getting the rare opportunity to visit the Naval Headquarters and board *INS Chennai*, on which naval personnel gave them an insight into India’s maritime security. “Vice Admiral Rahul Vilas Gokhale, a friend of my husband, was there and he ensured we had a wonderful experience, seeing the entire ship and interacting with the sailors. But the icing on the cake was meeting Lt Cdr Dilna, who shared with us her remarkable experience of 268-day circumnavigation of the world. When she related her entire sea journey, we saluted her bravery; this interaction was very motivating for all the 50 of us who went there,” says Rackhee.

In September on International Day of Peace, the club brought together 1,500 students from seven schools to explore the meaning of peace through art. *Painting Peace* encouraged students from classes 5 to 8 to reflect on what peace means in their everyday lives: kindness, friendship, inclusion, safety, harmony, unity and hope. “Every young artist brought a unique perspective to the theme, transforming a simple sheet of paper into an expression of the world they wish to live in,” says club president Pranit Naheta.

To celebrate International Day of Older Persons on Oct 1, this project brought music, laughter and companionship to the senior citizens and palliative care patients at the King George Memorial Infirmary, Lower Parel, by creating a music and dance evening titled *Melodies & Moments*. The South Mumbai chapter of the International Fellowship of Rotarian Musicians (IFRM) brought the evening alive with lilting live music. “The seniors sang along, danced, interacted with the performers and celebrated every note, creating moments of spontaneous joy and connection,” says Rackhee.

Local residents beneath a solar street lamp installed by RC Bombay Bay View in a hamlet in Machhal Valley in Kupwara, Kashmir.

A birthday cake was cut, a special meal organised and groceries, bed-sheets, pillow covers and essential supplies distributed.

Perhaps the most “emotionally powerful” and memorable project for these Rotarians will be the *Mera Veer Bhai* programmes under which 1,200 *rakhis* were given to the Indian Army jawans serving the Jammu and Kashmir region. “We felt that at the LoC in Kashmir, where rugged mountains, harsh winters and isolation define everyday life, a little light can mean a lot both for the soldiers who guard this challenging frontier and the villagers who live here,” she says.

So taking its *Jai Jawan* commitment beyond words, eight members including her and the club president executed three significant interventions in the remote Machhal Valley in Kupwara, Kashmir, installing street lights in villages, setting up a



Bayview Cares head Rackhee Mehta, Kanan Naheta, Jayesh Vidhani, club president Pranit Naheta, Jai Jawan project head Vimal Shah, Pawan Barasia, Rajni Barasia and Youth Services director Namrata Parikh at the fitness centre installed at the Army camp in Machhal Valley.



Kanan and Rajni present umbrellas to a woman.





Students participating in a peace-themed art competition organised by the club.



Celebrating Raksha Bandhan with soldiers in Kupwara.

Left: Club members interacting with children at the Navjeevan Centre.

fitness and rehabilitation facility for the jawans, and establishing an unforgettable bond between 1,200 women and 1,200 soldiers (Raksha bandhan), says club president Naheta. Through *Project Ujala*, done under the leadership of club member Vimal Shah, 120 solar-powered street lights were put up to benefit the soldiers who guard our borders, and the local inhabitants, in an area close to the LoC.

These lights were put up in 15 hamlets of the Machhal Valley, benefitting about 25,000 villagers. The total project cost is around ₹7.56 lakh. In the presence of eight members who travelled here, the first 10 solar lights were inaugurated in Pushwari village. “In these difficult areas, darkness is more than an inconvenience. Steep terrain and limited lighting can make essential movement difficult and unsafe after sunset. These solar lights will provide reliable illumination while enhancing safety, security, mobility and confidence in the communities,” says Naheta.



The members hope that these lights will also effect behavioural change, and the villagers will feel encouraged to maintain cleanliness and follow the *Swachh Bharat* principles. “The inauguration became a memorable community celebration. The warmth of the villagers, children, the local maulvi and the sarpanch reflected how deeply this seemingly simple intervention resonated with the people,” adds Rackhee.

The club has contributed ₹8.73 lakh towards a dedicated fitness and rehabilitation centre in the Machhal Valley, equipped with essential gym and rehabilitation equipment such as a Bicep Curl Machine, StairMaster, Leg Pulldown with Rowing Machine, Olympic Weight Bars, a Cross Trainer and several other fitness and strength-training equipment, providing the 300-odd army personnel there with a dedicated

fitness and post-injury rehabilitation space.

But an emotionally powerful gesture from the Bay View members which really touched the jawans was the specially handmade *rakhis* given for 1,200 soldiers. The jawans told the Rotarians that while they do get

From L: Rackhee Mehta, Kanan Naheta, Rajni Barasia and Namrata Parikh celebrating Raksha Bandhan with Indian Army jawans at Machhal Valley.



rakhis with accompanying letters from several parts of India, this time around they found, along with the *rakhis* and accompanying letters, a prepaid, return address postcard, so that the recipients could write back and express their thanks to their *rakhi* sisters.

The visiting Rotarians tied *rakhis* on the wrists of around 100 soldiers in a special ceremony and handed over the rest. “We wanted to assure them that they are not alone in this difficult region; 1,200

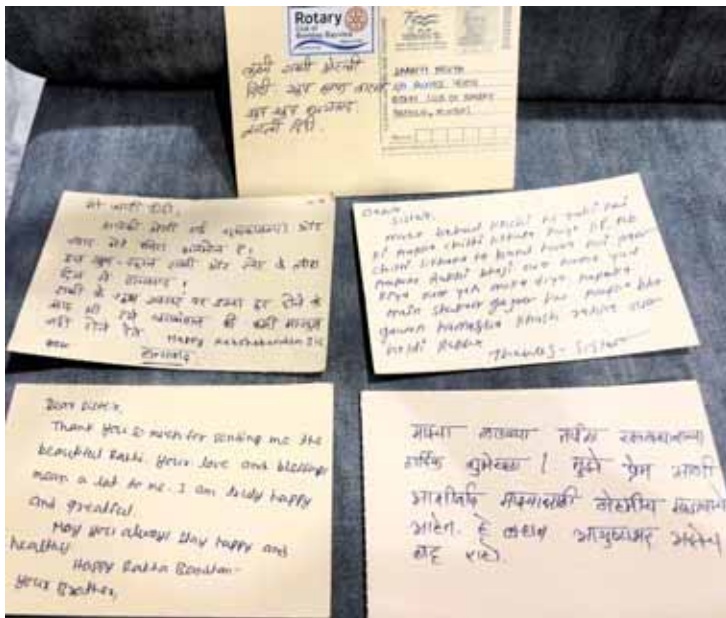
Those who stand guard for the nation should know that the nation stands with them.

Pranit Naheta
president
RC Bombay Bay View

women were thinking of them, standing with them and saluting them for protecting the nation. The soldiers promised to write back. And they did.”

Those handwritten postcards —written in Hindi, Marathi, and English — expressing their affection and gratitude to their ‘sisters,’ travelled from Kashmir to Mumbai and were distributed to the

Club members on board the navy ship INS Chennai as part of the Salute to the Sea programme.



Post cards sent by Army jawans thanking their rakhi sisters.

women who had sent the *rakhis*. For many, these postcards have become a treasured keepsake... a tangible connection with a *veer bhai* they may never meet again, and some have even framed them,” says Rackhee, who had specially crafted this project.

The club president adds, “For RCBB, the journey to Machhal Valley was not simply about delivering projects, but understanding the needs of communities and soldiers in one of India’s most challenging regions — and responding with meaningful, sustainable and heartfelt service. From the glow of a solar lamp illuminating a mountain hamlet to the smile of a jawan receiving a *rakhi*, the message remains the same: Those who stand guard for the nation should know that the nation stands with them.” ■

Bringing Biology to life

Jaishree

For 25 Class 9 students of Adarsh Vidya Mandir School, Nashik, Biology became more than a subject in a textbook at the Bio Discover Camp. They examined seeds and embryos, observed microorganisms under a microscope, handled fossils dating back millions of years and explored specimens of human anatomy in a series of hands-on sessions organised by the Rotary Club of Nashik West, RID 3030, in association with Acharya Classes.

The camp was designed to help students understand life sciences through observation and practical demonstrations. It was conducted under the guid-

ance of Prof S L Acharya, a Biology educator with five decades of teaching experience.

One of the highlights was a session on seeds and germination. Students examined the parts of a seed and its embryo, and learnt to distinguish between monocot and dicot seeds. “It was fascinating for the students to see a Jamun sapling which is a poly-embryonic (a phenomenon in which more than one embryo develops within a seed) plant. It was an entirely new discovery for them,” says project chairman Uday Khedkar.

Students observed specimens of fungi, bacteria, yeast and paramecia,

and learnt how to use a microscope. They were introduced to different culture media and bacterial colonies, and learnt about the spread of water-borne diseases and the use of test kits to identify possible contamination in water samples.

The students were able to touch and examine fossils from different parts of the world, some believed to be around 300 million years old. Practical demonstrations using bones and skeletons helped them understand human anatomy. Specimens of goat organs, including the eyes, heart, brain and kidneys, along with gallstones, air bladders, a non-malignant tumour, and human reproductive organs, offered a closer look at biological structures.

The camp also included sessions on balanced diets and the harmful effects of excessive junk food consumption.

Smita Khedkar, a retired professor of microbiology, and Kaustubh Sunil Hiray, co-founder of Insight Science Center, a science education institute in Nashik, served as additional resource persons.

“In schools, microscopes and other equipment may be limited, so not every child gets an opportunity to use them. Often, the teacher conducts the demonstration while students watch. The touch-and-feel experience is missing, and that is what helps children understand the subject better and develop an interest in it,” says Uday Khedkar.

The school principal has requested a similar programme for Class 10 students, and the team is preparing to conduct it in the school’s biology laboratory, which can accommodate its larger batch of around 100 students. The organisers plan to bring microscopes, fossils and bone sets to the school to ensure that the students can participate in the practical sessions. They are also planning a workshop for teachers. ■



Prof S L Acharya teaching Biology to school students as part of the Bio Discover Camp.

A mega Raahat camp in MP

As chartered accountant, Brij Agarwal handles a large number of corporate portfolios, and believes that "Rotary has got the most transparent and reliable Foundation in the world. This organisation is the best place to serve communities."

During his term, 4–5 new clubs with a net membership growth of 10 per cent is planned to take the numbers to 85 clubs and around 3,800 Rotarians by June 30. Medical equipment (GG: \$35,000) was donated to the cardiology unit of Mathura Das Mathur Hospital, Jodhpur; and 8–10 check dams are being constructed (GG: \$50,000) in the arid villages of Alwar and Jodhpur to meet the irrigation and drinking water needs of rural families. An HPV vaccination drive is reaching out to 5,000 school and college girls through 10–12 medical camps (CSR grant: ₹25 lakh) against cervical cancer.

Under its flagship *Raahat* programme, a week-long medical mission will be conducted either in Morena or Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh in Feb-March 2027. Before the medical camp, "our teams will tour villages for two months to hold at least 250 preliminary tests to register patients," says Agarwal. The mega *Raahat* camp is part-funded by MP government and RID 3060 which supports the event with doctors, equipment and volunteers. "Around 3,500 surgeries and over one lakh OPD examinations will be done at a project cost of ₹40 lakh at the camp."

Agarwal, who joined Rotary in December 1998, aims to collect \$300,000 for TRF.



Brij Mohan Agarwal
Chartered accountant
RC Bhiwadi
RID 3053

Meet your Governors

V Muthukumaran



P Keshav Reddy
Petroleum retail
RC Anantapur Central
RID 3160

A Rotary Blood Bank in Bidar

Ever since 2002, when Keshav Reddy joined Rotary, it has been a life-changing journey for him.

"Every service project, each fellowship event, and every life we touch through our collective efforts has the power to transform communities," he says. His target for net membership growth is 250, and he aims to charter 3–4 new clubs, which will take up their respective headcounts to over 2,850 Rotarians and around 85 Rotary clubs by June 30.

A Rotary Blood Bank will be set up in Bidar by January (GG: \$30,000) to meet the growing demand of blood components among local hospitals; and to provide eco-friendly menstrual hygiene products to girls and rural women, "we will start a sanitary pad manufacturing unit (GG: \$60,000) in Gulbarga. This plant, which will come up in 2–3 months, will be a boon to school and college students and villagers." The district's annual theme is 'Champions for Change' which, Reddy says, complements the RI's theme, *Creating lasting impact*. "Every Rotarian in my district will be a catalyst for positive change, and this belief drives me to serve with passion, humility, and commitment every single day," he explains.

RI's global motto of Service above Self and its stewardship values ('integrity' is the word) inspire "me to dedicate my time, energy and resources to create meaningful change in society." During his tenure, the district clubs will be doing 650–700 service projects, including GGs and CSR-funded programmes, worth ₹3.5–4 crore. He hopes to collect \$100,000 for TRF.

Autos, sewing machines for women

Comprising seven revenue districts of southern Tamil Nadu, RID 3212 had 124 clubs with 4,600 members in July. This DG hopes to start 12 new clubs, one every month, and induct at least 500 new Rotarians for the year," says Gandhi Krishnan. He had instructed his clubs to come up with projects ideas for global grants, and "they are working on it."

He has stitched up three signature projects for the year after consulting his executive team. First, sewing machines (sponsors+CSR fund: ₹60 lakh) are being given to over 1,000 underprivileged women who are skilled in tailoring to ensure a regular income for their families. Next, pink autorickshaws will be presented to 124 women (GG+CSR grants: ₹2.5 crore) once they had completed their "driver training given by a local NGO." In a boost to public hygiene and sanitation, prefab toilets (GG+CSR grants: ₹1 crore) with overhead tanks will be installed at 100 rural homes which don't have this basic amenity. "Rotary teams will identify beneficiary homes before the construction begins."

For TRF-giving his target is \$1.2 million. Krishnan was a Rotaractor in a community-based club since 1991 before he joined Rotary in 2000. "Friendship and service, the two pillars of Rotary, keep me motivated to excel in my voluntary work." Now as DG, he says, "it is a great opportunity to lead my clubs, and we will take all efforts to achieve our goals in a time-bound manner," he smiles.



Gandhi Krishnan
Civil engineer
RC Ramnad
RID 3212

Throughout the year, 200–250 medical camps are being hosted by local clubs, screening 25,000 patients with chronic ailments and other diseases. They are funded by a mix of club donations, sponsors and CSR grants.

– **DG Jasbir Singh Bhatia**
RID 3110



Jasbir Singh Bhatia
Chartered accountant
RC Kanpur South
RID 3110

Making cemeteries eco-friendly

Happy to get involved in multifarious service projects, Jasbir Bhatia says, "I joined Rotary in 2002 to expand my reach, and seeing those smiling faces of beneficiaries, gives me enough motivation to continue my work in this organisation." Comprising Uttarakhand and parts of western Uttar Pradesh, the district had 130 clubs and 3,600 members when he took over as governor. He is confident of forming 10 new clubs, and inducting 400 new Rotarians by June 30.

Around 400 water kiosks, each having an RO unit and a water cooler, are being set up (GG: ₹2 crore) across the revenue districts; 10 burial grounds will have special machines (GG: ₹4 crore) that will use eco-friendly tech to burn corpses. "These high-tech devices will consume just 20 per cent of wood and is pollution-free," says Bhatia. Throughout the year, 200–250 medical camps are being hosted by local clubs, screening 25,000 patients with chronic ailments and other diseases. The medical camps worth ₹3.5 crore are funded by a mix of club donations, private sponsors and CSR grants.

On the literacy front, 20 Happy Schools projects will usher in an aesthetic makeover to government schools in rural areas by either setting up or upgrading gender-specific toilet blocks, revamping classroom facilities, taking up civil, plumbing work etc. The Happy Schools are funded by a mix of club donations and CSR grants valued at ₹1.5 crore. For TRF-giving, Bhatia aims to collect \$500,000. ■

Rotary reaches Himalayan heights at Leh

Team Rotary News

A historic milestone has been achieved with the first Rotary club — the Rotary Club of Leh Ladakh — being chartered in Leh, Ladakh, RI district 3070.

The charter and installation ceremony was conducted by RI director KP Nagesh, marking a significant milestone in Rotary's expansion into Ladakh. RID 3070 DG Anil Singhal; Rotary Membership coordinator, Zone 4, PDG Dushyant Choudhary and PDG Jeetendra Aneja participated in the inaugural event.

Director General of Police, Leh-Ladakh, Anand Jain, attended the ceremony, underscoring the importance of Rotary's growing presence and its potential to contribute meaningfully to the region. "The establishment of RC Leh is special in many ways. Situated at a high altitude and surrounded by the majestic Himalayas, Leh presents unique geographical and climatic challenges. Bringing Rotary to this remote and strategically significant region reaffirms a fundamental belief: the spirit of service knows no boundaries," said director Nagesh.



RID 3070 DG Anil Sehgal fixes a Rotary pin on DGP Leh Ladakh Anand Jain, as RI director K P Nagesh looks on. PDGs Dushyant Choudhary (R) and Jeetendra Aneja (third from R) are also present.



Members of the newly chartered RC Leh Ladakh with DGP Jain and DG Sehgal.

Bringing Rotary to this remote and strategically significant region reaffirms a fundamental belief: the spirit of service knows no boundaries.

K P Nagesh
RI Director



With the establishment of this club, the ideals of Service Above Self, fellowship and community leadership gain a new foothold in Ladakh. The club now has an opportunity to understand local needs and develop sustainable initiatives that create a meaningful and lasting impact. Healthcare, education, sanitation, youth development, environmental conservation, women's empowerment and community welfare offer promising avenues for service. "By working closely with local communities and stakeholders, the club can help address regional challenges through innovative and sustainable solutions," he said.



Director Nagesh fixes the Rotary Pin on RC Leh Ladakh president Phuntsog Wangdon as DG Singhal looks on. Uma Nagesh is on the right.

Nagesh added that by nurturing local leadership and encouraging active community participation, the club can build initiatives that respond to Ladakh's distinctive needs while reflecting Rotary's global vision of service. "The chartering of the first Rotary Club of Leh Ladakh is only the beginning. The true measure of this historic milestone will be the impact created in the years ahead — the lives touched, communities strengthened, young people inspired and partnerships built."

DG Singhal said that for both the Rotary family and RID 3070, this is a significant addition. "The formation of the Leh club extends the district's geographical reach and opens new opportunities for collaboration, fellowship and community engagement across Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh. The club also provides a platform for Rotarians from different parts of the district to come together, exchange ideas and build partnerships that benefit communities in the Himalayan region."

He added that the journey ahead will call for commitment, teamwork and a strong local leadership. The success of a Rotary club lies not merely in receiving its charter, but in

building a vibrant culture of service, engaging members, developing impactful projects and strengthening its connection with the community.

PDG Choudhary added that RC Leh Ladakh has the potential to become much more than an organisation. "It can emerge as a centre of service, friendship, leadership and positive change.

Ladakh's unique ecological landscape presents exciting opportunities for Rotary to undertake initiatives in environmental sustainability, conservation of natural resources, responsible tourism, healthcare accessibility and educational development for young people."

Equally important is the opportunity to bring together local professionals, entrepreneurs, educators, community leaders and youth under one common purpose — "to serve society and create lasting impact."

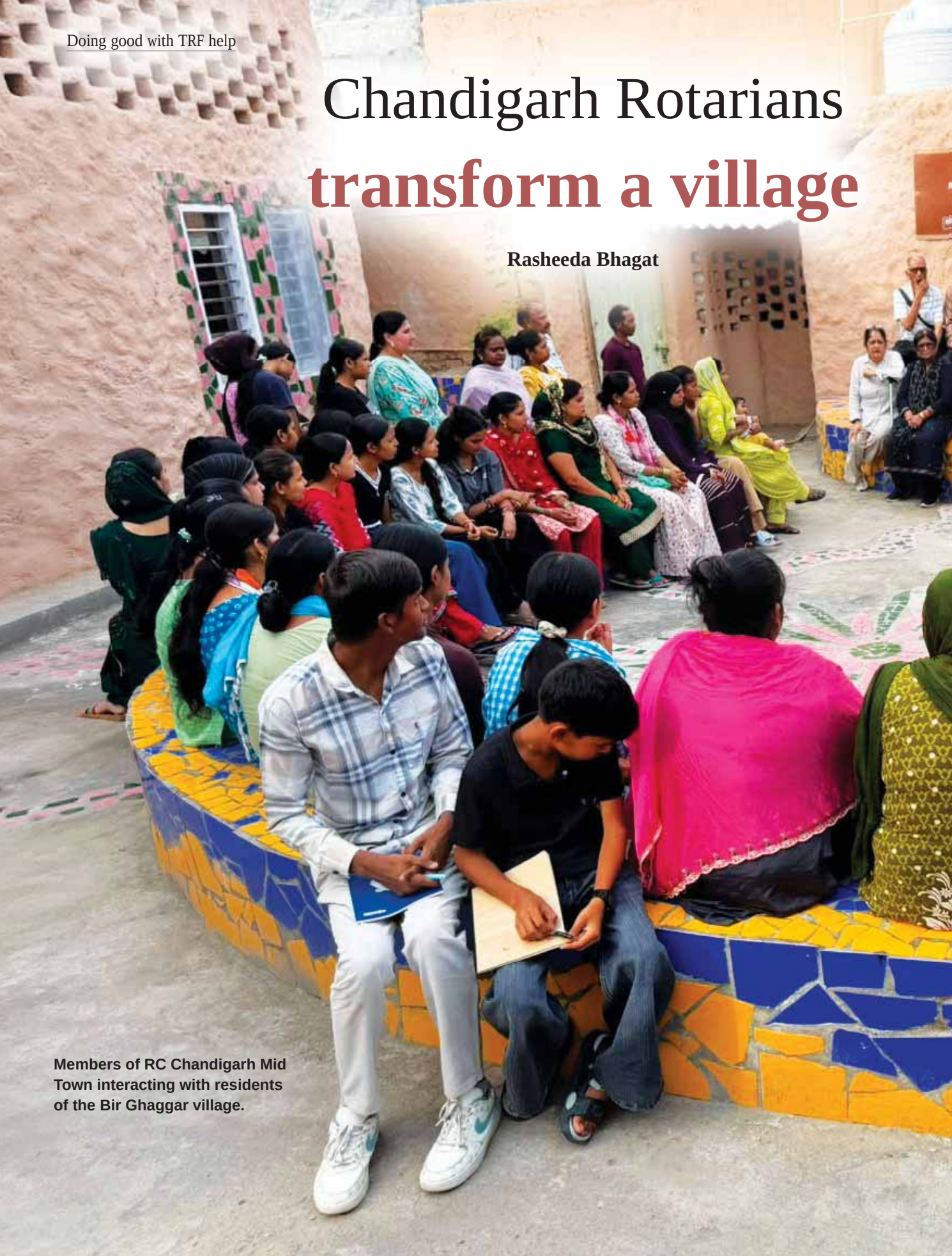
He added that the establishment of this club sends a powerful message: wherever there is a community, there is an opportunity to serve. "From the plains to the mountains, from bustling cities to remote Himalayan settlements, Rotary continues to expand its reach with a shared purpose — to make a positive difference in people's lives." ■

Doing good with TRF help

Chandigarh Rotarians transform a village

Rasheeda Bhagat

Members of RC Chandigarh Mid
Town interacting with residents
of the Bir Ghaggar village.





In 2022–23, when Ved Prakash Kalra was the district governor of RID 3080, his clarion call *Rotary chale gaon ki aur* (let Rotary concentrate on villages) was taken very seriously by at least one club — the Rotary Club of Chandigarh Mid Town and its club leaders.

Led by its then president Sanjay Kalra, apart from other village improvement projects, the club decided to set up a vocational training and skilling centre in the village Bir Ghaggar, located about 20km from

Chandigarh. This village was chosen because the club had already done some community welfare projects here. The DG had urged each club in the district to adopt a village and improve living conditions there. “We chose this village not because of our convenience, even though proximity to this village is there as it is only 20km away,” says Pradeep Sisodia, who was then vice-president of the club.

Even though Bir Ghaggar was so close to Chandigarh, it lacked so many basic facilities, beginning with

no electricity; it did not even have street lights. To begin with the club did a solar electrification project here and followed this up with several other projects which were initiated based on the needs of the local community, says past president Kalra.

The villagers here comprise a very mixed community given its proximity to a big and modern city like Chandigarh. Apart from farmers and farm workers, there are daily labourers and also women who work as housemaids. “We did quite a few big community service projects for the village such as rainwater harvesting, developing a park for the local school, and setting up an *angan-wadi*. But while doing a needs-based assessment with the village leaders, including the tahsildar, we were particularly asked to start a vocational training centre, specially for the youngsters,” says Kalra.

The Rotarians were briefed by both the tahsildar and the municipal counsellor that there was a big drugs abuse problem in the village and the



Women learning cutting techniques using newspapers at the vocational training centre set up by the club in the village.





A computer course in progress at the centre.

youngsters were getting addicted to drugs. After passing out from high school very few were interested in pursuing higher education. With an empty mind being the devil's workshop, they indulged in all kinds of nefarious activities; apart from drugs abuse there were crimes being committed like thefts and other illegal activities. "They stressed upon us the need for some structured vocational training which would not only give economic independence to the young, specially the women, but also result in gainful employment of their time," says the former club president.

The club's team devised a plan to set up a vocational centre and "we all agreed that we must do something substantial to provide a good opportunity for economic independence to the women. We decided to set up tailoring and beauty care courses for women and computer classes for both boys and girls. Apart from this a music course was also started and we bought musical instruments such as a tabla, harmonium and a keyboard and

employed a teacher to train them in singing,” he adds.

But, says his vice-president Sisodia, “To turn the vision of a vocational centre into reality required commitment, persistence and ownership. Our club’s past president Ashok Puri played a pivotal role in this journey... right from identifying Bir Ghaggar, understanding the needs of its community to bringing together the resources and partnerships needed to make the project possible.”

To raise the funds critical to set up what the Rotarians named the Hunnar Vocational Centre, that offers varied skilling options to the villagers, Ashok Puri approached his brother in the US, Anil Puri, past president of the Rotary Club of Twin Cities (Centralia-Chehalis), RID 5020, US. The project was subsequently supported through a Rotary global grant, bringing together contributions from Rotary clubs, District Designated Funds and The Rotary Foundation’s World Fund. “With total funding of \$40,000, this project became an inspiring example of how a local vision can be strengthened through Rotary’s spirit of partnership and international cooperation,” he adds.

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To establish this centre, a panchayat building, which was in a neglected state, was identified, and the Rotarians renovated and spruced it up. Here three vocational training courses — tailoring and computer courses for 20 students each, and a beauty care training course for 10 women, apart from the singing course, have been started. Each of the three vocational courses will last for three months, and the trainees have to pay `100 a month for it. “Even this money we waive for people who can’t afford to pay; we don’t offer these courses totally free because what is given for free is often not valued,” says Kalra.

This centre was inaugurated on July 1 and the event was attended by RID 3080 DG Rita Kalra, club president Renu Chopra, IPP Jagvinder Bawa, Sanjay Kalra, Ashok Puri, Pradeep Sisodia, and leaders and beneficiaries from the village.

Adds Sisodia, “Through meticulous planning and working together, we have executed a simple but powerful idea; instead of only addressing immediate needs, create opportunities that will enable local women and youth to learn practical skills, gain confidence and become self-reliant. Our centre is not just a renovated building. It has already begun to breathe with the energy, aspirations and dreams of its first batch of 50 students for the three courses.”

Giving the example of 28-year-old Shashi Bala, who is undergoing classes in sewing and tailoring with enthusiasm and dedication, he adds, “For her and the other students, these are not merely training programmes, they are the pathways to employment, possible entrepreneurship, and a brighter future in which not only their own but their families’ lives will be changed too.”

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



A Rotary clock tower in Patna

Team Rotary News

To mark the golden jubilee year of RC Pataliputra, RID 3250, a Rotary clock tower was installed at the Dak Bungalow Chauraha, a busy market place in Patna. The structure features GPS-enabled 42-inch diameter clocks on all four sides, equipped with illuminated backlit dials for enhanced visibility. The tower is crafted with high-grade cast iron, and combines durability with elegance. A UPS power backup ensures 24x7 operation. This public image project was conceived by past president Swati Modi, and executed by a team led by project chair Navin Gupta and PDG Bipin Chachan.

Gupta said installing a clock tower at this high-visibility location was a “formidable challenge that required approvals from various government authorities — Ministry of Home Affairs, Bihar; the

Director General of Police; ADG-Traffic and Beautification, the Patna Municipal Corporation; and the City Commissioner. Securing clearances from all the departments was a herculean task, and it took around three months of regular follow-up and coordination.”

Also, the project faced resistance from a local advertiser who opposed the clock tower at that intersection as he was earning a substantial revenue from the hoardings. “We overcame these challenges, thanks to the relentless efforts of the project team of RC Pataliputra,” he said.

The Rotary clock tower in Patna bagged the Best Public Image Project Award of RID 3250 in recognition of its impact and visibility. The then state minister for urban development Jibesh Kumar inaugurated it in August 2025. ■

PDG Prem Aggarwal honoured

Team Rotary News

In a district awards event of RID 3090, titled *Jashan-e-Champions*, presided over by IPDG Bhupesh Mehta, RI director KP Nagesh honoured PDG Prem Aggarwal with RI’s Service Above Self Award.

He is also the DRFC (2025–28) for the district. At the colourful event,



RI Director KP Nagesh awards PDG Prem Aggarwal in the presence of (from L) PDGs Bhupesh Mehta, Dushyant Choudhary, Uma Nagesh and Madhu Mehta.

members from Rotary clubs across Punjab, Haryana and Rajasthan were honoured for their contributions during the Rotary year 2025–26.

Each RI district can nominate one Rotarian a year for the Award; this top recognition is limited to 150 Rotarians

worldwide. “I am humbled to receive the award, the highest individual honour from RI; and grateful to RI director Nagesh who was my batchmate at the Council on Legislation, Chicago, in April 2022,” recalls Aggarwal, a member of RC Mansa Royal. ■

Grooming space scientists

V Muthukumaran

In a far-sighted move to groom space scientists, a mini-satellite payload of 2kg was launched at a height of over 34,000 feet by a high-altitude helium balloon to study the rising pollution levels in the troposphere above Coimbatore.

The experimental payload was designed and built jointly by 55 students of Class 6–8 from 11 government schools in the city. They were mentored by project partners and resource persons from Open Space Foundation (OSF), the astronomy educator, through a series of

workshops, says Vidya Natarajan, president-cum-project chair, Rotary E-Club of Metro Dynamix, RID 3206.

The payload was launched under *Project Uyarvu* (progress), a logical extension of this E-club's two-year-old *Project Vinveli*'s telescope construction and educational workshops to study distant stars. This is a first-of-a-kind project meant to evoke interest in astronomy among students of government schools, she says. Astronomy events with a well-structured module were conducted by OSF resource persons at 40 government schools that saw

around 1,600 students being trained in constructing telescopes for stargazing, which piqued their curiosity in space-related matters. Students were taught the fundamentals of astrophysics, space science, with an experiential learning on the galaxies that dot the universe, and the brilliant among them were enrolled in ISRO competitions.

A few students sponsored by the club went on to discover new comets and asteroids in the space contests, and "ISRO is in the process of naming these celestial bodies after these aspiring space scientists from government



Rotary E-Club of Metro Dynamix president Vidya Natarajan looks through the telescope guided by students at *Project Vinveli*.



Metro Dynamix members with CSR partners from Walkaroo Foundation handing over telescopes to government schools in Coimbatore.



schools,” says Vidya. Now, under *Project Uyarvu*, 330 students will analyse the data transmitted by the mini-satellite through readings that will record the aerosol levels in the upper reaches of atmosphere. “Through *Vinveli* workshops, we’ve reached over 4,000 students who interact with those trained by us. They also use telescopes installed at their school labs.”

As the first E-club in the then RID 3201 (now RID 3206 comprising Coimbatore and nearby areas), the charter members were Annets from RC Coimbatore Metropolis. “We represent third-generation Rotarians spread across the world — mostly in major cities of the US, Canada, UK, Netherlands, Mumbai, and of course, our birthplace Coimbatore,” she says. With the help of interactive smart boards donated to seven corporation schools, eight online sessions were conducted for 350 students who were

introduced to global topics ranging from lifestyle, culture, nature and wildlife to travel and leisure, apart from mentoring them on career choices for their professional growth. Named *Community of Practice*, the virtual sessions are anchored by “domain experts including Rotarians from other clubs who have specialised knowledge in a subject or a niche field like human resource, higher education and financial planning.”

Recently, the club donated occupational therapy equipment worth ₹1 lakh to the Sowkhyia Pain Rehabilitation Clinic being run by the Swarga Foundation. The equipment donated under *Project Spark* is for creating a sensory zone for treatment of children suffering from autism, cerebral palsy and other cognitive disabilities. The project was funded by private donors and sponsors, says M Sethuraman, club treasurer.

Juvenile diabetes

In November, the club's prestigious *Kid-a-thon*, a four-year-old walkathon for children up to age 15 will be flagged off, to create public awareness on juvenile diabetes.

Over the last three years, "we have attracted around 1,250 participants in each *Kid-a-thon*, but this year (Nov 15), we expect more than 2,000 children to take part in Coimbatore," he explains. The earlier walkathons have raised funds to donate insulin pumps and other consumables to the Idhayangal Charitable Trust for treating diabetic children. "Over the years we would have donated equipment and medical accessories worth `2 crore, mobilised through *Kid-a-thon* and other fundraisers supported by CSR funds and philanthropists," says Vidya. "We have sponsored a Centre of Excellence at the Government Medical College, Chidambaram, which is treating over 100 children with type 1 diabetes through immediate care and monthly supply of medicines."

During Covid times, 250 global volunteers hosted one-hour online sessions (*Project Bring a Smile*) for children impacted by the pandemic — some had lost their parents or were isolated staying indoors for an extended

period. "More than 100 children were engaged in activities by our guest volunteers and members who kept their mental wellness as a top priority," she recalls.

A global presence

The 33 members of Metro Dynamix, spread across the world, are not restrained by geography in reaching out to distressed communities. "We give back to the country we presently reside in by joining hands with local clubs, like I do in Toronto, and also reach out to beneficiaries in Coimbatore, where we had our schooling and still have family roots," she explains. Their field events and programmes benefit mostly school students with focus on healthcare, primary education and humanitarian issues.

Just a few months back, their Annets in Mumbai, Coimbatore, North Carolina and Florida distributed sparsely used clothes to orphanages and special homes on the same day. Stationery and other school essentials worth `18,000 were donated to eight Bala Shanti Kendras (primary schools) being



Club president Vidya Natarajan packs dry foods for shipping to disasters and flood-hit countries in a joint project with Rotary clubs in Toronto, Canada.

run by Shanti Ashram for children from low-income families in Coimbatore, explains Vidya. On an average, the club does at least 20 service projects worth `40 lakh each year across the world, "most of our activities funded by donors, sponsors and CSR grants."

Since inception in Nov 2020 during the Covid pandemic, "we have come a long-way in terms of service impact and reach. We are now a 100 per cent TRF-giving club, and from the last two years, all our members donate to Polio Fund too, each one contributing minimum \$30 a year." The club has 18 Paul Harris Fellows, one Major Donor, and their cumulative TRF-giving stands at \$23,600.

This statement from S Chitra, a teacher at the Corporation Middle School, Thudiyalur, sums up the 'monumental Rotary impact' on young minds: "Through hands-on telescope construction in *Project Vinveli* and interactive astronomy sessions, students gained practical skills and a passion for stargazing... now with upcoming CubeSat launch, our young learners are exposed to aerospace engineering, turning curiosity into achievable dream missions." ■



Club secretary Divya Harikrishnan (R), Swarnalatha and Raj Siddharth at *Project Book Nook* that donates shelves and books to government schools.

Self-defence training

RC Indore Uptown, RID 3040, trained 1,245 girls, including 52 visually-impaired students, in self-defence at three schools under its Sankalp Suraksha initiative. The programme focused on personal safety, confidence and self-reliance, with specialised, inclusive training for visually-impaired students.



A self-defence training session in progress.

Cervical cancer awareness

RC Humanity Kolkata, RID 3291, partnered with Wheeler Diary to launch *Wheels of Wellness*, a Kolkata-Ladakh awareness ride promoting cervical cancer prevention and HPV immunisation.



Riders at Khardung La Pass in Ladakh.

Mothers set breastmilk donation record

RC Erode Nexus, RID 3203, in association with Varam Breastmilk Bank, brought together 153 mothers for a breastmilk donation drive the at the Lotus Hospital, earning an Asia Book of Records milestone.



PDGs EK Sagadhevan, A Karthikeyan and club members, along with hospital volunteers, holding the Asia Book of Records certificate.

Rotary club develops public park

RC Turuvekere, RID 3192, developed a public park with hundreds of trees, walking paths and recreational facilities. TS Prakash Gupta, founding president of the Rotary Trust, spent about ₹8 lakh on children's play equipment and exercise facilities for senior citizens. Separate timings have been designated for men and women.





Kamlesh Patel (centre), founder of the Heartfulness movement, unveiling the Peace Pole at the Kanha Shanti Vanam as (from R) DG Uday Pilani; Jhansi Premanand, district chair for Peace and Conflict Resolution; district Public Image chair K Seshasai Kumar; RC Hyderabad Elite president Vijay Maddireddy and district secretary-Events Ranjit Thakur look on.

RID 3150 partners with Heartfulness to promote peace

Rasheeda Bhagat

To celebrate International Peace Day, RI District 3150, in association with Heartfulness, which runs several meditation centres across the world, including the iconic and massive 1,400-acre Kanha Shanti Vanam in Hyderabad, organised an impressive event attended by hundreds of Rotarians and several thousands of people from the local community. The event, during which a Rotary Peace Pole was established at the venue, was supported by RCs Hyderabad Elite and Secunderabad.

The Kanha Shanti Vanam is owned and operated by the Shri Ram Chandra

Mission, a global non-profit, and its president Kamlesh Patel presided over the Rotary event, which was organised to send a clear message to the larger community on the kind of efforts Rotary is taking through its Peace Centers across the world, including India (Symbiosis University in Pune), which trains Peace Scholars to promote peace and harmony in our world.

Patel is the founder of the Heartfulness movement which is centred around meditation and the Kanha Shanti Vanam houses the Heartfulness Institute, which is the world's largest mediation centre with a 30-acre campus and the capacity to seat 100,000 people for meditation at any given time.

Unveiling the Peace Pole Kamlesh Patel briefed the Rotarians on the architectural and other marvels of the Kanha campus, and said he was excited to enter into a partnership with Rotarians to promote peace. "I wish to create many Kanhas with you all. Hope you are ready for this," he asked.

He said there was discussion at various platforms on how to promote world peace. "My guruji had said in his letter to the United Nations way back in 1956 that "world peace is not possible without individual peace. There is nothing like the 'world' without individuals;

it all starts with an individual, a single person.”

He gave the example of Lord Krishna who had asked Arjuna on the battlefield how can one who is *ashant*, or not at peace, find happiness? “Every *jeevatma* (living being) seeks happiness. Unless there is peace in the heart, you can never bring about happiness despite having everything in life.” Similarly, there can be no peace in the state of restlessness. Unless there is harmony within one’s own self and among the family members, there cannot be any peace in the family. Underlining the importance of meditation, he said all harmony comes from a contemplating mind... a mind that is focused, and such a focus is not possible without meditation. “Now you can connect the dots between meditation, a focused and contemplative mind to harmony, peace and eventually happiness.”

He added that if he wanted to “bring some level of solace, joy of peace in his own wife, “I cannot do so. She has to do it herself. This is our fundamental nature. When we go against our nature, we become worse human beings.”

He added that to properly pursue this methodology of meditation, one had to take at least take three to four meditation sessions from a trainer. The Heartfulness movement had trainers even in small villages. Sharing his email id (daaji@daaji.org), he said anyone could email him and would be connected to some trainer in their area.

Addressing the large gathering estimated at over 40,000, RID 3150 DG Uday Pilani wondered what better way could Rotary celebrate World Peace Day than taking the message of peace and harmony to not only the large numbers present at the venue, but attending the event throughout the world through live streaming. “I’ve received so many messages from Mauritius, US and across India. Our two great organisations recognise the ancient Hindu philosophy that peace or *shanti* is the single most important aspect for growth and development of humanity.”

He added that Rotary and Heartfulness shared a common belief that a more peaceful, compassionate and sustainable world is possible only when people come together, through meditation, dialogue, community service and environmental stewardship.

Jhansi Premanand, district chair for peace and conflict resolution, reminded the gathering that true peace was not a passive wish, but “a deliberate investment, which requires more than the absence of conflict; it demands the presence of clean water, health, literacy, and economic opportunities, all of which are woven in to the fabric of Rotary service. We build trust through local service projects, youth leadership and our incredible network of Rotary Peace Centers.”

District public image chair K Seshasai Kumar said the Kanha event was a powerful reminder that peace begins within, and when “nurtured through service and collective action, as is done by Rotary, it creates lasting impact.” ■

2027 Convention

First of many

Not every Rotarian has made it to a Rotary International Convention. But then there’s Madu Bishnu. The Indian Rotarian from Kolkata has been to 29. Barcelona will be her 30th. “I just love coming to conventions,” she says. “It’s an addiction.” What’s she excited about for Spain? Flamenco. Paella. And catching up with Spanish Rotarian friends.

The June 26–30 convention in Barcelona will be the first in Europe since 2019 and the first in the Spanish city since 2002. So why not make it your first?

Another convention regular, Peter Lagarias of San Francisco (15 so far!), still remembers his first time, in Portland, Oregon, in 1990. Seeing members



applauding for their countries during the opening parade of flags was “electric,” he recalls.

What keeps him and others coming back? Experiencing the internationality of Rotary. Reuniting with friends — and making new ones — from around the world. Being surrounded by like-minded people of action. Finding inspiration from world-renowned speakers.

Many first-timers get their feet wet by wandering the House of Friendship,

the convention’s central hub. You’ll find project booths, interactive displays, and endless opportunities to connect with fellow members, Rotary staff, and our global partner organisations.

Next, attend breakout sessions to learn about successful projects you can adapt in your community, ways to engage and energise your club’s members, and ideas for addressing major global challenges, from climate change to conflict resolution.

Clementina Rosato, from Milan, a relative convention newbie (two and counting), says the experience made her feel part of a family. “You will learn a lot about Rotary,” she says, “but also about our potential as human beings and what we can achieve by connecting with other people.” ■



RID **2981**

RC Vijayapuram

Nutrition-rich food bags were given to 50 pregnant women at the Government Hospital, Vijayapuram, in Thiruvallur district, TN, at a breastfeeding awareness programme conducted by the club.



Club matters



RID **3011**

RC Delhi South East

Wheelchairs were distributed to patients at the Safdarjung Hospital in tie-up with Saksham Ek Abhiyaan, an NGO. Rtn Savita Garg and Ann Anjana Agrawal were the sponsors.

RID **3012**

RC Delhi Mayur Vihar

Large umbrellas were donated to street vendors at Mayur Vihar, Delhi, and Noida to protect them from harsh sun and rain. The project lifted the public image of Rotary in the national capital.





RID 3030

RC Kalwan

A measurement camp was held for 265 persons with disabilities for providing artificial limbs, calipers, and other mobility aids. Bharat Vikas Parishad, Pune, was the partner, and Maharashtra Natural Gas gave its CSR funds.

RID 3000

RC Karur Texcity

Rotary clubs in Karur organised a carnival (₹2.5 lakh) for 215 special children who displayed their talent in dance, singing and skit performances. DG R Subramani was present, while DGN Meena Subbiah distributed the prizes.



RID 3070

RC Phagwara South East

School bags were distributed to 100 students in memory of late Bishan Dass and with the support of his son Sudesh Kumar. Club president Kiran Aggarwal and others were present.



RID 3053

RI District

More than 200 women were screened at a nine-day mammography test and breast cancer awareness programme held in Alwar. Amit Shyamsukha from RC Alwar Greater as resource person coordinated for the camps.

Walk slow... it's good for you

Surendraa Singhvii

We have been taught to equate speed with progress — to move fast, think fast, produce fast. What we are rarely taught is the cost: a mind that rarely rests, a body that never fully exhales, a nervous system that has forgotten what stillness feels like.

There is a practice so simple it feels almost too ordinary to recommend — and yet it is one of the most effective tools available for real rest and clarity.

It needs no equipment, no subscription, no special location. Only intention, and about fifteen minutes.

The Practice

- Walk very very slowly.
- Breathe lightly, slowly and deeply.
- Become fully aware of your long exhalation. Take care of your exhalation, and your inhalation will take care of itself.

Very slow walking — about 30–50 steps a minute — puts you in real contact with the ground.

Each step becomes deliberate, not automatic.



That is it. That is the whole instruction. But a gentle stroll like this is, in fact, a precise and powerful reset for your body and your state of mind — worth understanding a little more closely.

What it does to your body

Very slow walking — about 30–50 steps a minute — does something unusual: it puts you in real contact with the ground beneath you. Each step becomes deliberate rather than automatic. This simple attention pulls the mind out of its usual loop of worry and planning, and anchors it in the present moment. You stop replaying the past or rehearsing the future. You simply arrive.

At the same time, the slow rhythmic movement of your legs works like a pump for your lymphatic system — the body's internal drainage and immune network, which unlike the heart has no pump of its own. It depends entirely on movement and breath. In a very real sense, you help your body cleanse itself with every slow step.

A summary worth remembering

- **Very slow walking:** Grounds your attention and gets the lymphatic system moving
- **Slow, deep breathing:** Improves oxygen delivery, calms the body at a cellular level
- **Aware long exhalation:** Switches on the body's calming system, slows the heart, releases tension
- **The still point at exhale's end:** Direct contact with inner stillness — the real reward of the practice

What it does to your breath

Breathing slowly and deeply — around four to six breaths a minute — does something most people don't expect. We assume more breathing means more oxygen. Often the opposite is true: breathing too fast actually reduces the oxygen reaching your brain and tissues. Slowing the breath restores this balance. The mind clears. The body relaxes, cell by cell.

This same slow, deep breathing also helps move lymphatic fluid along, working hand in hand with the walking itself — the two amplify each other.

What awareness of the long exhale changes

This is where the practice becomes powerful.

Your nervous system has two settings. Breathing in switches on alertness and readiness. Breathing out switches on rest and repair. Most of us, in modern life, stay stuck in the 'alert' setting nearly all day — physically braced, even when nothing is actually wrong.

The long exhale is the body's natural off switch — and paying attention to it makes that switch far more effective. As you follow your breath all the way out, your heart rate slows, your jaw unclenches, your shoulders drop. The body simply stops bracing for an emergency that isn't coming.

You cannot hold onto anxiety while breathing out slowly and fully — the two states don't coexist. And with regular practice over a few weeks, your baseline calm genuinely improves: you become less reactive, and it takes more to rattle you.

The invitation

You do not need to walk far, or fast. You do not need music, a podcast, or a destination.

You can't hold onto anxiety while breathing out slowly and fully. It soon improves your baseline calm, making you less reactive... it takes more to rattle you.

Find a space. Walk as if time has agreed to slow down with you. Breathe as though the air itself is something worth receiving gently. And when you exhale — follow it. Stay with it. Let it complete.

Then wait, just a moment, in the quiet gap at the end of the breath.

Do this for 15 minutes. Notice what returns to you.

Your body's medicine was never complicated. We only made the mistake of assuming it had to be.

Optimal parameters for practice

- Walking pace: 30–50 steps per minute
- Breath rate: 4–6 breaths per minute
- Inhale: 4 seconds / Exhale: 6–8 seconds
- Duration: 15 minutes minimum
- Surface: natural ground where possible; barefoot amplifies the grounding effect

I have been practising this myself, close to an hour a day, for nearly a year now — this piece comes from that daily experience, not from a book.

*The writer is a member of
RC Bangalore Rajmahal Vilas
RID 3192*

Membership and TRF Summary 2026-27

Top 20 Rotary Districts Worldwide New member addition

Rank	District	Zone	Country	Members
1	3000	5	India	1,435
2	2981	5	India	899
3	9141	22	Nigeria	617
4	3011	4	India	599
5	3141	4	India	586
6	3710	12	Korea	525
7	3080	4	India	498
8	3203	5	India	450
9	3233	5	India	443
10	3170	7	India	426
11	3131	7	India	398
12	3670	12	Korea	398
13	3350	10	India	390
14	3680	12	Korea	380
15	9111	22	Nigeria	368
16	3191	7	India	355
17	3020	7	India	354
18	3182	7	India	354
19	3250	6	India	348
20	9142	22	Nigeria	343

Top 20 Rotaract Districts in India

Rank	District	Zone	Rotaract Clubs	Rotaractors
1	3000	5	152	7,549
2	3233	5	70	5,773
3	3292	6	194	4,794
4	3220	5	95	3,713
5	3141	4	129	3,404
6	3206	5	107	2,202
7	3192	7	89	2,199
8	3150	7	55	2,054
9	3131	7	102	1,930
10	3234	5	74	1,914
11	3080	4	88	1,907
12	3191	7	84	1,809
13	3170	7	140	1,808
14	3203	5	79	1,581
15	3060	4	52	1,460
16	3011	4	74	1,253
17	3030	6	87	1,159
18	3142	4	59	1,132
19	3120	6	64	1,014
20	3231	5	44	959

Rotary Districtwise Ranking (India) New member addition

Rank	District	Zone	Members
1	3000	5	1,435
2	2981	5	899
3	3011	4	599
4	3141	4	586
5	3080	4	498
6	3203	5	450
7	3233	5	443
8	3170	7	426
9	3131	7	398
10	3191	7	355
11	3020	7	354
12	3182	7	354
13	3250	6	348
14	3231	5	306
15	3192	7	306
16	3142	4	303
17	3150	7	299
18	2982	5	289
19	3120	6	282
20	3292	6	279
21	3234	5	278
22	3181	7	269
23	3090	4	250
24	3132	7	244
25	3060	4	231
26	3212	5	224
27	3206	5	215
28	3291	6	212
29	3240	6	206
30	3012	4	205
31	3070	4	197
32	3110	6	190
33	3030	6	188
34	3055	4	186
35	3053	4	166
36	3262	6	164
37	3056	4	162
38	3211	5	161
39	3220	5	148
40	3204	5	134
41	3205	5	122
42	3040	4	120
43	3261	6	106
44	3100	6	89
45	3160	7	48
Total			13,724

Top 10 Districts - TRF Giving

Annual Fund

Rank	Zone	District	Annual Fund (\$)
1	7	3150	246,758
2	4	3141	183,535
3	7	3131	162,919
4	4	3080	129,947
5	4	3142	129,002
6	4	3060	114,496
7	6	3250	99,535
8	6	3291	94,308
9	6	3120	90,780
10	7	3132	84,903

PolioPlus Fund

Rank	Zone	District	PolioPlus Fund (\$)
1	7	3170	14,612
2	5	3234	13,210
3	7	3191	10,968
4	5	3206	8,093
5	6	3292	7,875
6	7	3020	7,392
7	7	3150	7,137
8	4	3141	6,889
9	6	3240	6,630
10	7	3181	5,871

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	42,039
5	7	3131	39,069
6	7	3150	38,592
7	4	3141	34,596
8	6	3120	34,450
9	5	3212	30,000
10	7	3182	27,211

Zone Ranking in Implementing 10:20:30

Formula for New Clubs

Rank	Zone	Rotary	Rotaract	Interact
1	5	46	35	246
2	4	42	32	119
3	6	23	45	152
4	7	9	50	170
Total		120	162	687
Target		500	1,000	1,500

Top 20 Giving Districts in India for 2026-27

Rank	District	Zone	Total Contributions (\$)
1	4	3141	1,136,629
2	7	3150	363,858
3	5	3234	285,106
4	7	3191	267,166
5	7	3131	262,803
6	4	3142	255,271
7	4	3080	239,425
8	6	3250	164,948
9	6	3291	163,961
10	6	3120	154,736
11	4	3011	152,681
12	7	3132	140,917
13	4	3060	134,583
14	5	3203	117,684
15	5	3233	102,566
16	7	3170	98,081
17	7	3020	90,456
18	5	3205	86,754
19	4	3053	83,111
20	7	3192	81,277

Zonewise Ranking - CSR Credits

Rank	Zone	District	CSR (\$)
1	4	3141	569,201
2	4	3142	119,792
3	7	3132	54,534
4	7	3150	53,694
5	4	3011	52,083
6	6	3250	34,092
7	5	3233	31,500
8	5	3234	26,042
9	7	3191	23,750
10	7	3131	22,500

Making a difference

Team Rotary News

A Rotary dairy farm in Pune

Since 2005, RC Poona North, RID 3131, has distributed milch cows to over 2,460 women across 200 villages in Maval, Mulshi, Khed and Ambajogai taluks of Pune district. The donated cows have multiplied to become 50,000-plus cattle producing five lakh litres of milk every day.

Giving details of this mega dairy project, club president Deepak Takkar says, “our total investment is `9.74 crore over last two decades.” Each beneficiary has a high-yielding cow that produces over 10 litres of milk daily, which ensures a sustainable livelihood for rural families. The club has introduced scientific cattle breeding, given training on dairy management to women for improved milk yield, and sustainable farm practices, he said.

Also, 300 milk collection centres employ over 50,000 people, and supply fresh milk to over two lakh consumers. ■



A beneficiary with a cow gifted to her by RC Poona North.



An eye check-up camp in progress at Ekamra Nilaya, an old age home in Bhubaneswar.



Eye check-up for the elderly

An eye check-up camp was held at Ekamra Nilaya, an old age home, by the Rotary E-Club of District 3262, to mark Senior Citizens Day (Aug 21).

Fifty-five inmates were examined through a Rotary mobile eyecare initiative in partnership with Vision Hope Express, an initiative of PDG Jayashree Mohanty.

The eye screening identified 11 elders in need of cataract surgery. The club provided meals and new clothes to the residents at the home and installed a solar water heater for their benefit. ■

Digi Class at rural school in Solapur

In a Happy School initiative, RC Solapur Smart City, RID 3132, provided a smart TV (Digi Class) for digital learning to rural students at the New English School, Kusur. The project was funded by a CSR grant from P P Patel & Co.

Bicycles were presented to girl students who had to walk long distances to and from this school, while two waste-segregation drums and a handwash station were also donated under the Happy School outreach. The smart TV will provide digital content to students and make classroom learning more interactive, while the handwash unit will promote hand hygiene. The waste-sorting drums will enable students to separate wet and dry waste, and promote organic composting.

Club president Basavaraj Birajdar urged students to make use of technology effectively which will help them to pursue higher education. ■



RC Solapur Smart City president Basavaraj Birajdar (5th from R) and girl students with their bicycles.



Visually-challenged students at a shopping mall.



Mobility RYLA for visually challenged

A two-day Empathy and Mobility workshop under a District RYLA was conducted by RC Vishrambag, RID 3170, for 40 visually-challenged students at the Late Sou Sushilabai D Ghodawat Residential Blind School, Miraj.

Swagat Thorat and Swaroopa Deshpande mentored the students in various activities. During the Empathy session, Rotaractors and Rotarians experienced the daily tasks of visually-challenged people, and this helped them to appreciate their confidence and challenges. The students were taught life skills such as identifying fruits, vegetables and grains by touch and smell; walking independently with white canes; and climbing stairs safely.

The students had their first-ever mall experience as they explored the clothing shops by touching the fabrics, feeling the texture and design, and learned to use an elevator/escalator for the first time. Team-building games were also organised. ■

Protein: Getting enough at every age

Gita Mathai

Suddenly, everyone seems to be talking about protein. Once discussed mainly in gyms among bodybuilders, weightlifters and athletes, it has now become a concern for ordinary people. Growing awareness suggests that an Indian diet dominated by rice or wheat, with only small portions of protein-rich foods, may leave some people short of their requirements. A well-planned vegetarian diet, however, can provide adequate protein.

Unlike vitamins and minerals, which are micronutrients needed in small quantities, protein is a macronutrient required in larger amounts. It builds, maintains and repairs tissues, supports immune function, and forms part of many essential hormones and enzymes. It is also necessary for growth, wound healing and recovery from illness or injury.

Protein requirements vary with age, activity and health. Children need protein to support growth, but their requirements depend on their age; a single figure does not apply to all children. For most healthy adults, the recommended daily allowance is approximately 0.8 gram per kilogram of body weight or about 56gm for a person weighing 70kg.

People who exercise regularly may require more. Those doing substantial

endurance or strength training often need about 1.2–2.0 gm/kg daily, depending on training intensity and goals. Exercising for an hour does not automatically put someone at the upper end of this range.

Daily exercise remains beneficial even when someone spends much of the day sitting. However, prolonged sitting carries additional health risks, so desk workers should also get up, move around and break up long periods of inactivity.

With advancing age, maintaining muscle becomes particularly important. Sarcopenia is the progressive loss of muscle strength and mass associated with ageing. It can cause weakness, slower walking and difficulty rising from a chair. As it progresses, balance and mobility suffer, increasing the risk of falls, fractures and loss of

independence. Strength training can help preserve muscle and physical function.

Age-related changes, inactivity, hormonal changes and chronic illnesses all contribute. Poor nutrition may add to the problem. Loose or missing teeth, poorly fitting dentures, a painful mouth, difficulty swallowing and reduced appetite can make eating a challenge. Some medicines also affect appetite or taste. These problems deserve attention rather than being accepted as inevitable consequences of ageing.

Healthy older adults are often advised to aim for approximately 1.0–1.2gm of protein per kilogram of body weight daily. Requirements may be higher during illness or recovery, but should be assessed individually, particularly when kidney disease is present. Including protein-rich foods at each meal makes the daily target easier to reach.





For healthy adults, protein generally provides 10–35 per cent of total daily calories. However, calculating the requirement in grams is usually more practical than working with percentages.

Understanding portions helps. One large egg provides approximately 6–7gm of protein, while an egg white provides about 3–4gm. A 100gm portion of cooked chicken breast contains approximately 30gm, and the same quantity of cooked fish usually supplies around 20–25gm.

Vegetarian foods can also contribute substantially. Pulses, beans, chickpeas, soybeans, tofu, milk, curd and paneer are useful sources. Nuts and seeds add protein, although they are also calorie-dense. Rice and chapatis contribute smaller amounts and should be accompanied by more concentrated protein sources.

Food values vary with the variety, portion size and preparation method. Cooked lentils may provide approximately 7–9gm of protein per 100gm, but a watery dal preparation contains less. Milk supplies approximately 3–3.5gm per 100ml. Raw and cooked weights should not be confused: pulses absorb water during cooking, reducing the amount of protein per 100gm without removing protein from the original portion.

Nutrition databases, food labels and apps can help estimate intake. Online searches and AI-generated charts are convenient, but check their figures against reliable sources, especially when portion sizes or cooking methods are unclear.

For older people with small appetites, obtaining enough protein from bulky meals can be difficult. Smaller meals containing concentrated sources such as eggs, curd, paneer, or thick dal may be easier to manage. People with lactose intolerance may tolerate curd or lactose-free milk better than ordinary milk.

Some people consume several egg whites each day to increase their intake. Six egg whites supply roughly 20–24gm of protein, which is only part of most adults' daily requirement. Whole eggs also provide useful nutrients like minerals, flavonoids and antioxidants, so there is no universal need to discard every yolk.

Protein supplements can help when ordinary food does not meet a person's needs. They come as powders, bars, and ready-to-drink shakes. Whey, soy and other suitable protein preparations offer convenient ways to fill a dietary gap. Check the label carefully: the amount in a scoop may be different from the amount of protein it contains.

Supplements are not essential for everyone, and their benefits depend partly on whether protein intake was

inadequate to begin with. They should not be presented as treatments for high blood pressure, raised triglycerides or diabetes. Some preparations contain considerable sugar or calories, which may work against a person's health goals.

Adequate protein must be combined with physical activity to preserve muscle effectively. Resistance exercises can include lifting weights, using resistance bands, performing suitable body-weight exercises (pilates) or repeatedly rising from a chair. Older adults also benefit from aerobic and balance exercises.

A 2–3kg dumbbell may suit some people but be too heavy or too light for others. As strength improves, you can gradually increase resistance, repetitions, or sets. People who are frail or have significant joint or balance problems may benefit from supervised instruction.

Choose supplements from reputable manufacturers and avoid products containing unnecessary stimulants, undisclosed ingredients or claims of hormone-like effects. Count protein from both food and supplements; more is not automatically better.

People with chronic kidney disease need individual advice because excessive protein can increase the kidneys' workload. Their requirements also vary by disease stage and whether they receive dialysis. It is inaccurate, however, to claim that appropriate protein supplementation inevitably causes chronic kidney disease in people with healthy kidneys.

Adequate protein, sufficient overall nutrition and regular resistance exercise work together to maintain strength, mobility and independence as we grow older.

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



RID **3170**

RC Belgaum Midtown

DGE Ashok Naik inaugurated a solar-powered water lift system and solar lights in temples at Koladur village, Bailhongal taluk, through a GG valued at ` 1 lakh. It will benefit 10,000 villagers and their livestock.



Club matters



RID **3182**

RC Konandur

Forty-five women attended a five-day vocational training camp on saree tassels for self-employment. The event was done with the support of Bank of Baroda and Tailors Association of Karnataka, Thirthahalli.

RID **3234**

RC Nanganallur Elite

New shirts were donated to 25 auto drivers on Vijayadasami to recognise their role in urban transportation. The shirts were sponsored by J Suryanarayana, and club president Meena Sathish led the initiative.





RID **3240**

RC Dimapur

An RO filter unit was inaugurated by additional DCP Veni Vese to provide access to clean, safe drinking water to visitors and community members at the police station in Chumoukedima.

RID **3181**

RC Belthangady

Low-cost homes (~ 7.5 lakh), sponsored by past president Sharath Padvetnaya, were given to two elderly women from economically weaker sections of society.



RID **3261**

RC Damoh Greater

A sanitary pad incinerator was installed at the Government Kamala Nehru Girls College. Club president Ajit Jain, coordinator Sanjay Jain, and other members were present at the handover event.



RID **3291**

RC Jodhpur Gardens Calcutta

Thirty players took part in the All Bengal Chess Tournament for the visually challenged. The games were played on tactile chess boards with raised squares. Chess GM Dibyendu Barua helped the club.

Compiled by V Muthukumaran



Towards water wisdom

Preeti Mehra



At the table next to mine were seated four people. They ordered a bottle of water and the waiter filled up their glasses. They ate heartily and gently sipped on the water. When they left after paying the bill, all their glasses were lying on the table half full of water. The waiter cleared the table, removing the four glasses and throwing their content into the washbasin. What a waste!

I watched silently and sadly. There was nothing I could do. I wondered if I should have asked the four of them to finish the water in their glasses. But that would have been an intrusion.

Through this column I want to tell our readers that wasting water is not a virtue. Least of all at a time when the expert prognosis is that water scarcity is looming large on the horizon. This year's deficient rainfall means that the country is facing one of the worst water shortages in a decade.

Data recently put out by the Central Water Commission (CWC), which monitors 178 major reservoirs across India, reveals that the combined live storage of the water reservoirs was at 132.734 billion cubic metres (BCM) at the end of the monsoon; much lower than last year's 166.856 BCM. The storage this year was below the

10-year average of 151.118 BCM. This means that our water position is not very comfortable and farmers still need its supply for their winter crops.

When the above data is combined with what the India Meteorological Department (IMD) has indicated, we are looking at a difficult situation ahead. The IMD says that the post-monsoon rainfall between October and December could remain below normal, potentially limiting replenishment of our reservoirs and directly impacting the moisture in the soil and the water table. With rain deficiency, irrigating the crops will be a major issue.

Researching for solutions to mitigate the situation, I came across many sources on the net discussing the problem. But what caught my attention on the things we can do was on the Concern Worldwide website. It provides an overall global perspective on the situation. It says: “At least 50 per cent of the world’s population experiences high water stress for at least one month every year. Twenty-six per cent lack safely managed drinking water, and a full 41 per cent lack adequate sanitation services. By 2050, drought could impact up to 75 per cent of people around the world.”

The figures are stark, and the challenge is enormous. But the solutions are there — and proven to work. So here are some solutions to the water crisis:

Water trucking

The simplest solution to this crisis is water trucking. It is one of the quickest short-term solutions to scarcity. Trucks are chartered into areas like refugee camps or drought-stricken communities. This is an expensive solution and not a long-term fix for a crisis, but it can be a life-saving stopgap in dire situations.

Desalinators and water purification tablets

Areas without access to safe, potable water often have access to some form of non-potable water. There are options to work with what’s available. For seawater, we can use individual, portable desalination devices (or desalinating at a mass scale). Water purification tablets are also handy for freshwater sources, killing microorganisms and pathogens that cause typhoid, cholera and other waterborne illnesses.

Protect existing freshwater sources

Sometimes, the solution isn’t creating a new water source, it’s protecting the one a community already has.... Simple

protective structures can safeguard these resources by keeping the surrounding area free from human and animal interference, helping ensure long-term access to clean water.

Tackle leaks and other sources of water waste

Plugging these holes in both individual homes and within larger infrastructure and pipes will help conserve what’s already on hand. Community members usually know where things need to be repaired and should be prepared to take on required improvements with the right technical and financial support.

Rainwater harvesting

A solution that’s both low-tech and low-cost in areas that get enough rainfall: Collect and store rainwater. Build rainwater harvesting systems

Don’t leave a half-filled
glass of water on your
dining table. Drink it all up!

on a collection surface like a roof and create a pathway for the water to run into a storage tank. It can be rendered potable with some processing and is also useful for agriculture (which takes up a lot of water in stressed countries), livestock, schools and hospitals. The systems are also easy for communities to manage.

Water management committees

When community members take ownership of their local water systems, water is more available to those who need it most. Water management committees are made up of locally elected members who oversee and manage local resources.

Eliminate water dumping and other pollutive activities

Approximately one million people die each year due to water contamination. We can’t solve this issue on our own as individuals, but we can work together to push for actions that ban and enforce restrictions on wastewater dumping.

Improve water infrastructure at the national level

In fragile states, it’s often the case that there isn’t enough government infrastructure or capacity to deliver water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services. This is an explanation, but it isn’t an excuse.

So far so good. But what can we do at a personal level? First, please finish the water poured out for you in your glass in a restaurant. It will hydrate you, instead of getting thrown into the basin to mingle with wastewater. Better still fill your glass with only as much as you’re likely to drink.

Other ways to decrease your water footprint

Brushing your teeth twice a day is extremely important, but don’t leave the tap running while you brush. Quite a lot of water gets wasted. Similarly, while having a shower and waiting for warm water, place a bucket under the shower so that the water can be collected, and later used for the plants or mopping the house.

If you are using a washing machine, collect the clothes to be washed and do them all at once. Avoid using the machine for just one or two clothes. Saves both water and electricity.

Don’t overlook small leaks... a leaking tap or a leaking pipe can lead to a lot of water wastage.

Last, but not the least. Don’t leave a half-filled glass of water on your dining table. Drink it all up!

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues



Romancing with sense and sensibility

These are easy reads that take you on insightful paths through the ways of the world.

Jane Austen is hugely popular around the world. In an article published in *The Common Reader* in December 2025 ('Why we love Jane Austen more than ever after 250 years'), Henry Oliver writes that this is because she "invented the modern novel in order to answer fundamental questions about how to be good, happy, and flourishing in a commercial society. Her novels are about questions that are still central to our lives". Do read this article if possible. However, this column is not about Jane Austen, it is about Uzma Jalaluddin and her writing. And yes, she is a huge Jane Austen fan. In fact, you could say that her books are a tribute to Austen. At least the two that I read recently: *Ayesha at Last* and *Hana*



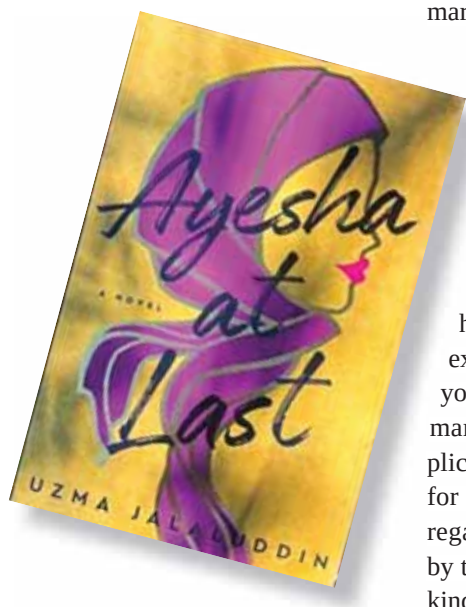
Sandhya Rao

Khan Carries On. This Canadian author writes about what it is like to live in today's complex culture of constant civilisational clashes, or so it would seem in practically all corners of the world. Certainly, in multicultural, multilingual, multiethnic, multifaitth Canada which, over the years, has become a refuge of sorts for many. Uzma Jalaluddin writes about what she knows and experiences.

Ayesha is a woman in her late twenties, clearly well past the accepted marriageable age, a poet working as a school teacher. She belongs to a loving family that includes grandparents, a single mother, and a brother. But there's nothing 'settled' about her; she is still finding her place in the world, both personal as well as professional. It doesn't help that her cousin Hafsa is the perfect example of how a girl 'should' be: young, beautiful, ready and ripe for marriage. Matters are further complicated when Ayesha has to step in for Hafsa as Hafsa-not-Ayesha with regards to an event being organised by their local mosque, resulting in all kinds of confusing outcomes.

Meanwhile, Ayesha meets Khalid, a quiet, conservative individual, who is accidentally engaged to be married to someone else — no spoilers here. She is put off by how he presents while he is irresistibly drawn to her. How Uzma resolves these various oddities makes for an engrossing, quick, insightful read. In an article posted by Ryan B Patrick back in 2018, Uzma reveals how the plot of *Ayesha at Last* came to her: "I had this funny image of this man who is an observant and conservative man in a big beard and wearing religious clothing with a skullcap. He just looks like the stereotypical 'scary person' and yet, he is a total romantic who has fallen completely in love with this girl. ... From that character, the rest of the book sort of emerged very slowly, very painfully." Often described as a 'Muslim version of *Pride and Prejudice*,' this book took many years to write given the compulsions of running a home, working a profession (Uzma is a high school teacher as well as newspaper columnist) and bringing up small children, but when it was published it instantly garnered success.

What makes both *Ayesha* and *Hana* attractive are the details worked into the storytelling, details that the reader can relate to, especially if your history has a colonial colour. Ayesha's grandfather, Nana in other words, is shown to have been a professor of literature in Hyderabad, India, before the family moved to Canada. When Ayesha



ponders aloud over her mother's attitude regarding her (Ayesha's) father's demise, she says to Nana, "It's like she hates him. She doesn't have any pictures of him, and she never talks about Dad. I lost something too when he died." Nana responds by quoting Ophelia from *Hamlet*: "We know what we are, but know not what we may be." Ayesha too knows what she is but is yet to discover who she can be.

Uzma's storytelling voice rings true. That's why, through all the contradictions and conflagrations that pepper the narrative in both novels, what shines through is the sense that despite everything and in spite of efforts to disjoint matters, this is 'home' for all those who feature in the stories. In the same Patrick post, Uzma says that "growing up as a child there weren't a lot of books by diverse writers of colour. I always found books that actually spoke about the immigrant experience and people of colour were filtered through a condescending, sometimes erroneous lens."

There's where the triumph of *Ayesha* and *Hana* lie: what you get is what it is. In a 2018 *CBC Radio* post Uzma explained that she "wanted to write a story that isn't the sad immigrant story, which so often takes over the narrative about marginalised communities. I wanted to explore



the happy parts. My book has a lot of drama — it does have a lot of serious issues of identity — but it also focuses on love."

As in *Hana Khan Carries On*, Hana, short for Hanaan, is into radio. While she helps her mother run the family's restaurant business — Three Sisters Biryani Poutine — she is also an intern at Radio Toronto, a local indie radio station. There she works alongside another intern of South Asian descent, Thomas Mathews; they are 'bossed' by Marisa Lake who, Hana suspects, has a saviour complex. Marisa's bosses put pressure on her to produce engaging material, she diverts the pressure on to Hana and Thomas — but of course, each one's notion of 'engaging' is poles apart. Three Sisters meanwhile faces stiff competition from a spanking new upscale halal restaurant across the street run by a rough-tough and his market-savvy son Aydin. While Hana vents her frustrations through her podcast, *Ana's Brown Girl Rambles*, they manifest as virtual fisticuffs in real life, leading to much tension and heartache. The only redeeming feature is a sympathetic fan of her podcast, Stanley P. Hana's aunt,

Kawkab Khala, visiting from India, is a kind of catalyst who motivates Hana to become who she aspires to be.

Both books end rather dramatically in the way romcoms generally tend to end, but getting there is all twisty and turny filled with flesh-and-blood people and real-life situations. That's what is so refreshing. It's not a whitewashed version of multiculturalism. Uzma's novels are populated by people with all their warts, halos, giggles and ghosting, inhabiting truly diverse neighbourhoods that nurture friendships as well as gossip. They pray, they work, they deal with office politics, racism and discrimination, but they also bask in the security of true relationships and routine... The title of Uzma's column for the *Toronto Star*, 'Samosas and Maple Syrup,' clearly indicates her world view and the world her characters reside in.

Finally, a word about *Fractured Communities*. This book, which developed from a PhD thesis on the Adivasis of Singbhum district in Jharkhand, and their history under British rule, was written as the author-cum-student Umar Khalid was serving, and continues to serve, time in jail without bail for the last six years on highly debatable charges. In fact, he had not completed writing his thesis when he was incarcerated and had to appeal to the court in order to submit it to the university. Hailed as a remarkable piece of analytical, historical writing by scholars, the book examines the colonial policy of working the ruptures within Adivasi societies to subjugate them. Serious and scholarly, this book is like a song of resistance, reminding us to pay attention to what the young are now saying.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist

Both books end dramatically as romcoms generally end, but getting there is all twisty and turny filled with flesh-and-blood people and real-life situations.



The fine art of babudom

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan



What is it about our bureaucrats and their babudom that everyone loves them like they love a pimple on their noses? I can't think of a single person who hasn't had an endearing experience with one of them. Even my father who spent his career as a civil servant, and who used to scold me for criticising his tribe, said maybe I had a point. His great eyeopener was when in his late 70s and well into retirement, he tried to return a train ticket after the train had been cancelled. He was highly diabetic and his hand used to shake; so filling the form wasn't easy. He asked the clerk at the counter to help him fill it. There were only five entries to be made but the clerk refused, saying it wasn't his job. My mother gave the man 20 rupees and he filled it out double quick.

Over the years the power that a bureaucrat has to say no or delay saying yes has been compounded by ignorance and incompetence. Now the babus, never mind their level, say no not only so that they can extort money but also because they don't know what to do with an application. My wife had this experience a few months ago when she was trying to change her email address that she had given for a bank account 27 years ago. Her ordeal started in March and it's still not over. The bank babudom had no idea what to do and kept on asking for all sorts of documentation because of the need to cover up ignorance and incompetence. They kept citing rules that no one has either ever made, or heard of, till then. And mind you this is not a public sector bank. It's a large private sector one. But babudom exists everywhere, to make our lives fun and worth living.

Last year a friend was told he had to pay a ₹5,000 fine for something he had not done or

requested. A government crew had lopped some branches from a tree in front of his house on a complaint from a neighbouring house. A few weeks later another group of babus from some other department issued him a showcause notice with a demand for a fine. They said he had cut the branches illegally. He refused to pay and the matter was eventually sorted out.

Yet another friend needed a completion certificate for his house. He was a bureaucrat and thought he would get it without any trouble. But after several reminders and visits he realised this wasn't as easy as he had thought it would be. So he called a colleague for help who ordered the lower babus to hand it over. But when my friend went to collect, he was told that there were three other certificates he needed and that would level the playing field.

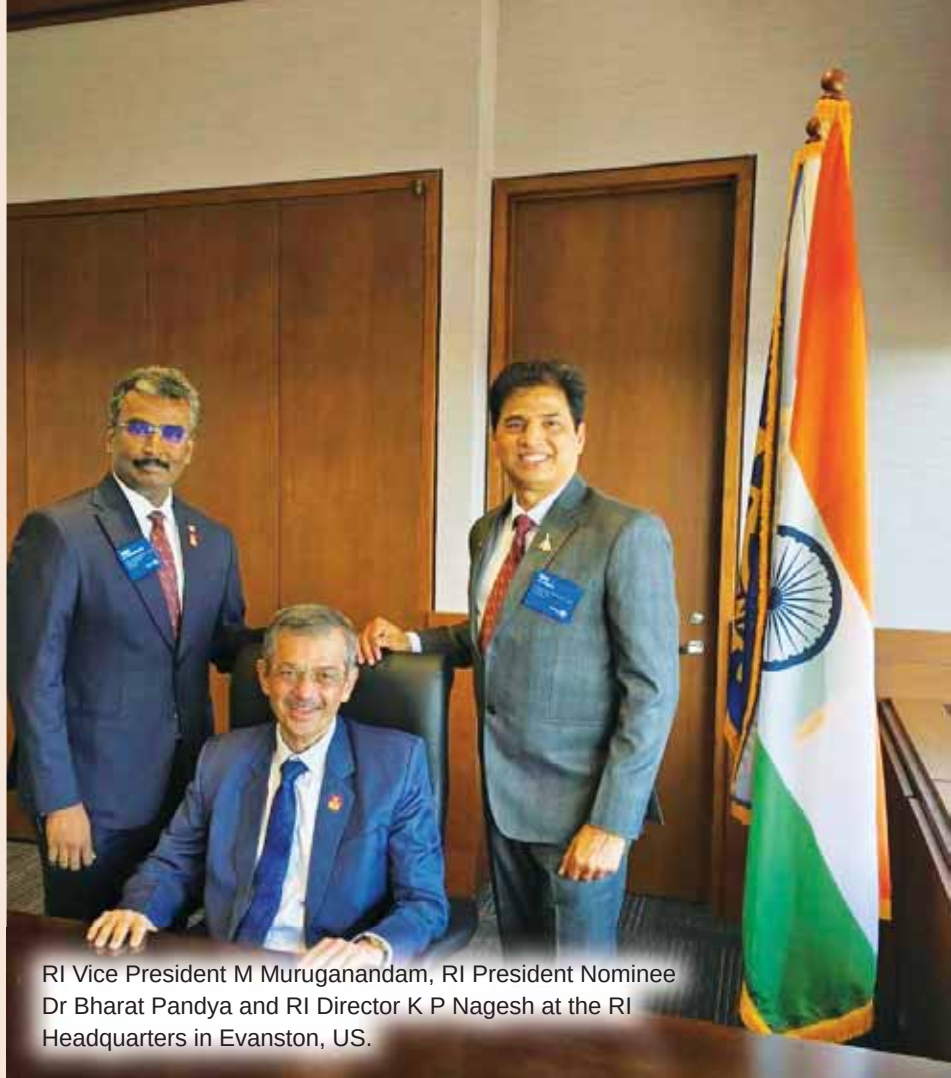
A few years ago, a research paper was published that showed that Indian businesses needed as many as 68,000 compliances to be made — 27,000 were required by the central government and the rest by different state governments. Each compliance is overseen by a bunch of babus, who don't ensure that the rules are followed but take a bribe to overlook non-compliance. The government made a serious attempt to fix the problem. But the babus have struck back by inventing new rules. Where there is a will, there is always a way.

The most shameless and yet the funniest babu, however, was the one my brother encountered when he was building his house. The babu demanded a bribe for something. My brother said, no, I won't pay, I am also an employee of the government like you. Without batting an eyelid, the babu said "ok, I will give you a 50 per cent discount!" How can we not love these fellows. ■

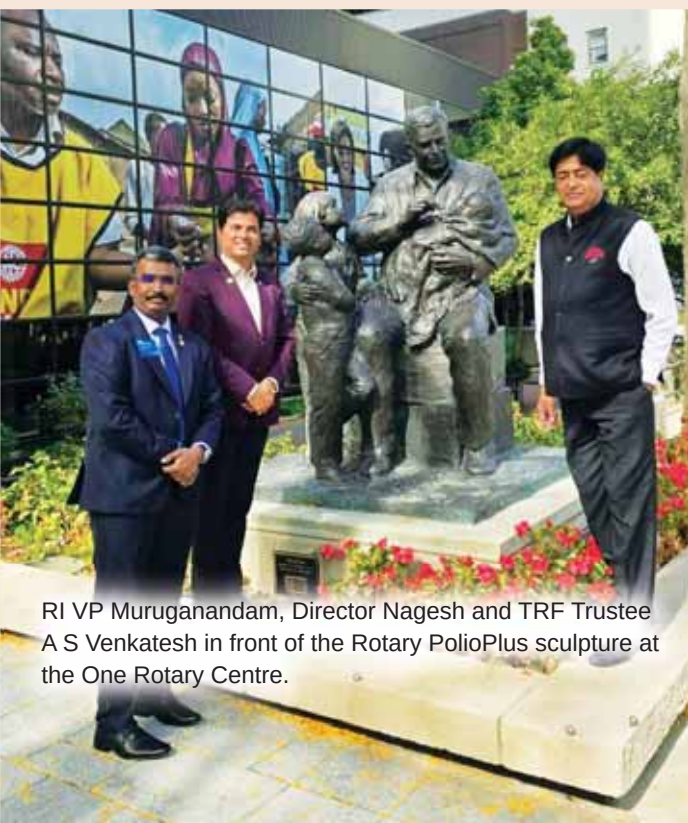
Glimpses from Evanston

Rotary leaders from India — RI Vice President M Muruganandam, RI Director K P Nagesh, TRF Trustee A S Venkatesh and RI President Nominee Bharat Pandya — took part in meetings and interactions with Rotary leaders at the RI Headquarters, One Rotary Centre, in Evanston, US.

Sharing photographs on his Facebook page, RID Nagesh wrote: “Wonderful interactions, meaningful conversations, and inspiring experiences with the global Rotary family made this visit truly special. Every moment was a reminder of the power of fellowship, collaboration, and our shared commitment to Service Above Self.” ■



RI Vice President M Muruganandam, RI President Nominee Dr Bharat Pandya and RI Director K P Nagesh at the RI Headquarters in Evanston, US.



RI VP Muruganandam, Director Nagesh and TRF Trustee A S Venkatesh in front of the Rotary PolioPlus sculpture at the One Rotary Centre.



RI VP Muruganandam, RIPN Pandya and Director Nagesh.



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