

Rotary

INDIA NEWS

INDIA
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Two serving RI presidents visit RNT office

RI President Jennifer Jones and her husband DGN Nick Krayacich visited Rotary News office in Chennai during their *Imagine Impact India* tour.

Just one month earlier, on June 26, RI President Shekhar Mehta and Rashi dropped into the RNT office.



RI Director A S Venkatesh

RI President Jennifer Jones and DGN Nick Krayacich (extreme R) with *Rotary News* editor Rasheeda Bhagat and staff.



RI President Shekhar Mehta, Rashi, RI Director Mahesh Kotbagi and RID 3232 DG J Sridhar and his wife Punitha, with *Rotary News* staff at the RNT office in Chennai during their visit to the district in June.

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May Lord bless our new President

Finally, Rotary is having its first woman president — Jennifer Jones from Canada. This is certainly going to be a landmark year for all of us. The article *Storyteller in Chief* details her journey including her tryst with breast cancer, and her jigs on the dance floor. We are lucky to have her as our leader.

As our former President APJ Abdul Kalam said, “Think big and strive to achieve it.” May the Lord bless our new President Jones and Rotary.

The article *Preventing cardiac arrests* by Bharat and Shalan Savur must be read by all Rotarians who value their health. I relished reading this article which is simple and down to earth for anyone to understand it. Also the suggestions for a healthy lifestyle are simple and practical. Here we can remind ourselves of the famous mantra of TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya: *Ek chamach kam, char kadam aage*. A healthy Rotarian is an asset not only to Rotary but to the community!

Robert Franklin Rego
RC Bajpe — D 3181

In her editorial, Rasheeda Bhagat has nicely penned the following: “When direction comes right from the top,



then miracles do happen. I completely agree that the battle for gender equity is a long and arduous one and needs as many shoulders at the wheel as possible... both male and female.”

Namita Sharma
RC Nagpur — D 3030

The cover picture of President Jones in the July issue is superb. She has rightly stressed on promoting Rotary during this year to fulfil its vision. Rotary has finally got its first female president as predicted by Jones herself seven years ago.

RID Dr Mahesh Kotbagi has explained the importance of fellowships in Rotary, while RID AS Venkatesh has urged us to come out with new ideas and visions for the new Rotary year. Both Foundation trustee chair and trustee point out the need to donate to TRF. Article *Storyteller in Chief* is an excellent read as it details the qualities of Jones with colourful photos. It’s good to hear from past RI president Shekhar Mehta that last year 45,000 new members were added worldwide. The video speech by PM Narendra Modi at the Houston convention gives Rotarians ample energy to march forward. All other articles, *Skilling women in*

RID A S Venkatesh’s message offers new hope at the dawn of new Rotary year as he says past successes have given rise to a new thinking process and thus opens up new opportunities. His views are simply inspiring.

Mukundham Singam
RC Tiruchirapalli
Diamond City — D 3000

Transformation in Pere, Nepal

The word ‘hope’ has so much depth that it comes out so loudly with the work done in Pere village of Nepal. I feel that this is a story not just for this country but across the world. Rotary has ushered in a transformation in that Nepal village.

I loved the idea shared by RI Director A S Venkatesh on the ‘reputation of excellence’. The story of empowering girls by RI president Mehta left me spellbound with the kind of work done across the world. I feel that this is something that will only grow stronger since the foundation has already been built on a solid ground.

The story on Rotary’s Solidarity Walk was inspiring and showed how our organisation contributes towards the upliftment of the nation. The articles on the RI Presidential Conference were awesome — pictures came alive speaking a thousand words. The article on health

served as a ready reckoner and a good reminder.

Vivek Khandelwal
RC Deonar — D 3141

Two big achievements

Empowering girls and membership growth have been the two big achievements of RI President Mehta last year. Hats-off to him for leading Rotary in a commendable manner. His visits to different countries and meeting heads of state have been detailed by editor Rasheeda. Rotarians led by PRIP K R Ravindran marched in Sri Lanka demanding good governance as the island nation slipped into political and economic crisis.

LETTERS

Nagpur, South Asia Dinner at Houston with beautiful photos, Peace, Conflict and Rotary's role, Conference Vignettes, and RC Baroda empowers girls are excellent. Club Hop photos are colourful.

*Philip Mulappone M T
RC Trivandrum
Suburban — D 3211*

The article *Peace, conflict and Rotary's role* is interesting with an inspiring speech by former Army Chief and Union minister Gen V K Singh. Another write-up on skilling women in Nagpur under Project Sundari by RC Nagpur Vision provides details about the training on beauty care to 100 women. It is great pleasure for all Rotarians to finally have Rotary's first female president in Jennifer Jones.

*Jagdish M Vaghasia, RC Surat
East — D 3060*

TCA Srinivasa Raghavan's article on his extended family who has settled in many parts of the world and speak different languages is interesting to read as it is laced with subtle humour.

*S Muniandi
RC Dindigul Fort — D 3000*

In his year-end message, President Mehta has nicely summarised his work. We are happy to hear that the year gone by has witnessed many life-challenging projects. Many clubs did projects to empower girls, improve the environment and promote literacy and health. Mehta has proved that the top leadership

No fence sitting by Gol

Rtn John Armstrong from RC Chiswick and Brentford, UK, in his letter in the July issue laments about the "fence sitting by the Indian subcontinent", and talks about the RI statement that calls for 'the withdrawal of Russian forces'.

It is sad that the grandson of the charter president of our mother club, RC Madras, is making an issue of a political statement by RI, which in the first place has no business to comment on international political issues.

It is a pity that Armstrong, with his colonial mindset, passes judgement on the Indian government's decision not to take sides — as our foreign minister S Jaishankar said "India takes its own side — our national interests will take priority." It is not fence sitting but a clear policy to ensure

that the 1.4 billion people in the sub-continent are not affected by the effects of war in Europe caused by the trigger-happy policies of western and NATO countries.

It was Armstrong's country that caused loss of millions of Indian lives, during the colonial rule and caused the Bengal famine that killed three million citizens when Britain diverted food for the war instead of feeding the people who produced the food.

RI should only focus on alleviating human suffering wherever it happens. We feel sorry for all victims of wars and strife. We can help others only after we have helped ourselves.

*Shankar Duraiswami
RC Madras
Midtown — D 3232*

in Rotary is not only a status but an opportunity to serve and project the great image of our organisation among the public. The special effort taken by PRIP Ravindran with the help of Rotarians, Rotaractors and Anns, to take out a procession

in Sri Lanka, demanding good governance and create an awareness, when the island nation has descended into a deeper chaos, is noteworthy.

*R Srinivasan, RC Madurai
Midtown — D 3000*

We welcome your feedback. Write to the Editor:

rotarynews@rosaonline.org; rushbhagat@gmail.com.

Messages on your club/district projects, information and links on zoom meetings/webinar should be sent only by email to the editor at **rushbhagat@gmail.com** or **rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com**.
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Click on **Rotary News Plus** on our website **www.rotarynewsonline.org** to read about more Rotary projects.

On the cover: A heart patient fitted with a pacemaker sponsored by RC Jamshedpur.

It starts with an invitation

We've all taken our own path to become a member of Rotary. Some of you joined because your father was a Rotarian. Some of us signed up because an employer tapped us on the shoulder and asked us to attend a meeting. Others became members only after a US Supreme Court ruling made it possible. Yet each of us entered through one mechanism — an invitation.

An invitation that unlocks our imaginations and allows us to know that everything and anything is

possible. Each one of us has that same opportunity — the honour to extend an invitation.

It is awe-inspiring to imagine how we can look out across our communities and identify our future leaders. It's often tempting to attract people who are exactly like us. It's a special form of ingenuity to consider how people who are seemingly very different can, in fact, share our values and have some of those same talents, just waiting to be unleashed.

It's time for Rotary to take our next step in advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) across our organisation.

Embracing an experience where people feel included is more than just making our membership numbers more diverse. It's about making our meetings and events places where we can speak openly and honestly with each other, where our members feel welcome and safe. This means removing

barriers for entry and opening doors for inclusion. Our values remain our strength — and our commitment to excellence requires us to maintain high standards for our members as well.

I believe we are all determined to advance DEI across Rotary. This is rooted in the deepest traditions of our organisation, and it will ensure that we remain vibrant and relevant for decades to come.

A few years ago, our Rotary Board set the ambitious goal of increasing the share of female members to 30 per cent by 2023. We have less than a year to go, but I believe we can meet and exceed this target.

We need Rotary leaders to rise from every continent, culture and creed. We need young members and young thinkers to take on larger roles and responsibilities. We need to listen to new Rotary members just as keenly, and with as much respect, as those with many years of membership.

During our recent convention in Houston, we heard from astronauts about their journeys into space. We reflected upon a time in the 1960s when US President John F Kennedy urged the world to dream, with his declaration that we would “go to the moon (and do) other things, not because they are easy but because they are hard.”

Fully committing Rotary to DEI and meeting our ambitious membership targets may seem as unlikely as a moon shot.

But I know that when people of action are committed to a big goal, we make it worth every ounce of our energy.

Jennifer Jones
President, Rotary International



RI President Jennifer Jones at the RNT office.

Krishnaprathesh S

EDITOR'S NOTE



Service at its best...

In the Rotary world, it is a great honour to get a visit from a serving RI president. Well, before June 2022, the last time the Rotary News Trust office in Chennai had an RI president calling in was in 2007 when President Wilf Wilkinson visited our office while holding this high post. This was well before I joined as an editor of the magazine in September 2014. A few years before my tenure as editor, we had incoming RI presidents visiting us — from Kalyan Banerjee, Ron Burton, Gary Huang to KR Ravindran.

But all of a sudden, and by sheer co-incidence, and zero planning on our part, within a month — June 26 to July 26 — we had two serving RI presidents — Shekhar Mehta and Jennifer Jones — delighting us with a visit. Mehta is a trustee on the RNT board.

Even though Mehta's year was ending, his enthusiasm and energy were palpable, and similar electrifying energy radiated from Prez Jennifer as she breezed into our office, oozing charm, enthusiasm and resolve. From her expressions, talk and body language it is evident that she means business. She is acutely aware of the historic opportunity that has been given to her to display to the world that hard work and resolve, enthusiasm and energy, intellect and vision, and above all a compassionate heart... are qualities that are neither gender specific, nor confined to this gender or that. From the meeting and events that I have watched her address in Pune first and Chennai next, it is evident that she is going to invest all the energy, passion and hard work required to make a huge success of her year as president. She doesn't like making much of the gender

factor in her rise to the office of president, always maintaining that competence and qualifications matter, not gender. But there is no doubt that she will be watched like a hawk, as all women in positions of substance and power are. Now it will be left to other qualified, talented, hardworking and competent women to walk through the door she has opened. If hard work, passion and service are their mantra, they are bound to succeed too.

It was heartwarming to meet at the goal-setting event *Lakshya* in Pune, seven women DGEs from our zones. Yes, for the first time ever, Rotary India will see seven women governors in a single batch. Good luck to all of them.

Again, by co-incidence, the cover story of this issue is also about a feisty and dedicated woman, who has worked undaunted, relentlessly and passionately to help needy patients with a defective heart get pacemakers implanted at a nominal cost. Dr Vijaya Bharat, a cardiologist from the Rotary Club of Jamshedpur, has been working for 17 long years to help patients with irregular heartbeats get fitted with pacemakers at the Tata Main Hospital in that city. Even after retirement from the hospital as the head of the department of cardiology, she convinced her successor, Dr Mandar Shah, to join her Rotary club, and continue this service. In all, thanks to her efforts, 222 hearts are continuing to tick with the help of pacemakers implanted at the Tata Hospital.

Surely this is service at its best...



Rasheeda Bhagat

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Website



A new Rotary year has begun with a new world leader Jennifer Jones. We salute outgoing president Shekhar Mehta who set new records in membership growth and retention. His appeal 'Each one, bring one' has created wonders in strengthening the organisation with a massive addition of nearly 10,000 members. The 'empower girls' mission was a huge success and is now a slogan for Rotarians across the world.

We now have a deserving woman from Canada to lead us all, after the long years it took Rotary to choose a woman leader, as envisaged in the DEI policy. These are learning lessons for our organisation and we should welcome them with open arms.

Jones became a leader not because of her gender but because she exhibits focused leadership and dedicated service. Her partner Nick Krayacich, now a DGN, shows us how a partner's role can be ideal and encouraging.

Jones wants Rotarians to widen their horizons and enhance Rotary's public image through the media without losing focus on serving humanity.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) is her unique mantra. Sometime ago we were talking of classifications with the concept of covering all sections of our communities. She expands it further with DEI.

Let us work together with bigger and better goals, along with the

Director

Imagine Rotary

Innerwheel members, Rotaractors, Interactors and all those who want to join us in our mission of serving humanity! Women's empowerment and projects aiming at the girl child's development, especially in the rural, remote areas, are the need of the hour and let us pledge to work largely in these areas this year.

As we work on Rotary's areas of focus, let us respect the seventh area of focus — Supporting the environment. Preserving Planet Earth is the priority. Every Rotarian should work with passion and dedication as creating a healthy environment and a green cityscape will only help us survive.

President Jones and Nick were given a warm welcome in India when they visited Pune, Kochi, Chennai, Varanasi and Delhi to interact with highly performing Rotarians and their families. She shared her dreams, guided the governors and motivated the club presidents. I am sure her visit will have a huge impact on Rotary India.

She wants all of us to *Imagine Rotary* as an organisation that can transform the world through our dedicated service to humanity.

Let us all pledge to be with her as soldiers in this mission. Let us close the windows of our mind that relate to the past and open a new window with DEI.

Cheers!

Dr Mahesh Kotbagi
RI Director, 2021-23

Let's adapt to change

A couple of weeks ago, I had a conversation with a senior Rotarian. We discussed the impact of the recent pandemic on Rotary at the club level. We quickly agreed that technology came in handy to keep our members engaged in some form and to keep the connect alive. Not surprisingly, we also agreed that such meetings held online can never be a substitute for the real thing, an in-person meeting, and that we should soon be getting back to pre-pandemic style of club meetings.

Though the conversation ended there that day, I was still thinking about it thereafter. It appeared that we were not ready to move away from our comfort zone, regardless of the benefits such a move may offer. Is this mindset of those who are already in, a hindrance to our growth? Are we refusing to see the elephant in the room?

Rotary's greatest strength is its ability to adapt with the changing times. This quality of ours has ensured our survival and growth over twelve decades. The success of e-clubs, hybrid clubs, passport clubs and various other forms that reflect the changing landscape of Rotary membership is testimony to



this. We would be doing ourselves a disservice by turning a blind eye to it. Doing the same thing and expecting a different outcome would be foolhardy. If we want to attract and retain those who are not presently in, the next-gen in particular, we need to embrace change. While maintaining status quo gives us a sense of stability, it may also be our biggest threat. Our willingness to change gives us the ability to go far.

Let us look around. Let us assess what needs to be changed and be brave enough to accept those changes. Ability to adapt is a part of our action plan. Let us not miss this piece of action!

AS Venkatesh
RI Director, 2021–23

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Magazine

Two sides of the same coin

During my travels, Rotary often comes up in conversation. Most people associate us with local projects and fundraisers — which is great — but few know what a global force Rotary is. It's easier to understand this aspect of Rotary through an example, such as how Rotary responded to the devastating bushfires in Australia in late 2019 and early 2020.



The result of extreme drought, global warming and adverse weather conditions, the fires caused catastrophic damage. The need for help was obvious and substantial. No stranger to forest fires themselves, Canadian Rotarians knew the best way to help was through The Rotary Foundation. They were soon joined by Rotary clubs and districts in other countries and Taiwan, resulting in three Foundation global grants totaling \$280,000 to support the economic recovery of farmers affected by these fires.

One farmer wrote a letter of thanks on behalf of the remote communities we helped, saying they “were in disbelief that Rotary clubs from other countries would step up and help our relatively small farming region” and adding that “they were very grateful and honoured to be considered worthy of such aid.” Friends, this is the kind of impact your Foundation has every single day around the world and why it deserves the support of all Rotary members.

The most significant projects done in Rotary's name are those accomplished through TRF. The list goes on and on. Think of the impact of our polio eradication efforts, our peace education programmes, and our Programs of Scale grants. All these efforts to make the world a better place emanate from our Foundation.

The Foundation also impacts our club experience, membership, partnerships, and so much more. The more visibility and impact we have through Foundation projects, the more people want to be part of what we are doing as partners or as members. Everybody wins.

To me, Rotary and its Foundation are inseparable — you can't have one without the other. They are two sides of the same coin. I love the friendship and fellowship and projects I experience as a member of the Rotary Club of Sandringham, Australia, but I am also thrilled to be part of a global movement that is changing the lives of countless people through TRF.

Remember that other side of the Rotary coin and support your Foundation. By doing so, you will also be supporting your fellow members who are bringing to life the projects our world truly needs.

Ian HS Riseley
Foundation Trustee Chair

A museum for everyone

EVA Remijan-Toba



Melbourne's Carlton Gardens is home to the Royal Exhibition Building and the Melbourne Museum.

Melbourne is known as Australia's cultural capital, and its museums are a big reason why. During the 2023 RI Convention, taking place May 27–31, be sure to explore the history, art and creativity on display at the dozens of museums in the city.

Start your day in the Melbourne Arts Precinct, home to several of the city's most popular galleries, including the National Gallery of Victoria. It maintains a collection of over 75,000 pieces, ranging from ancient Egypt to contemporary art, across two sites. Entry to its permanent exhibitions is free.

If you prefer art in action, check out ACMI (Australian Centre for the Moving Image), located in Federation Square. Here, you can explore the universe of film, television, video games and video art.

Melbourne is also known for its cultural diversity, and at the Immigration Museum you can hear, read, and watch the real-life stories of the people who have migrated to Australia from all over the world. To learn about the area's original inhabitants, head to the Melbourne Museum's Bunjilaka Aboriginal Cultural Centre, which celebrates indigenous culture through performances, storytelling, art, and more. Then, explore the area's wildlife and forest ecosystems in the museum's Forest Gallery.

Head to the Australian Sports Museum at the Melbourne Cricket Ground to learn about nationally popular sports such as Australian rules football, created in Melbourne in the 1850s, and view the country's largest collection of sports memorabilia.

Learn more and register at
convention.rotary.org.

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Rotary at a glance

Rotary clubs : 36,913

Rotaract clubs : 11,370

Interact clubs : 18,415

RCCs : 12,371

Rotary members : 1,175,466

Rotaract members: 207,597

Interact members : 423,545

As on July 18, 2022

Membership Summary

As on July 1, 2022 (Interim)

RI District	Rotary Clubs	No of Rotarians	Women Rotarians (%)	Rotaract Clubs	Interact Clubs	RCC
2981	135	6058	8.09	63	55	240
2982	76	3277	7.02	47	98	73
3000	132	5175	8.83	99	305	214
3011	121	4467	26.89	76	120	36
3012	148	3782	23.80	71	82	61
3020	78	4632	6.82	33	168	350
3030	98	5136	15.03	126	357	379
3040	111	2594	14.26	57	83	182
3053	74	2929	17.14	36	51	127
3054	167	6916	20.36	106	195	569
3060	105	4803	14.72	65	78	151
3070	120	3052	15.63	48	53	59
3080	107	4333	13.25	147	192	116
3090	99	2510	6.49	46	109	161
3100	100	2132	10.18	14	28	151
3110	141	3662	10.76	14	19	106
3120	90	3695	16.56	66	34	55
3131	141	5293	23.92	120	244	143
3132	86	3498	11.32	34	125	167
3141	108	5759	25.72	144	189	103
3142	103	3607	20.71	84	148	84
3150	110	4208	13.31	143	148	119
3160	78	2783	9.99	29	20	82
3170	145	6370	15.27	99	260	176
3181	87	3344	9.24	35	197	116
3182	87	3433	9.18	45	131	104
3190	163	6497	19.19	202	272	72
3201	164	6284	9.75	126	104	87
3203	94	4710	7.92	74	234	37
3204	72	2404	8.49	23	32	13
3211	155	5060	8.48	7	27	133
3212	127	4706	11.84	83	270	153
3231	94	3399	7.86	34	99	417
3232	172	7484	18.92	132	229	98
3240	107	3602	16.46	67	412	226
3250	102	3853	20.63	64	74	186
3261	92	3255	18.68	17	25	44
3262	128	4142	14.92	76	625	270
3291	158	3959	24.80	137	103	675
India Total	4,475	166,803		2,889	5,995	6,535
3220	72	1988	15.74	95	144	75
3271	130	2788	16.93	151	184	25
3272	161	1708	18.44	70	22	47
3281	308	8818	18.21	278	156	207
3282	179	3635	10.62	202	49	47
3292	153	5805	17.73	175	137	129
S Asia Total	5,478	191,545		3,860	6,687	7,065

Source: RI South Asia Office

RC Jamshedpur keeps hearts ticking through an exemplary project

Rasheeda Bhagat

A 50-year old Afghan citizen Shadaab, with limited means, was diagnosed with a defective heart when a tertiary centre in India conducted a cardiac screening camp in Kabul. He needed a pacemaker and Shadaab, who owned a small farm in Kabul

and was the sole earning member of his family, managed to reach Delhi, after he had tried for treatment but in vain in both Kabul and Lahore. In Delhi he was shunted from one medical facility to another but he found the cost of treatment prohibitive and no benefactor to help him. Soon he ran out of money.

“The desperate man was told by some kabuliwallas in Delhi to go to Kolkata as they had heard that patients with limited means were getting free heart procedures done in that region. In Kolkata, he heard that there was a doctor in Jamshedpur who was helping heart patients, and one fine day he landed up in my

Shadaab, an Afghan heart patient, after getting a pacemaker implant with Dr Vijaya Bharat (second from R) and her team.



home,” recalls Dr Vijaya Bharat, a cardiologist and member of RC Jamshedpur, RID 3250. She has been helping fix pacemakers, for 17 years, at a very nominal cost associated with only hospitalisation and medicines at the Tata Main Hospital in Jamshedpur.

She examined him and found that he had a heart problem with a lower heart beat and required a pacemaker. She told him that he could be cured by placing a pacemaker for his heart to beat at the required rate. “*Jab maine kaha ki pacemaker laga degey, toh usne kaha Madam paise aur visa dono khatam honewale hei* (Both my money and visa are running out). So I told him don’t worry about the money, just get your visa extended and return here.”

At this point, Shadaab went on his knees on the ground under the open sky, and looking up started



Dr Vijaya Bharat with a young pacemaker recipient.



With a low heartbeat, a person cannot do any normal activity and will feel very tired. So in order to keep such a person’s heart beating at a normal pace, we need to put in a pacemaker.

screaming in an Afghan language that she couldn’t understand. Thinking he was worried about the pain the intervention would cause, she tried to comfort him by saying there would be no pain as anaesthesia would be used, etc. Imagine her astonishment when he said: “I am not scared, I am praying for you as you are the first person who has said you’ll help me and I can get cured.”

He returned after extending his visa, the pacemaker was placed and he went home a happy and healthy man.

Shadaab was the 99th man to receive a Rotary pacemaker; till date RC Jamshedpur has helped in the placement of 222 pacemakers. The story of the Rotary pacemaker begins in 2004 when Dr Vijaya was not even a Rotarian and only a Rotary Ann, with her husband Ramachandra Bharat being a past governor and member of RC Jamshedpur. Working as a cardiologist at the Tata Main Hospital in Tatanagar, Jamshedpur, she came across Anjali Das, a 65-year-old woman, the wife of a retired school teacher, who used to lose consciousness often. She had a problem in the electrical circuit within her heart known as Complete Heart Block (CHB). The solution lay in implanting a pacemaker in her chest. But the poor school teacher could not afford the cost and he helplessly watched his wife getting fainting episodes. “Das

Das would come to my hospital every other day and say desperately ‘*Madam meri patni ko bachaney ke liye aap kuch karo*’. She needed a pacemaker, for which her husband had no money.

would come to my hospital every other day and say desperately ‘*Madam meri patni ko bachaney ke liye aap kuch karo*’ (Do something to save my wife). She needed a pacemaker, for which her husband had no money.

So one December evening in 2004, Dr Vijaya did a google search on “pacemakers for poor patients”, and literally struck a jackpot. Co-incidentally, around that time, after returning from the incoming district governors’ training in the US, Ronald D’Costa from RID 3250, and also a member of RC Jamshedpur, was excited about doing a project to give pacemakers to needy patients. One of the answers that google threw up was about Heart Beat International (HBI), US, which supplies pacemakers all over the world through Rotary club initiated pacemaker banks.

She now remembered that at one of her husband’s club’s board meetings, DG Ronald D’Costa “had said that during his governors’ training in US he had learnt about a project which gives pacemakers to poor patients. I didn’t know much about it then, but when google threw up HBI, the two pieces of information clicked,” says Dr Vijaya.

When good is destined to happen, everything falls into place. She immediately wrote to HBI, a Florida-based organisation, that had developed a system of routing new pacemakers donated by the

best-in-class manufacturers to Pacemaker Banks established by Rotary clubs across the world. RC Jamshedpur swung into action and fulfilled the formalities for accrediting Dr Vijaya as the implant physician and Tata Main Hospital as the implantation centre. Thus the 42nd Pacemaker Bank in the world and the fifth in India was established in December 2004.

Club member KN Venkat came forward to pay the first annual membership fee of \$4,200 to HBI on the occasion of his son’s 40th birthday. Soon a carton of new pacemakers was shipped from the US to Jamshedpur, “and the

first beneficiary was Anjali Das,” beams the cardiologist, adding, “since then, no poor patient in need of a life-saving pacemaker has been turned away from the Tata hospital.” Initially a spouse, she later became a Rotarian and joined RC Jamshedpur.

Giving details for the lay person on when a pacemaker is needed, the doctor says “there are people with a very low heartbeat, such as 40 beats a minute, (against a normal of 60–90 heartbeats a minute), and even that can stop suddenly. With such a low heartbeat, the person cannot do any normal activity and will feel very tired. So in order to keep such a person’s heart beating at a normal pace, we need to put in a pacemaker.”

The procedure to implant a pacemaker takes around 30 minutes and it



Dosma Liyangi after a pacemaker implant.

is placed after making a two-inch incision below the collar bone on the right or left side of the chest as required. "From there we pass a small wire into the heart chamber and connect that wire to the pacemaker which is a small lithium battery-operated electronic device," she explains. With continuous improvement in technology, the current single chamber pacemaker weighs just 15gm and dual chamber one, 19gm. The cost ranges between ₹55,000 (single chamber) to ₹1.2 lakh (for double chamber).

The cardiologist says that once a pacemaker has been implanted the improvement in the condition of the patient is dramatic. Apart from the pacemaker charges, the hospitalisation and medicines can cost between ₹5,000 to 10,000. "In 2018, I retired as the HoD from the Cardiology department of the Tata Main Hospital but I know that in cases where very poor patients can't afford even ₹5,000 or so, Tata Steel waives off the operation or hospital charges." She is now a consultant and works for this cause through her club's pacemaker committee.

She has convinced her successor at the Tata Main Hospital, Dr Mandar Shah, to join Rotary as a member of her club; he is now the chairperson of the club's pacemaker committee and continues the work of



Dosma Liyangi with her two children.

placing Rotary pacemakers in needy patients at the Tata hospital in Jamshedpur.

From 2004 to 2014, HBI used to send big cartons with the pacemakers and the customs duty was negligible, but after 2014, "due to changes in government policies, the import of donated devices became cumbersome and incurred additional duty. The pacemaker committee of our club worked upon an alternative. A corpus was made with the annual donations from Rtn NL Rungta, a member of RC Chaibasa, which was used to buy pacemakers for needy patients. Thus the project to

keep diseased hearts ticking continued without any interruption," says Dr Vijaya.

She adds that only the previous day she got a letter from Rungta saying that since a new Rotary year has started, he will soon be sending the annual fund of ₹6 lakh for the coming year. That will enable the pacemaker committee to help another nine patients.

She adds that for Rungta's annual contribution PRID Kamal Sanghvi

is responsible. "He visited Jamshedpur several years ago and after interacting with a few of our beneficiaries, promised to keep the project alive. He impressed upon a benevolent Rotarian in Chaibasa to donate the annual fee on a permanent basis. That Rotarian is Rungta!"

She adds that PRIP Shekhar Mehta was so impressed by this project that he has referred several

Actress Vidya Balan, while presenting an award to Dr Vijaya Bharat, said that if ever a movie was made of the project, she would love to act in it!



PRID Kamal Sanghvi with a beneficiary.

patients requiring pacemakers to the Jamshedpur club. The beneficiaries come not only from all corners of District 3250 (Bihar and Jharkhand) but also from the neighbouring states of Odisha and West Bengal.

Each of the 222 beneficiaries from March 2005 till June 2022 has an interesting story to tell of which two, including that of Shadaab, are exceptional. The youngest recipient of the Rotary pacemaker was a poor 22-year-old tribal woman, Dosma Liyangi, who was detected with a heart deficiency during her first pregnancy, requiring a pacemaker. Though that pregnancy ended in a miscarriage, after getting a dual chamber pacemaker implanted, she is now leading a normal life and has two healthy children through subsequent pregnancies.

Though she has retired from the Tata hospital, she works closely

When a needy person who had received our pacemaker required a new one, I got goosebumps when he turned down a free pacemaker saying that he could now afford to pay for the second device.

with the new cardiologist Dr Mandar Shah. In her private practice she gets a lot of poor heart patients from Bihar and Jharkhand and those requiring a pacemaker are referred to Dr Shah at the Tata hospital.

In the normal course pacemaker batteries last for 10 years, so some of the earlier patients' batteries are now getting ineffective, and they need a second pacemaker, and 12 earlier recipients have already had their devices replaced through Rotary.

What is most heartening is that some of the patients, whose financial status has improved over the last 10 years, have turned down a free pacemaker and are paying for it. Dr Vijaya recalls, "When a needy person who had received our pacemaker required a new one, I got goosebumps when he turned down a free pacemaker saying that his children had now grown up and in good jobs and he could afford to pay for the second device. Madam, he told me, with this money please help someone else." She adds that poor people requiring a pacemaker can be referred to her club which can be reached at rotaryjsr16030@gmail.com.

Who knows if this project might at some point turn into a Bollywood film? Dr Vijaya recalls that in 2018 when she was given an award for the pacemaker project (Advantage Woman Award) by ICICI Bank, while presenting her the award, actress Vidya Balan said that the recipients' stories were remarkable as was the project, and if ever a movie was made of it, she would love to act in it! ■



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Forensic Psychology/ Cyber Forensics

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MCA (2 years)

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BCA + MCA (3+2 years)

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110 countries already have 30% women members in Rotary: Jones

Rasheeda Bhagat



RI President
Jennifer Jones

In the last two years the most common question I have received is how does it feel to be the first woman president of Rotary. I will confess that I feel a sense of excitement brewing because this truly opens opportunities for lifting and celebrating each of our diverse perspectives. We've all (women members) taken a different path to get here. Some have joined because your father was a Rotarian and some because an employer tapped you on the shoulder, and others because the US Supreme Court ruling permitted women to join Rotary," said incoming RI President Jennifer Jones at the closing session of the Houston Convention.

But for each entry, the mechanism was the same — an invitation to join the organisation.

"That's why I am determined to harness diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) to advance this invitation across the Rotary world. Honouring and living our DEI efforts is much more than a trend in popular culture. It's about fully understanding and celebrating our differences. It's a profound step in weaving the global mosaic of humanity."

Reiterating that when it came to DEI, what really mattered were the results, Jones said, "We have two years left to achieve the (RI) Board's target of 30 per cent women by 2023. We've come a long way and already 110 countries have achieved this goal," she said, to thunderous applause in the auditorium.

But to get to 30 per cent in the entire Rotary world, was still a long way, "and 30 per cent is the next stop on the way to 50 per cent. Do you know that our members in Rotaract have already achieved this distinction?" To achieve greater inclusion Rotary meetings and events would have to be places where "each of us can speak openly and honestly, where our members feel welcome. This

means removing barriers for entry and opening doors for inclusion. We need Rotary leaders from every continent, culture and creed... as also young members to take on larger roles and responsibilities.”

Jones said that Rotarians needed to “listen to new Rotary members just as keenly and with immense respect as those with many years of membership. Now more than ever in our shared history we need to be good to one another, to look out for each other, raise each other up, and protect those who are in our care.”

Houston was an apt city to talk of big goals, she said, recalling that it was from Houston that the then US President John F Kennedy boldly announced in May 1961 about putting the first man on the moon, and bringing him back safely. She also recalled how in the movie *Hidden Figures*, Dorothy Vaughn, portrayed by Olivia Spencer, was the first African American woman to hold the first managerial position in NASA. “She was a brilliant mathematician who was silently legendary and thanks to her talent for spotting hardworking, capable colleagues and her tireless advocacy for their advancement, entire generations of women from diverse backgrounds owed their careers to her. And hundreds of vital scientific breakthroughs resulted from that influx of talent.”

She added: “That kind of legacy means a great deal because being the first (woman president) in Rotary doesn’t mean anything until there is a second and a third.” To get to that point, Rotary needs leaders with “a different perspective... we need to bring leaders into Rotary who open new doors, walk different paths and have so much to offer. It’s a big task.”

Coming to membership growth, Jones said that several surveys done over the years had shown that the single driving factor of retention and member satisfaction was related to focussing on the comfort and care of new members. “We need to stop the revolving door of recruiting new members and then losing them all too quickly. So let’s help create club experiences that are welcoming, inclusive and enjoyable and extend that warmth and belonging to every participant.”

But all this could not, and should not, be done “by throwing our doors wide open. Our values are our strength and that means that as an organisation of excellence, we expect that same quality from our members as well.” District and club leaders would have to give new members meaningful responsibilities, service opportunities and personal growth, as these create purpose and passion. If we serve our members, we serve our communities. When I say members, it includes both Rotary and Rotaract. I will include Rotaractors on several international committees, the membership committee and the convention committee for Melbourne,” she announced.

Jones also announced the convening of a Youth Advisory Council to develop programmes that “nurture and define our future leaders. And in my year I will be assigning a group of Rotaractors as president’s representatives to our district conferences. We have so much to learn from each other.”

She also announced that she plans to continue the initiative introduced by President Shekhar Mehta to empower girls, “which has resonated so powerfully across the world. We will

Being the first woman president in Rotary doesn’t mean anything until there is a second and a third.

We need to bring leaders into Rotary who open new doors, walk different paths and have so much to offer.

It’s a big task.

continue this bold effort recognising that empowered girls become empowered women.”

To “shine the torch on Rotary projects and display them to the world, Nick and I are embarking on an ‘Imagine Impact’ tour where we plan to visit the high impact projects across our areas of focus to draw attention to the incredible work that all of you are doing.” Each of these stops will have a different media approach; some will have top tier global journalists telling the Rotary story and others will have social media influencers helping Rotary to reach people and communities yet unserved by Rotary.

Urging each and every Rotarian to “dream big”, Jones concluded that these dreams would have to be converted into reality, just as was happening with the Rotary dream to end polio.

Touching upon her theme ‘Imagine Rotary’, she said: “Let’s imagine a world without polio, a world with clean water for everyone, a world free of disease, where every child learns to read, imagine kindness and hope and love and peace, and that is why I am asking you to imagine Rotary.” ■

Let's have more regionalisation in Rotary: Shekhar Mehta

Rasheeda Bhagat

At the closing session of the Houston Convention, outgoing RI President Shekhar Mehta spelt out the many dreams that he has for Rotary. Encouraging all Rotarians to “dream big” and then work towards realising those dreams, he said his biggest dream was that he wants to see “this great organisation always mentioned among the top 10 in the world. We know how great Rotary is and are so proud of it. We have a 117-year-old history with a footprint in even more countries than the United Nations. We’ve taken on a major task of eradicating a disease when only once in the history of

Because of lack of data, we are underselling the true worth and impact of our organisation. My dream is for Rotary’s true value, which is in billions and not millions of dollars, to be known to each and everyone.

mankind has a virus (smallpox) been wiped out.”

But yet, “despite all our great work and accomplishments, when you google the world’s top 10 service organisations, Rotary doesn’t throw up at the top. Neither does it come to the top when we search by membership, programme outlay or impact.” His dream was that with its “outstanding experience in public health programmes, Rotary should be invited to the top development sectors for advice, get constantly consulted by the WHO or invited by the UN for advice. We should be invited to speak at the World Economic Forum, and asked by governments in different countries to work with them.”

But to achieve all this, “it is important that we revalue our organisation completely. Today the only measure we have of our revenue, outlay or input is all that is available through the Rotary Foundation.” But that was only part of the complete story, Mehta said, giving the example of India, which received the highest amount — \$20 million — as TRF grants. “But is that the full value of the work done by Rotarians in India? No,

the real value is at least 10 times greater. But because most of that spending happens at the club level, we do not know the real worth of our work,” he said.

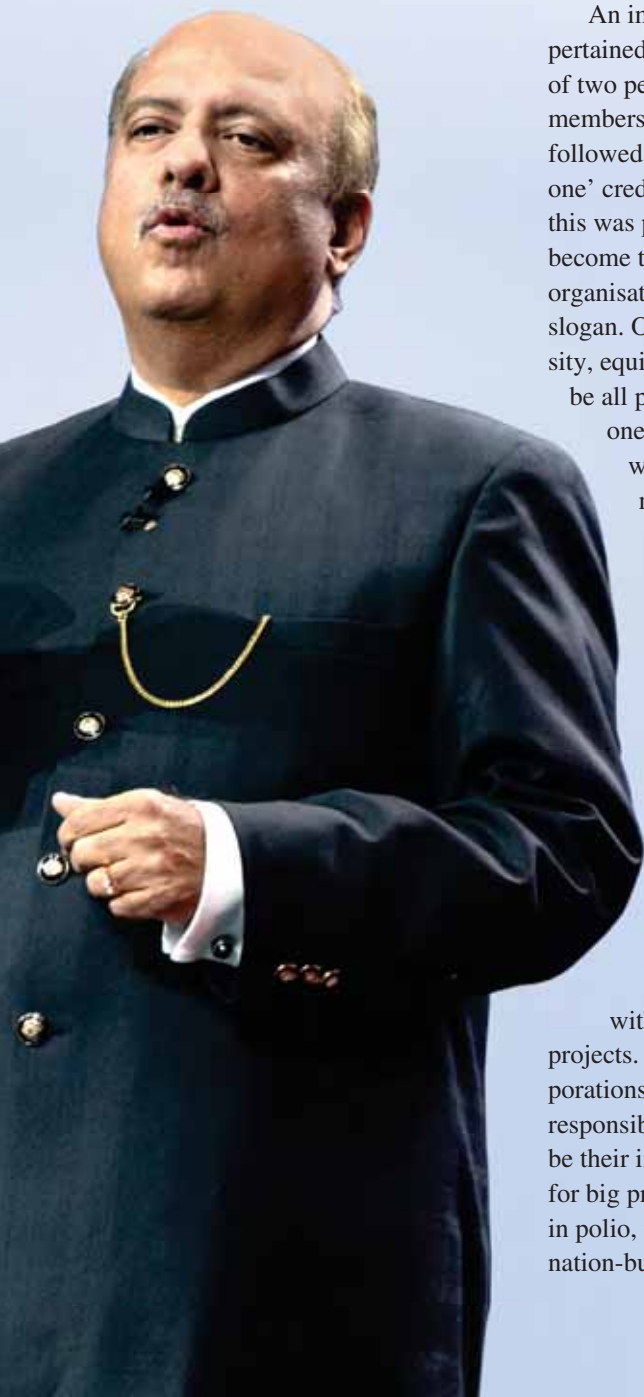
Giving examples, he asked: “How many hospitals and schools have we built and managed? How many heart surgeries have we funded? How many people could access health service because of us? How many thousands of borewells have we sunk across the world and how much money did we spend for projects during the Covid pandemic? We have neither the numbers nor the value.”

The result, said Mehta, was that Rotarians did not know “the real value of the organisation itself. Because of lack of data, we are underselling the true worth and impact of our organisation. My dream is for Rotary’s true value, which is in billions and not millions of dollars, to be known to each and everyone.” It was time that every

club recorded details of the value of the work/projects it does, the hours spent, etc. That would give RI a tool to measure the real impact of Rotary.”

Give regions a federal flavour

The RI president said another dream of his for a bright future for Rotary was related to Rotary getting a “federal structure,



where there is a Rotary Australia, Rotary Africa, Rotary Korea, etc, each of them having their own ethos, culture, practices, governance, etc, but all owing allegiance to RI. One size does not fit all. Rotary in Japan is different from Rotary in America and its not the same in Germany. There should be greater regionalisation of Rotary, to enhance its appeal for local Rotarians and to attract greater membership.”

An important dream of his pertained to an annual growth of two per cent in Rotary’s membership. If every Rotarian followed the ‘each one bring one’ credo introduced by him, this was possible. “This should become the philosophy of the organisation and not just a slogan. Of course, DEI (diversity, equity, inclusion) will be all pervasive as this is one of our core values which is absolutely non-negotiable. ‘Grow more’ will help us do more. Our contributions to TRF will grow and we’ll be able to do more programmes of scale and projects worth millions of dollars impacting millions of people.”

Once these dreams were realised, governments and corporates would partner with Rotary on impactful projects. “More and more corporations are becoming socially responsible and Rotary can be their implementing partner for big projects. Just as we did in polio, we can play a role in nation-building itself. Today

Rotary should get a federal structure, where there is a Rotary Australia, Rotary Africa, Rotary Korea, each of them having their own ethos, culture, practices, governance, but all owing allegiance to RI. One size does not fit all.

we are known best for eradicating polio but soon enough we should be known in Zambia for eradicating malaria, in Haiti for the water projects that we do and for literacy in India.”

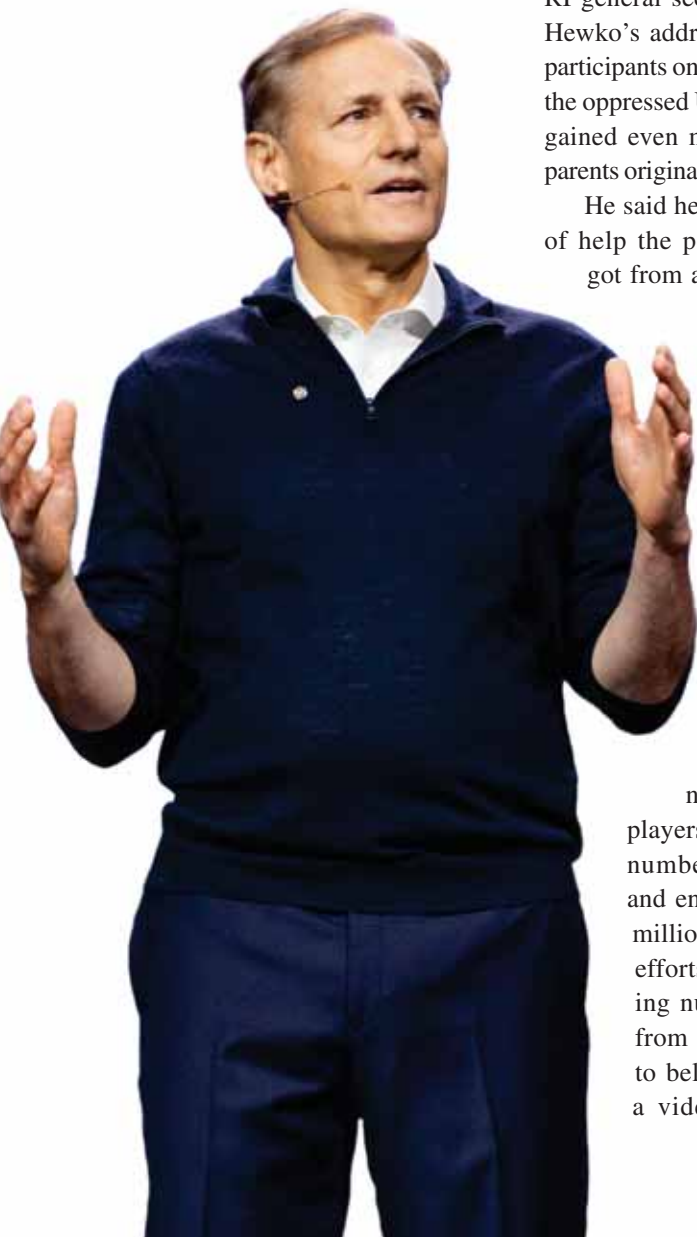
The RI president added that the one project started this year that has caught the imagination of Rotarians everywhere is that of empowering girls. “Every place Rashi and I visited, this project was showcased to us and this can be implemented in each of Rotary’s areas of focus, and provides us the potential to do large-scale projects. Different presidents and prime ministers have hailed this initiative and now it’s time to take it forward. Women and girls are half the humanity and should have half the opportunities.”

Mehta signed off his year as president by adding: “These are no ordinary dreams. They will shape the future of our organisation. I am so happy that the board of directors this year spent a lot of time in discussing these transformative issues and we have started moving the needle.” ■

“Overwhelmed” by Rotary’s help to Ukraine: **John Hewko**

Rasheeda Bhagat

**RI General Secretary
John Hewko**



One of Rotary’s vital focus areas — peacebuilding and conflict resolution — came into sharp focus at the Houston convention, in the background of the war raging in Ukraine. RI general secretary and CEO John Hewko’s address to the 11,000-plus participants on how Rotary had helped the oppressed Ukrainians under siege, gained even more poignancy as his parents originally hailed from Ukraine.

He said he was happy at the kind of help the people of Ukraine had got from across the world, especially the young. The Fortnite (an online video game) players decided to support Ukraine refugees by donating funds. “Based on their normal sales (of their video games) they expected to raise somewhere between \$15 to 20 million. The average age of a Fortnite player is 19; these players blew those projected numbers out of the water and ended up donating \$155 million to the Ukraine relief efforts. That is an astonishing number and it all came from young people wanting to belong to just more than a video game community.

They wanted to show they cared about something that is happening right now, something important and wanted to make a difference.”

This is exactly what Rotary and Rotarians plan and do, said Hewko. “When we were formulating our new Rotary Action Plan a few years ago, our research consistently found that young people are hungry for just these kind of engaging, meaningful connections. It also found that all generations want to connect and belong and take action that makes a meaningful difference in the lives of others. That’s why our vision statement says that together we see a world where people unite and take action to create lasting change across the globe, in our communities and in ourselves.”

Rotary does this “by taking action and through meaningful personal engagement, which improves personal wellbeing much more than getting financial rewards. Doing good makes people feel good and also improves physical health.” Of course, the members also have to feel that the club they belong to is relevant and fun. “For the first time in seven years, Rotary will gain net members; this is good news but it is up to us now to keep these new members,” he said.

A Houston club’s transformation

When it came to “grow Rotary”, clubs could take a leaf out of the book of a club in Houston — the Plano West Rotary Club. Three years ago, the club

had just 20 members who certainly did not represent the community they served. Their median age was 67 and it had only 5 women and one person of colour. “It hadn’t really positioned itself as a resource for community action. So the club members adapted and changed their approach. They started with activities such as distributing after-school meals to school children, forming close ties with teachers. They reached out to police officers and when the pandemic began, they handed out material about Covid-19 in underserved communities.”

Next, the members started delivering meals directly to the families in need during the pandemic in Afro-American and Latino neighbourhoods. “Because of this effort, people from across the community started showing up to help. The club started drawing members from the Afro-American, Latino and LGBTQ groups, and it also became younger. “Today it has tripled its size to 65 members, including 37 women and 28 men, and its median age has come down from 67 to 50,” Hewko said to thunderous applause.

When clubs grow, they have the power to transform communities and the good their members do, does not go unnoticed, he added.

Helping Ukraine

Right now, Rotary’s commitment to “take action” was amply evident from the work the Rotary family including Rotaractors were doing on the ground in Ukraine. Giving details, he said when “this brutal war began, we moved quickly to designate our Rotary’s Disaster Response Fund as a vehicle for direct Ukraine donations. Thanks to the generosity of donors around the world, Rotary was able to contribute more than \$15 million to provide Ukrainians with water, food, shelter, medicine and clothing.”



Rasheeda Bhagat

PRIP Rajendra Saboo and Usha with a delegate from Ukraine at the Houston Convention.

But that was only part of the story. Many organisations across the world had, and were, raising money for Ukraine. But we are unique.” Ukraine has 62 Rotary clubs and six satellite clubs with a total membership of 1,100. And 24 Rotaract clubs with over 300 members. Through connections with the Rotary family in Ukraine, RI was able to “respond to their immediate needs, whether it was providing meals or medical supplies and even delivering a fire engine and emergency medical vehicle. We listen and we respond. Rotarians and Rotaractors in Ukraine, and every Rotary member supporting them, are extraordinary.”

He then pointed to the delegation of Rotary members from Ukraine who had made it to Houston for the convention even though there were no flights out of Ukraine due to the war. As they waved the Ukraine flag, they were lustily cheered by the Rotarians in the auditorium. Striking an emotional note, the general secretary said: “In the 1940s, my parents fled the country as the Soviet army advanced towards Ukraine, and landed in a displaced

persons camp in southern Germany and then began a new life in the US. And here they found a vehicle to give back to the country that welcomed them with open arms when my dad joined the Rotary Club of Clarkston in Michigan.”

He himself had “worked in Ukraine in the early days of Independence in the 1990s, and many of my relatives, friends and former colleagues still live there.” Watching Rotarians do so much for the displaced and oppressed people of Ukraine left him “overwhelmed with gratitude”. Medical supplies had been given by Rotary to multiple hospitals, and Rotarians in “Poland, Hungary, Slovakia, Moldova, Romania, the Baltic states, and many other countries have opened their arms to millions of refugees, mostly women and children. Some members have travelled to border countries to help refugees adapt to local situations, unload relief material, and deliver it,” he added.

If proof was required that such response to suffering in a war zone matters, “consider this,” said Hewko. “Rotary membership has actually

increased in Ukraine since the war began. These are people fighting for their lives, witnessing entire cities being completely destroyed before their very eyes. People who have never touched a weapon are being asked to defend their country. And in the midst of all this, Ukrainians, having seen what Rotary has done in their time of need, have taken the extraordinary step to join our organisation.”

He concluded his speech saying that extraordinary acts of kindness, such as the Fortnite players donating their allowance, Rotarians and Rotaractors still holding meetings and reaching out, “gives me, and I hope each one of you, great optimism for our great organisation and our future. Because if we can grow our impact, we can grow our organisation and the good that we do. If we have the

courage to stand up to what we know is right we can bring the world a little closer to peace.”

Following Hewko’s remarks, Myroslav Gavryliv, a member of the Rotary Club of Lviv, Ukraine, spoke about how clubs in his country had networked to coordinate the distribution of incoming relief supplies and how members are assisting their neighbours.

ShelterBox CEO Sanj Srikanthan discussed how Rotary and ShelterBox, which are partners in providing disaster relief, work together in responding to crises of all kinds. Azim Khamisa, an author and activist, spoke about founding the Tariq Khamisa Foundation after his son was killed by a gang member in 1995 while delivering pizzas. The foundation is driven by the principles of restorative and social justice to help people choose forgiveness

and compassion rather than revenge and bitterness.

The Rotary Presidential Conference on Peace, held two days before the opening of the convention, began with recognition of Rotary’s support for peace in Ukraine and talked about the effect that Rotary’s vast network has had in providing rapid humanitarian relief in the country.

The speakers included Dr Gary Slutkin, founder of Cure Violence Global; Julia Roig, founder of The Horizons Project; and Kiran Singh Sirah, a past Rotary Peace Fellow and president of the International Storytelling Centre. At the closing session of the peace conference, RIPE Jennifer Jones joined the chief executive of UNICEF USA, Michael Nyenhuis, in announcing a partnership to empower girls. ■



RC Colombo West gets medicines from India

Team Rotary News

With Sri Lanka in the grip of a severe economic crisis with no foreign currency reserves to import food, fuel and medicines, DGE Jerome Rajendram received an emergency request for help from the island nation’s ministry of health and the National Hospital of Sri Lanka (NHSL), Colombo.

Following the request, Rajendram reached out to Rotary clubs in India. PDG Dr EK Sagadhevan and RC Erode Central, RID 3203, readily agreed to help out with emergency supplies and arranged shipment worth ₹1 crore within days.

The medicines were handed over to Dr WK Wickramasinghe, deputy director general of health services, by



RID 3220 DGE Jerome K Rajendram (L) handing over medicines given by RC Erode Central to Dr WK Wickramasinghe (fourth from L), Deputy Director General of Health Services at the Colombo National Hospital.

RC Colombo West, RID 3220. “Thus, we embarked on our very first community project for the new Rotary year,” said Kapila Mohotti, club president. DGE Rajendram, community service

director KP Nagarajana, Mohotti and Dr Ruwan Thushara Matiwalage, along with NHSL officials, thanked Rotary India for the timely shipment of essentials. ■

Rotary India reaches out to Sri Lanka

Kiran Zehra



PDGs A Sampath Kumar (RID 3231), his wife Dr Saiprasanna, G Olivannan (RID 3232), DGND NS Saravanan and DG JKN Palani (3231) with Sri Lanka's Deputy High Commissioner in Chennai D Venkateshwaran (fifth from L).

In June 2022, RID 3232 past governor G Olivannan met Henry Wickramasinghe, a Sri Lankan, for business in Chennai. But the meeting was interrupted by repeated calls Wickramasinghe received on his mobile. “He explained that it was from the Sri Lankan Prime Minister’s office. There was an urgent need for food in his country that was grappling with its worst economic crisis. I told him about Rotary and that we could help,” said Olivannan.

A meeting was set up at the Sri Lankan Embassy in Chennai where Olivannan, along with Rtns Chakravarthy and Kumar Rajendran, met Sri Lanka’s Deputy High Commissioner in Chennai D Venkateshwaran. After the meeting, the Rotarians posted a message on their social media accounts asking Rotary clubs to help source food for Sri Lanka. It was decided that the funds for this initiative

will be mobilised through the Rotary Club Madras North Trust.

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee contributed ₹30,000 for the cause and “boosted our morale through a video call to appreciate our efforts.” PDG Chinnadurai Abdullah (D 3212) donated food items worth ₹15 lakh. DG VR Muthu (RID 3212), an AKS member, donated 1,000 litres of cooking oil and RID 3291 contributed ₹2 lakh. Amma Trust, an NGO in Guntur, donated 100 tonnes of rice. DG JKN Palani (D 3231), PDGs Rajani Mukherjee (D 3291), Sampath Kumar (D 3231), his spouse Dr K Saiprasanna, and DGND NS Saravanan (D 3232) coordinated with their districts to collect funds and relief material.

Seven shipping containers of food items (including rice, wheat flour, oil, dal and milk powder) weighing 125 tonnes, valued at ₹90 lakh, and medicines worth ₹4.5 lakh were shipped to the island nation, he said. The

Rotary Club Madras North Trust paid ₹5.5 lakh for shipping the containers through the funds collected from various sources.

“The deputy commissioner was amazed at the speed with which we worked and requested us to meet him at the embassy in Chennai again.” This time the request was for 10,000 charcoal stoves. The commissioner explained that the Sri Lankan government is running short of funds to import these stoves for its people who have gone back to cooking over firewood because of the unavailability of gas. As an initial commitment, the Rotarians agreed to export 1,000 stoves. PDG Sampath Kumar and Saiprasanna immediately got in touch with a vendor in Rajkot. “These are tough times. Be it Ukraine or Sri Lanka the world is looking at Rotary for help and we must do everything we can,” said Olivannan. ■

There is no limit to unleashing women's potential in Rotary

Rasheeda Bhagat

TRF Trustee Geeta Manek, who has served as governor in RI District 9212, Africa, has stars in her eyes when she talks about Rotary in India, particularly the TEACH programme, and the mega service projects that Indian Rotarians do. In an interview to *Rotary News* at the presidential conference in Hyderabad, she said the entire Rotary world was looking up to Rotarians in India, and Africa is trying to emulate India's example in membership growth and mega, sustainable projects. Excerpts: ...

How did you begin your Rotary journey?

If I tell you that, you will laugh! My husband was part of a group that was chartering a club and going every Monday evening without fail to the meetings... he just dropped everything and simply ran. I was very curious and wanted to know why. I had never heard of Rotary and he was so keen to never miss a meeting, that it seemed funny... it filled me with a bit of curiosity, a little suspicion, and even worry.

**TRF Trustee Geeta Manek,
RID 9212, Africa**



Rasheeda Bhagat

Which year was that?

That was 1996; one day I asked him can I join you and he said not today but we're soon having a ladies' evening and you can join us. So I went that day and the rest is history.

After that the charter president of the club invited me to join, I did and never looked back.

Tell us a little about your background in Kenya, were you always in Nairobi? And when did your family migrate there?

I was born and grew up in a village in Kenya; my great grandfather went there first. Just as in India, our villages lacked a lot of facilities. In the village school, we had one big room and all the children sat on the mats, and we had just one teacher for the whole school. He was the most respected man in the community.

So did you study in that school?

Yes, I did, for three years and then my father thought I was getting too big for my boots and sent me to the city boarding school, where I learnt English. After finishing there, I went to England for high school and eventually graduated in business administration and marketing.

What was your family business like?

My father was like a general merchant in the village. He was a supplier to the



big people who had settled there and whatever they needed, he would rush to the city and bring it. Now my husband and I are in real estate, hospitality, insurance... we have a group of companies. I am a director in the real estate company.

So as part of service to your village what did you and your family do to change things?

First of all, we made sure that it got access to water. It is located in the highlands and there was a natural waterfalls nearby, but people didn't have access to piped water supply to households. We ensured that water was provided, as well as job opportunities. We did a vocational training project in our village. We worked in education... the children sat on the floor, so we ensured that desks were provided, teachers were trained, and resources provided for books and upgrading the curriculum. Even today, though my

family has left that village 40 years ago, we still have our roots there... no matter how high we fly, we know we come from there. We are grounded.

What are your views about Rotary in India and how did you first connect with the Rotarians here?

Oh, the Rotarians of India are great, they are so dedicated, so inspiring, so determined, whatever they want, they aim for it, work for it and get it. Rotary in India is fabulous because it is growing in a big way, and doing so much work. Ten years ago, access to clean water was a big challenge in so many areas. Now Rotarians are ensuring that people get access to clean water in so many places in India.

The work they do in education with the TEACH programme is so inspiring. India was once a recipient of so many different kinds of aid, but now the Rotarians of India are ensuring

Even today though my family has left that village 40 years ago, we have our roots there... no matter how high we fly, we know we come from there.

that the reverse is happening. They are doing so many projects in Africa, and even America... particularly on the US-Mexico border.

Rotarians of India have taken Rotary to another scale when it comes to membership growth, giving to the Foundation, and receiving from it to do grand projects on such a mega scale by forging great partnerships. What I see as an outsider is that the rest of the Rotary world wants to do as India does... because of the connections and partnerships you have built, the collaborations you have made, with big and reputable corporates like the Tatas, the GoI, and others. Thanks to the TEACH programme, people in different states have speed dial to the leaders, so hopefully we too will get there.

How did you first connect with President Shekhar Mehta and the TEACH programme?

He was a director when my husband was training to be governor. And over the years, we kept in touch. We have a lot of strong connections with India, but we don't have a family here. Our family moved out of India nearly 200 years ago, so every time I look at an Indian, I am just mesmerised.

So Rotary in India is your family?

Exactly. And President Shekhar and Rashi are very close to us; it was inevitable they had to come to Africa this year and they spent a lot of time here. He has a special place in his heart for Africa, as he knows its true potential.

He believes it is the next growth area in Rotary.

Of course it is going to be the next frontier of Rotary. We borrowed a lot from the polio eradication practices from India. And were fortunate enough to achieve that milestone in Africa, during the hardest period of the Covid pandemic. In Africa RI has

developed a peace programme with the Makerere University. And the next one will come up either somewhere in North Africa or the Middle East.

And peace centres are required now more than ever, with the Ukraine conflict raging now.

Yes, and peace is also connected with poverty. Most of our conflicts come because of lack of resources.

There is so much of violence and conflict in African countries...

Yes, that is because we are simple, poor people with no access to resources. So if somebody has two cows, you want to grab one, more because of survival and not because people are bad or greedy. The instinct is to get something they don't have. But Rotary in Africa is making big strides.

How many Rotary members are there in Africa.

Only 42,000! And we are one billion people, so it is not enough. For eg, in India you have more than 1 billion people but you have at least 160,000 Rotarians.

So you can at least aspire for that number. So what kind of a membership drive is there in Africa?

We are striving to attract people to join Rotary by chartering corporate clubs,

going out to the community, seeing on maps where there is no Rotary and how we must try and get a club there. So there is a purpose.

How difficult was your journey to this leadership position... of a TRF Trustee... you are a woman and few women have reached such high levels in Rotary.

I am not the first woman trustee...

But from Africa you are!

Yes, from Africa, and the first woman of Indian descent! (smiles).

So was that a difficult journey?

Quite honestly, no, because though I've worked very hard, I've enjoyed so much what I was doing that it didn't seem hard to me at all. I participated in all areas of the club and the district. I was invited to join



Rasheeda Bhagat

a committee and maybe they realised there that I have some potential. I don't know how I was identified... but yes, I was very active in Rotary.

The other thing is that I'm unable to say 'No' to people, so I try to make sure that I am available when some work is required from me.

What do you think about the future of women in Rotary?

Oh, that will be amazing, because every door here is open for us. We are purposefully and deliberately ensuring that once the glass ceiling was broken, every opportunity became available to women in Rotary. And with diversity, equity and inclusion being a major part of our focus, we want to ensure that everybody is included.

And women are known as traditional caretakers and caregivers and in the corporate world, women are going places. And now with incoming president Jennifer Jones, there is going to

be no limit, it's all about merit, outcomes and delivering results.

Do you aspire for the top post?

(Laughs) No chance! Because the pathway to becoming a president is that you have to become a director first, which is an elected position and I have never liked elections, because somebody always wins and somebody always loses.

So you've never contested an election, even to become DG?

Never; I was made DG through a unanimous decision; I did not contest an election.

What do you enjoy the most about Rotary

Every evening I go to bed very comfortably because I know I have touched a life, even if it is only to make somebody smile. Or just giving a hand to an elderly person to walk one step down. Honestly, I feel

that when I am giving a hand to somebody I am bending down to lift somebody up. That is the magic of Rotary.

How do you see the future of Rotary? The membership has been static for so long; is Rotary changing at all to address this issue?

Perhaps not changing fast enough, but it is certainly changing and Rotary is adapting and focused on membership not because there is anything for Rotary to gain by a higher membership. But because Rotary has so much relevance in the world today, where there is so much strife and conflict, lack of resources, etc. As Gandhiji said there is enough in this world for everyone's need but not greed. So if we tone down the greed a bit, there is enough to make it an equitable world.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy



Rotary gifts for Delhi municipal schools

Team Rotary News



DG Ashok Kantoor giving a tablet to a student.

RC Delhi Lutyens, RID 3011, upgraded the infrastructure of five municipal schools in Delhi at a cost of ₹9 lakh. The club began the new Rotary year by distributing five water coolers and 100 desks to the schools. Lunch boxes were distributed to 400 students. DG Ashok Kantoor, inaugurating the project, distributed tablets to 27 underprivileged students in the presence of Corporation deputy commissioner Danish Ashrah and the lieutenant governor of Delhi VK Saxena. ■

Lakshya moments

with Prez Jennifer Jones



RI President Jennifer Jones being carried in a palanquin.



From L: Lakshya convener RID AS Venkatesh, co-chair PDG ISAK Nazar, President Jones, co-convener RID Mahesh Kotbagi and chair PDG Ashish Ajmera.



From L: DGs Ashok Kantoor (3011), Jinendra Jain (3040) and Dr Lalit Khanna (3012) during a flag march at Lakshya in Pune.



Above: PRIP Shekhar Mehta being greeted by RID Venkatesh and Vinita.

Below: PDG Nazar greets TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya.



RID Venkatesh and Vineeta greet RI President Jones and her spouse DGN Dr Nick Krayacich.



DGN Krayacich and President Jones participate in a Marathi wedding ritual.



RIDE Aniruddha Roy Chowdhury (second from L) being recognised by PDG Ajmera in the presence of (from L) RID Kotbagi, RIDE TN Subramanian and RID Venkatesh.



President Jones and DGN Krayacich get “married” in traditional Marathi style in Pune. Vinita Venkatesh, Ameeta Kotbagi, Dr Hema (spouse of DG Anil Parmar) and PDG Rashmi Kulkarni are also seen.



PDG Ajmera greets PRIP Mehta in the presence of RID Kotbagi, RID Venkatesh and TRF Trustee Pandya.





Above: President Jones with RID Kotbagi, Ameeta, RID Venkatesh and Vinita.

Right: (From L) Hema Parmar, Ameeta and PDG Bina Desai dance along with President Jones. RIDs Venkatesh and Kotbagi are seen on the background.

Below: Women power (from L): DGEs Swati Herkal (3132), Anandtha Jothi (3000), Asha Venugopal (3030), Ritu Grover (3040), Manjoo Phadke (3131), B C Geetha (3182) and Jayashree Mohanty (3262).



RID Venkatesh with PRID Kamal Sanghvi and PDG Nazari.

Rotary WinS facility at a Gurukul

Jaishree

Educating a girl child means educating an entire village. You are doing a great service by supporting girls' education in this remote hamlet," said RI Director A S Venkatesh to the members of RC Sambalpur Central, RID 3261, after inaugurating a water tank and toilet blocks in a school in April this year.

"Set short-term goals which can be easy to achieve and you can execute more meaningful projects benefiting larger communities. Focus on communities' needs while designing projects," he added.

Navaprabhat Kanya Gurukul is a school for girls at Nuapali, a village 140km from Sambalpur, Odisha.

The club has constructed 10 toilets and bathrooms, group handwash stations and an exclusive MHM room equipping it with an incinerator, a sanitary pad dispenser and a bed, in this school, and a 100,000 litre-capacity water tank to cater to the school's needs and for the entire village. A solar panel is also set up in the school campus as power supply is erratic in this region. RC Kiel Eider, RID 1890, Germany, is the international partner.

The village and its surrounding area were once infested with Naxals. The region still lacks infrastructure and basic facilities such as toilets at homes. "We barely drink water," says one of the students. The villagers can access the toilets and hand wash facilities in the school now, says the club's project contact Pradip Lath.

RI Director A S Venkatesh inaugurates the water tank in the presence of (from L) project contact Pradip K Lath, IPDG Sunil Phatak, PDGs Deepak Mehta and Sashi Varvandar, RC Sambalpur Millennium member Subodh Toley and RC Sambalpur president Ranjit Singh Hura. Dirk Axel Koch, past president, RC Kiel Eider, Germany, is seen third from right.





RI Director Venkatesh with IPDG Phatak, Gurukul head Bhagabandev Acharya and the students after inaugurating the WinS facilities at the Navaprabhat Kanya Gurukul. Also present: DGN Akhil Mishra (2nd from L), PDG Harjit Singh Hura (5th from L) and German Rotarians.

The Gurukul spread over 105 acres is managed by a trust headed by Bhagabandev Acharya who initially set up a residential school for boys in 2000. Girl students were admitted as day scholars 12 years later. The students' education is funded through contributions from philanthropists. Fifteen students are admitted annually. The school offers education from Class 6 to graduation with Sanskrit as the medium of instruction.

"For the last five years our students have won gold medals in BA stream and our Class 10 students are among the state toppers every year. Eight former students are pursuing PhD," smiles Acharya.

The girls' school was a recent addition, begun in 2018 with the help of his German acquaintances whom he had met at the Ashram's headquarters in Meerut. "They were interested in the school and have visited us here several times. A German girl was enrolled in our school two years ago but had to leave when Covid struck," he says. His association with Rotary began when he met Ranjit Singh Hura, president of RC Sambalpur,

Set short-term goals which can be easy to achieve and you can execute more meaningful projects benefitting larger communities.

AS Venkatesh, RI Director

on a flight from Delhi. "I briefed him about the construction of the girls' school and the German connection, and he assured help with our infrastructure." When Hura put forth the idea in the district, RC Sambalpur Central offered its support.

Presently, 100 boys and 30 girls are studying here. "With the enhanced facilities, we will be enrolling more girls this year," he says.

Lath owes the completion of this project to DRFC Deepak Mehta, PDG Shambhu Jagatrambika and the then DG FC Mohanty. "We had applied for a GG in 2020 and our application got rejected as the 'training' part was missing. Then the Covid second wave happened and grant sanctions were

prioritised for medical support," he says. The grant was eventually sanctioned in May 2021. "All of us were jubilant as this is our first global grant in the last 15 years," smiles Mehta.

The total cost of the project was \$81,000 of which the German club contributed \$41,000 and RID 1890 donated \$21,000 from its DDF.

"Our club was keen on supporting this project from the very beginning," says Dirk Axel Koch, president, RC Kiel-Eider. He, along with three members of his club, were at Nuapali for the inaugural, and seemed very much at home at the school. "I have visited here several times and have been regularly in touch with Acharya for this project. It is a pleasure to see children imbibing Vedic traditions," smiles Koch.

"We are very happy to work on this project with Rotary India and now to be able to witness its fruition. Here is to you girls, go out into the world, and make it better," said Bettina Frank, a member of the German club, to the group of girls present at the inaugural.

Pictures: Jaishree

Robotics for government school students

Kiran Zehra

robotics and STEAM education to government schools in urban, rural and tribal areas, the club has started a Robotics STEAM Lab at the school. A CSR partnership with ZS Associates, a management consulting and technology firm in Pune, helped cover the project cost of ₹25 lakh. This programme will cater to 1,500 students.

Jothi, a Class 5 student, and her robotics workshop partner Rekha are learning to design codes to make their robot pick up a ball. “We can create a robot that can carry water for our village,” says Rekha. Jothi wants to make a robot that can “carry my bag to school.” Post-training, these students will also have an opportunity

Inside the auditorium of the Zilla Parishad Primary School at Lonikand near Pune, tiny robots manoeuvre around obstacles, move up and down miniature ramps, and throw balls into mini rings. These demonstrations are part of a robotics training programme. The students will learn coding, IoT, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and STEAM (science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics) to create robots that can perform specific tasks. All thanks to the efforts of RC Pune Sinhad Road, RID 3131, “these students will learn the skills of tomorrow,” says Deepak Mahajan, the project coordinator.

He points out that these students “can hardly afford two sets of uniforms a year. Some of them don’t even have electricity at home. But they have dreams and the determination to learn new things.” While nurturing their interest in the field, this programme will help them learn

other important skills like teamwork, community participation and communication, he adds.

In association with Robotex India, a non-profit organisation bringing

Students working on a robot at the Lonikand Zilla Parishad School near Pune.





From L: Anaya Patil, a representative of ZS Associates; Payal Rajpal, Robotex India director; Ayush Prasad, CEO, Pune Zilla Parishad and Rtn Deepak Mahajan, along with the school authorities and students, at the inauguration of the project.

to participate in district and state-level robotics competitions. “Some of them may also represent the country at the Robotex International World Olympiad,” says Mahajan.

Under the initiative students are provided with Learning Management Systems (project-based hybrids, such as software to run a robot, science instruments, and calculators), workbooks, worksheets, video content, live and recorded sessions demonstrating robotic prototypes, the hardware based on physical computing, followed by assessments. Payal Rajpal, the director of Robotex India, and a member of RC Pune Central, says that the programme will increase awareness, interest, and confidence in STEAM fields for the students.

Recalling how Robotex, which was limited to private schools expanded its programme for underprivileged students, Payal says that at a robotics event in Ahmedabad in 2018, “a village

Some of these students don't even have electricity at home. But they have dreams and the determination to learn new things.

Deepak Mahajan
project coordinator

boy came to me and asked if he could talk in Gujarati instead of English to present a robot that could help his father plough the fields.” Amazed by his confidence she asked the boy how he got the robot and coded it. The toy bot was handed down to the boy by a family who had employed his mother for domestic help. With the help of Wi-Fi connection at his mother’s employer’s home he learned to code the robot to plough the field. “It was mind-blowing to see what his robot could accomplish. He represented those students that could do wonders with a programme like ours and that is how Robotex for Rural India was born.”

Today the programme has coached over 20,000 government school students throughout India. Payal’s club has started a Robotex

India programme at a zilla parishad school in Pune. With Rotary’s help, she says, “we can introduce robotics to more children. This is the start of a long-term engagement that will improve the lives of children across India, preparing them for future employment opportunities.”

Addressing the disconnect between college degree and skill development she says, “bringing children to school doesn’t equate to quality learning. But bringing AI, and STEAM education through the medium of robotics will integrate technology into the classroom and also increase the effectiveness of the learning process.”

At a one-day event called *Hackathon* in Pune hosted by Robotex India, students from various zilla parishad schools ideated robotics and coding solutions to tackle environmental problems. “From beach cleaning bots to solar-powered vehicles, the students left us spellbound with their innovative projects,” she smiles and adds that “instead of mugging up definitions and formulas the students learn through a hands-on approach in this programme which enables them to understand core concepts in a way they won’t forget and can apply it to solve real-world issues.” ■

Young Karur traders, professionals swell Rotaract ranks

V Muthukumar

As Rotary's youth movement, Rotaract is grappling with the mandatory RI dues from July 2022, here is a club, RAC Karur, RID 3000, whose members, consisting of traders and professionals, are willing to pay an extra ₹1,000 per head annually to raise their club membership fee to ₹3,000 so that it takes care of monetary obligations to Rotary International.

This Rotaract club does not have a single student, teacher or a doctor. Don't be surprised as it is a community-based club catering to the interests of traders and businessmen in Karur, the textile city of Tamil Nadu. "We have 36 active members in all, hailing from diverse trade such as jewellery, textiles, finance, training academies,

architects and engineers. All of them are successful traders, second and third generation entrepreneurs carrying forward the legacy of their families," says R Sabarish, past president, RAC Karur.

Recently they have launched a blood donation app, *R4Blood*, which can be downloaded from the Play-Store. "The site has listings of donors, government and private hospitals, and a range of critical care services being offered in and around Karur. The app, developed by Rtr R Jeevananthan, is tailor-made to help patients in need of blood and this e-platform can be scaled up to the national level with the support of Rotary and Rotaract clubs," he explains. An amount of ₹1.2 lakh was

pooled in by members to design the mobile app.

Project *Karna* which had a soft launch in March 8 during Rotaract Week offers free NEET coaching to less privileged government school students for medical entrance exam. "We tied up with Graavitons, a coaching centre, to hold classes for 200 students aspiring to become doctors."

A number of sporting events are being held throughout the year to nurture young talent across the state. A state-level carrom tournament in Dec 2020 saw over 250 contestants and winners in men's, women's and doubles categories got a total prize money of ₹50,000. In March 2021, 46 teams competed at the open football tournament from all over the state and a prize money of ₹70,000 was given to the winners. "We raised ₹3.5 lakh from the football matches and donated ₹50,000 to N Hariharan, a final year medical student, for his college fees. Now he is a doctor at the Salem Government Hospital."

Karur deputy mayor Dharani Saravanan flagged off a three-day



RAC Karur IPP P Selva Kumar hands over the laminated Karna poster to Graavitons CEO Parameshwari in the presence of (from L) project chairman Chris Marshall and club president N Baranish.



Former AG V Sundararajan, RID 3000, presents a cheque for ₹50,000 to N Hariharan, a medical student, at the end of the '5 vs 5' football tournament.

volleyball tournament for the top eight teams in TN in the presence of municipal commissioner N Ravichandran. PRID C Basker presided over the inaugural.

TN State Volleyball Association patron K Ramakrishnan and Mayor Kavitha Ganesan presided over the valedictory session.

RI. As traders, we are well off and can mobilise resources and money for our programmes.”

High-profile projects

N Baranish, architect, has taken over as the new club president (2022–23). Listing out a few projects that are being drafted, he says, “training workshops will be held to convert farm waste into charcoal briquette (WCB), a profitable business model, for the youth to reduce our carbon footprint.” A series of public campaign on 3Rs (recycle, reduce and reuse) will be taken up to create awareness on adopting a sustainable and eco-friendly lifestyle.

A team of Rotaractors will visit schools under Project *Agri School* to engage students on the importance of agriculture so that “they appreciate the value of food chain from seed to plate and learn to grow crops.” Under Project *RHAC* (Rotaract Health Awareness and Consulting), a team of service-minded doctors will be empanelled to offer consultations to poor families who had registered under this Rotaract programme.

Karur has 1,500-plus Rotaractors across 18 clubs (five community-based and 13 institution-based), but 85 per cent of them are yet to register themselves at My Rotary portal which is a mandatory requirement. ■

We network with each other and mobilise funds easily for gala events, service projects and other programmes. Also, we get sponsorship as we are part of business community.

R Sabarish
past president, RAC Karur

No funding woes

As most of the Rotaractors are traders and entrepreneurs, “we network with each other and mobilise funds easily for gala events, service projects and other programmes. Also, we get sponsorship as we are part of the business community,” explains Sabarish. When queried over the new RI dues effective from July, he says, “membership dues is not a problem at all. Some Rotaractors are willing to pay more club dues to include the financial commitment to



A state-level carrom tournament in progress. Past president Sabarish (2nd from R) looks on.

Rotaractors reach out to flood victims in Assam

Jaishree

The heavy rains in Assam in June wreaked havoc on five million people across 2,900 villages in 27 districts resulting in loss of life, property and belongings. Rajarshi

Sinha, the District Rotaract Representative (DRR) of RID 3240 who resides in Silchar, shared a video of his inundated home and street on WhatsApp, and I immediately reached out to him. The conversation

revealed the harsh scenario of the state. Silchar was one of the worst affected towns and the breaching of the embankments of the Barak and Bekli rivers worsened the situation.

“It rained continuously for two days (June 18–19); the rivers began to overflow and the dykes gave away, flooding the town. We moved up to the first floor as soon as the water levels started rising. There was no electricity or water for 10 days,” said Sinha, and promptly shared a list of emergency items such as mosquito repellents, water, milk powder, sanitary napkins and blankets that were urgently needed for relief distribution.

Roads and infrastructure were destroyed, leading to breakdown in communication between cities. Shilu Rani Das who lost her husband during the floods was shattered. “This tragedy will be etched in my memory forever. Every time there is a flood, I will remember how I struggled to save my husband’s life,” she cried. He was suffering from cancer and bedridden for the past one year. “Maybe he would have been alive if we could have taken him to a hospital. We took his body for cremation on a raft made with banana stems.”

Sinha related heart-rending incidents of a woman begging for a boat as her child was very ill, and how people were desperately trying to get drinking water. “We had no choice other than to drink the flood water, and



Members of RAC Hailakandi distribute relief material to flood victims.

I cooked food with whatever I had, using the same dirty water,” he quoted a woman in one of the villages which the club had visited to distribute relief material. “And there was a man on a raft holding on to a ripe jackfruit so dearly saying that he, his children and his cow will survive on it until they got some food.” Over one lakh persons were sheltered in 500-plus relief camps in Silchar.

Rotaract clubs of the district hit the ground quickly as soon as the rains stopped, collecting drinking water bottles, food items and other relief material to reach

out to the flood-hit people across the state. Rotaractors spread the word on social media across the country seeking help.

The DRR, along with club members Rtn/ Rtr Bikash Mozumdar, Shubham Banik, Rupak Kumar Das, Pankaj Kanti Sinha and Dr Samujjwal, packed drinking water bottles, candles, biscuit packets and cooked food, and rode on make-shift bamboo rafts to reach out to over 250 people in the city’s low-lying areas such as Singari Basti and New Bhakatpur. Pankaj Sinha visited the railway station every night to feed stray cows and dogs.

RAC Hailakandi led by its president Kaushik Chakraborty distributed drinking water and groceries to 500 flood-hit families. “In many places we had to wade through chest-deep water to deliver food packets and water,” he said, adding that 14 students from Agartala were stranded in Silchar due to the floods. “We helped them with food and accommodation for a week and helped them board the train to their hometown.”

Rotaractors of RAC Silchar Royals visited the flood-hit areas, along with the National and the State Disaster Rescue

Force (NDRF and SDRF) to assess the situation. They distributed 100 packets of sanitary napkins and personal hygiene material, 8,000 litres of drinking water, biscuits, milk cartons, mosquito repellents, candles and grocery items to people in the relief camps. “We would have helped at least 1,000 families across the city. It was pathetic to see people lose their belongings and get stranded amidst the floods,” said club president Animesh Paul, and thanked the generous public and other NGOs who also joined hands for the cause. ■

Patna gets a Rotary eye hospital

Team Rotary News

RC Pataliputra, RID 3250, in association with RC Guildford, RID 1145, set up the Mahavir Rotary Pataliputra Eye Hospital in Patna with a \$94,000 global grant. The facility is equipped with a phaco emulsification system, a scan biometer, slit lamp, auto kerato reflectometer, operation microscope and other hi-tech equipment.

The hospital was inaugurated by Mangal Pandey, the health minister of



Bihar health minister Mangal Pandey inaugurating the hospital in Patna. IPDG Pratim Banerjee is present second from right.

Bihar in the presence of IPDG Pratim Banerjee.

It will provide free surgical and non-surgical services to the underprivileged. Rotary clubs can refer poor patients to this hospital for treatment.

RC Pataliputra has already completed three global grant projects worth ₹2.4 crore in the last two years. These include three dialysis centres (two in Patna and one in Muzzafarpur), and a blood bank with cell separator facility. ■

ADVERTORIAL

कन्या श्री



Cycle Donation Drive

Agency, Kash

District

3110

Mega Project

कन्या श्री

Cycle Donation Drive

This Rotary year started with a befitting welcome to our first ever woman RI President in the history of Rotary, Jennifer Jones, by organizing **Kanya Shree Mega Project in our district on 1st July, wherein 2100 cycles were presented to the needy and meritorious girl students in 19 cities.** The donors were Rotarians and their friends and families. **The Chief Guest of the inaugural program was Shri Pushkar Singh Dhama, Hon'ble CM of Uttarakhand.** Smt. Hema Malini, Social Worker, Classical Dancer & Actress and Member of Parliament supported the project.

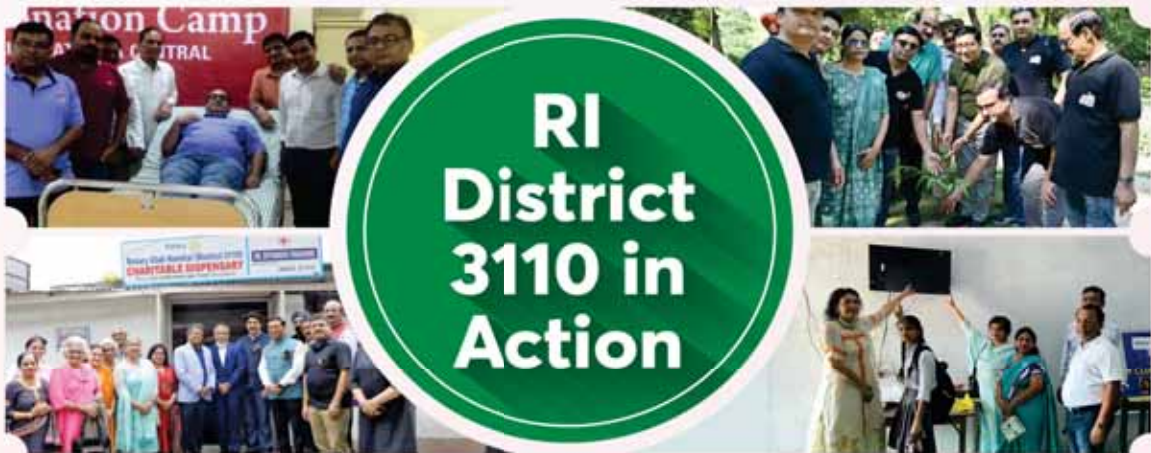


Lakshay

District Governor Rtn. Pawan Agarwal and First Lady Rtn. Prachi Agarwal attended the Goal Setting Seminar – Lakshay at Pune between 20th to 22nd July, 2022. The event was addressed by RI President Jennifer Jones and Past RI President, Shekhar Mehta.



District Governor Pawan Agarwal started this Rotary year with new vigour



CSR Projects

RI District 3110 is pleased to announce the approval of 4 CSR projects of Rotary Club of Kashipur by Rotary Foundation (India) in the month of July, 2022. **The total value of these projects is USD 275,000.**

These projects are being done in the area of "Basic Education & Literacy" and "Maternal & Child Health".

New Clubs: Four new clubs have been chartered so far, out of which one is "All-women-club"

Endowment Funds

District has already created two **Pooled Endowment Funds** totalling **USD 59,000**

This is the first time that our district has done any endowment.



Prachi & Pawan Agarwal
District Governor, RID 3110

Project Happy Halli transforms a village

V Muthukumaran

While Rotary clubs are active in cities and major towns, not much is being done in the remote villages of Karnataka, feels T Srikanth Bhagavat, president, RC Bangalore Midtown, RID 3190. “I always felt that rural areas are getting the short end of the stick as all development is focused in urban clusters. But doing a clutch of Rotary projects at some villages is not enough. Our Project Happy Halli (village in Kannada) is designed to provide an integrated, 360-degree development to villages through a series of programmes and infrastructure building across all the seven focus areas of Rotary to create sustained happiness among villagers,” he says.

In the first phase of Happy Halli, the club entered into a tripartite MoU with the Ramakrishna Mission and the state government’s Rural Development and Panchayat Raj department to create a holistic ecosystem to ensure sustainable

livelihoods for those at Shivanahalli village, Anekal taluk (Bengaluru rural). A primary school, Sri Sarada Devi Vidya Kendra being run by the Mission got CBSE affiliation and was upgraded to high school-level. Two new blocks were built, the former sponsored by Sudha Murthy from the Infosys Foundation and the latter through contributions from Ramakrishna devotees and other donations.

“We flagged off two 50-seater buses (₹45 lakh) to transport children from their homes to this school and back. There is no school at all in a 20km radius from this village. Now the student strength can go up from 300 to 800,” explains Bhagavat. The club has applied for a global grant to provide lab equipment worth ₹30 lakh to the revamped school and Montessori tools to aid classroom learning will be procured at a cost of ₹4 lakh.

A healthcare centre run by the Mission has voluntary doctors and

nurses who earlier visited the facility only on Sundays which could hardly serve the medical needs of the villagers. “So we set up a telemedicine clinic worth ₹6.5 lakh in partnership with the Oxford Medical College and Hospital, Attibele. They provide the doctors to offer tele-consultation to patients on a daily basis and also conduct health camps at Shivanahalli and nearby villages. The required software to maintain patient records was donated by YouSee, an NGO.”

A 75,000-litre capacity tank will provide drinking water to 1,400 villagers. “We are providing vocational skills like tailoring to women at an existing centre and will try and get bulk orders for them, mostly school uniforms, to ensure regular income for them. Right now, 10 women at Shivanahalli are doing job orders, including the one for delivering uniforms to two schools being run by our club,” says Namrataa Bhatia,

RID 3190 IPDG Fazel Mahmood (second row, left), along with RC Bangalore Midtown members including club president (2021–22) Srikanth Bhagavat (extreme right, front) and secretary Namrataa Bhatia (2nd from L, front) at Shivanahalli.



club secretary. Sansera Engineering of Rtn FR Singhvi is training school and college dropouts to operate CNC machines, and they will be employed later.

Recalling the origin of Project Happy Halli, Bhagavat says, “we hired a team of sociologists to a ‘needs assessment’ study at Shivanahalli. They came out with a detailed report on demographics, civic amenities and livelihood needs which can be fulfilled through Rotary projects.” While the total cost of ₹1 crore for the first phase of the project is being met mostly through member contributions, “we are ready to replicate Happy Halli across 100 villages in the next 10 years.”

eMaanasi: Mental wellness

During a visit to her native place, RID 7130 IPDG Dr Geeta Jayram from Baltimore, US, found the villagers, mostly women, suffering from mental and psychological problems. With the support of RC Bangalore Midtown and technical know-how from St John’s Medical College Hospital, she set up a community mental health clinic, Maanasi, at Mugalur village in Anekal taluk in 2001. The centre is also mentored by the researchers at the

Johns Hopkins Hospital, Baltimore, US. “Around 1,200 patients are being treated for psychiatric diseases at the clinic. The health workers visit patients at their doorsteps to ensure compliance and empathy during treatment,” says Ramesh Bulchandani, project chair.

Following the success of the Maanasi clinic, its first branch was set up last year at the HSIS dispensary run by the club at Frazer Town in North Bengaluru. In 2011, the club shot a documentary film on Maanasi which was appreciated by the RI Board and WHO for “amplifying the reach of critical, but limited resources of psychiatrists for sustainable treatment of patients suffering from neurological problems.”

Now the club has developed a software, eMaanasi, costing ₹80 lakh to provide global benchmarks in the treatment of mental and psychological problems. “Any club in the world can replicate our mental healthcare project using this tech platform by setting up either a brick and mortar clinic or through telemedicine,” says Bulchandani.

Brain Health Initiative

An MoU was signed between the club and Nimhans, Bengaluru, in the

presence of RI President Shekhar Mehta at a TRF dinner event, to conduct a series of brain health workshops, yoga camps and other special events which will create awareness on taking care of our neurological system. “Nimhans wants to develop a hub and spoke model by training staff at the PHCs to detect and treat psychiatric illness. Our focus will be on preventive care,” says Bhagavat. The state government and planning body Niti Aayog have lent support to this pilot project which will be executed at two places — one in Bengaluru South (urban) and the other at a village in Chikkaballapur district.

Brain Health Initiative, as a one-year pilot project, will identify people with neurological symptoms through special camps. “Later we will focus on their treatment and rehabilitation,” says Nadeem Ahmed, club treasurer and trustee, Rotary Midtown Charitable Trust. “While MCKS, a local NGO, will contribute ₹40 lakh, another ₹10 lakh will be from our club.” The 45-year-old, 100 per cent PHC club has 104 members who are the pillars behind the success of its multifaceted projects across verticals, adds Ahmed. ■

Get your iconic projects featured in Rotary News



Rotary News is committed to featuring projects from clubs across our zones. So do share with us the more significant projects that your clubs/districts have done to change the lives of people in your community.

Do identify someone from your club who can prepare good reports about your work, and send us the details with good candid pictures. Even if they are from your cellphone camera, they should be emailed directly from the photos gallery and not via Whatsapp, which reduces the size and hence the quality of the picture.

Here’s a checklist of what your project report should include: How the project was conceived; what was the need; cost and how the money was raised; challenges; execution and beneficiaries.

Pictures — a picture is worth 1,000 words. Take good, action photographs of the project, its beneficiaries, and send them in high resolution, original size. Do differentiate between projects which are fit for the GML, and those which can go into the national Rotary magazine.

Send your projects to either
rushbhagat@gmail.com, or
rotarynewsmagazine@gmail.com.

When a village adoption project helped save a young girl

Jaishree

When a fire cracker burst on Kamina Patil's face on Diwali in 2014, the entire family was distraught. The eyeball on her right eye popped out of its socket due to the impact, in addition to causing minor injuries on her face. "That Diwali was a dark day for me and even today I don't touch firecrackers. I was just 14 then and was too scared to look at myself on the mirror for a very long time," she

says. She was taken to the local hospital immediately but nothing much could be done. She lost her vision on the affected eye.

Residing in a remote village, Kunde in Palghar district, Kamina was ridiculed at school by her classmates for her appearance; she dropped out of school and slowly withdrew into a shell. "I used to feel so miserable and avoided stepping out of my house. It pained me even more to

see my parents suffer on my account but there was nothing we could do. Any advanced treatment was beyond our means."

Around the same time RC Bombay Kandivli, RID 3141, was implementing rural upliftment projects in Palghar. The club had adopted few villages in the district and was setting up schools, toilets, crematoriums and water facilities, and organising health camps in these villages.

One such medical camp was held at Kunde village in 2015. As the doctors wanted to use the washroom, Kamina's father who was the gram panchayat head directed them to his house. Deepa Goenka, the then club president, noticed Kamina sitting in a dark corner in the house. "When I tried to chat up with her, she remained silent and hid behind the curtains. I got to know about her accident from her father. He told me how Kamina avoided people and always stayed indoors, and how she was ridiculed."

Deepa immediately consulted with the doctors in Mumbai and decided to sponsor Kamina's treatment at the L M Patil Rotary Eye Hospital in Malad. But it did not have a sophisticated equipment that can treat her condition. Immediately Krishna Chaturvedi, a member of RC Bombay Kandivli, agreed to sponsor the machine that cost ₹45 lakh. It arrived in two weeks and the hospital was all set to treat Kamina.

"But convincing her parents for the treatment was a huge challenge," she

From L: Deepa Goenka, past president of RC Bombay Kandivli, with baby Himani, Kamina Patil, past president SL Prasad and Jatin Lakhani.



recalls. They were worried about the risk involved and doubtful about the success of the treatment. Subsequently after Deepa's reassurance they conceded. The club bore the travel cost of Kamina and her parents from Palghar to Mumbai for the entire treatment that lasted for three sittings.

The treatment

The doctors removed the damaged eye and let the tissues heal. An artificial

eye was then placed in the socket. Though the surgery did not bring back Kamina's vision, it transformed her face. "At first I could not believe myself when I looked into the mirror and my parents were ecstatic," she says. The surgery was so sophisticated that it was nearly impossible to differentiate between the real and artificial eyes. "As part of their contribution, the hospital did not charge anything for her treatment. It was established 50 years

ago by RC Northwest Malad," says Deepa.

After the surgery, Kamina went back to school and completed her secondary education. She got married in 2021. Deepa, along with her club members, visited her recently at Kunde village. "We were delighted to see her with a cute baby girl, Himani. Now her success story is a favourite topic in our club and it has strengthened our faith in Rotary and its power to transform lives."

As Avenue chair Deepa was instrumental in coordinating with 75 Rotary clubs of RID 3141 to distribute 50,000 reusable sanitary napkins among rural women and girls, and educate them on puberty and menstrual hygiene management under the district's Project Red. "We had engaged women from less privileged communities to make the napkins and thus helped them earn their livelihood," she smiles. ■

A Rotary dispensary at Nainital

Team Rotary News



DG Pawan Agarwal (fifth from L), club president Babita Jain and RID 3012 PDG Subhash Jain at the Rotary Joggers Park in Nainital.

DG Pawan Agarwal inaugurated a Rotary dispensary set up by RC Nainital, RID 3110, at Farsoli village in Uttarakhand.

The clinic, set up with the support of the Indersheel Jain Trust, will benefit less privileged families who do not have access

to hospitals or any modern health-care, said club president Babita Jain. In another initiative, the club has developed a Rotary Joggers Park, along with an open gym, at the Kennedy Park, Nainital, which was also inaugurated by DG Agarwal. "The club will beautify

the park and maintain it as an ongoing project," said Babita. PDG Dr Subhash Jain, RID 3012, AG Dr DK Bhatt and Rtn Raj Mehrotra were present at the installation of the new club president who took charge from IPP Vikram Syal at a ceremonial event. ■

New directors and trustees take office

The RI Board of Directors has 19 members: the RI president, the president-elect, and 17 directors, who were nominated by their zones and elected at the RI convention. The Board manages Rotary International affairs and funds in accordance with the RI Constitution and Bylaws. Eight new directors and the president-elect took office on July 1.

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

Directors

Gordon R McNally

President-elect, RC South Queensferry, Scotland



Gordon McNally is the RI president-elect. He was educated at the Royal High School in Edinburgh and at the University of Dundee, where he earned his graduate degree in dental surgery. He operated his own dental practice in Edinburgh until

2016. McNally was chair of the East of Scotland branch of the British Paedodontic Society and has held various academic positions.

McNally joined Rotary in 1984 at 26. A member of RC South Queensferry, he has served as president and vice-president of Rotary International in Great Britain and Ireland (RIBI). He has also served RI as a director and on several committees, including as an adviser to the 2022 Houston Convention Committee and as chair of the Operations Review Committee.

McNally says he looks forward to working with members to build new Rotary clubs and groups. “My vision is that Rotary should exist everywhere in a style to suit everyone who has the desire to be part of us and to help us do good in the world,” he says.

He is a patron of the UK-based nonprofit Hope and Homes for Children and led a partnership between that organisation and RIBI to support children in Rwanda who had been orphaned in the genocide there. He is a patron of Trade-Aid, an initiative of RC Grantham Kesteven, England, that provides sustainable humanitarian aid to individuals, families and businesses in the developing world. He is also an ambassador for Bipolar UK, a national mental health organisation.

McNally describes TRF as “the fuel that provides the energy to do Rotary service.” He and his spouse, Heather, also a Rotarian, are Paul Harris Fellows, Major Donors and

Benefactors of TRF. They are also members of the Bequest Society. He wishes to dedicate his presidency to making the world a better place for his granddaughters, Ivy and Florence, to live and thrive.

Alberto Cecchini

RC Roma Nord-Est, Italy



Alberto Cecchini is the sole administrator and technical director of Idroesse Engineering, one of the oldest firms of its kind in Italy. He earned his bachelor’s and master’s degrees in civil engineering at Sapienza University of Rome in 1988. He

also served as a partner, board member and technical director of 3TI Progetti Italia, an engineering firm with offices in cities including Rome and Milan; Muscat, Oman; and Hong Kong. Among the many projects he has led or designed are the rehabilitation of a water and sanitation system in Kenya, the construction of a new military air base in Oman, and the rebuilding of panoramic Provincial Road 28 in Sicily.

Cecchini’s first experience with Rotary was in 1988, when he became a founding member of the Rotaract Club of Anzio-Nettuno. He joined his first Rotary club in 1994. He has served RI at the zone and international levels, including as a committee member, Rotary public image coordinator, training leader, regional coordinator and adviser, governors-elect training seminar facilitator and International Assembly speaker. He has served as chair and vice-chair of the Rotaract-Interact Committee and chaired the Rotaract preconvention meeting in Sydney in 2014. In addition, he has served as the primary RI representative to numerous Rome-based organisations, including the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, International Fund for Agricultural Development, World Food Programme and the Holy See in Vatican City.

Cecchini conceived and organised a polio eradication fundraiser at the Colosseum in Rome in June 2018 that featured actors from the film *Gladiator*, including Russell Crowe and Connie Nielsen, as well as a projection of the movie within the Colosseum with a live orchestra. The event raised \$500,000.

Cecchini has received the Service Above Self Award and The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. He supports the Foundation as a multiple Paul Harris Fellow and Benefactor.

Patrick D Chisanga

RC Nkwazi, Zambia



Patrick Chisanga, a chartered governance professional, is a fellow of the Chartered Governance Institute (UK) from the London School of Accountancy and a fellow of the Institute of Directors of Zambia. He has advised the World Bank on corporate governance and has served as president of the Institute of Directors of Zambia and the African Corporate Governance Network.

Chisanga first joined the family of Rotary as a member of Interact. As a high school student in 1968, he was selected to go on a short-term interclub exchange to Kenya, where he stayed with the then district governor in Mombasa. In 1986, he became a charter member of RC Nkwazi, and in 1998, he became governor of District 9210, the first nonwhite person to hold that position.

Chisanga has served RI on several committees, including the Membership Committee and the Reach Out to Africa Committee, and as a training leader and Rotary Institute chair. He has also chaired regional Rotary organisations, including the Governors' Council of Southern and Eastern Africa.

He has received the Service Above Self Award and The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his partner, Petronella, are Major Donors.

Jeremy Hurst

RC Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands



Born in Rochester, England, Jeremy Hurst relocated to the Cayman Islands in 1988. He owns and operates the IRG group of companies, which provides a range of property services in the Cayman Islands and other Caribbean markets.

Hurst joined Rotary in 1988; has served on RI's

Membership Committee and the Joint Committee on Partnerships and has been an RIPR several times.

Hurst has been heavily involved in managing Rotary's disaster relief efforts in the Caribbean, chairing his district's disaster relief committee for the 2017 hurricanes Irma and Maria and organising the Rotarian Emergency Disaster Initiative (REDI) conference in 2009. He is a founding member and steering committee chair of HANWASH, the Rotary-led partnership to bring clean water and improved sanitation to everyone in Haiti. He and his wife, Michelle, are Rotary Foundation Major Donors and members of the Bequest Society, Paul Harris Society and District 7020's PolioPlus Society. He has received TRF's Citation for Meritorious Service.

Drew Kessler

RC North Rockland (Haverstraw), New York



Drew Kessler is senior vice-president of the commercial real estate division at M&T Bank. Kessler joined Rotary in 2001 at 20. He became president of RC North Rockland (Haverstraw) at 25 and was at that time the youngest president in the club's history. At 32, he became governor of District 7210.

Kessler has served RI on the Young Past Governors Committee, as a representative to the CoL and Council on Resolutions, and as an RIPR. He also has held zone leadership positions, including chair of the Zone 28/32 Summit, assistant Rotary coordinator for Zone 32, and chair of the Mid-Northeast Presidents-Elect Training Seminar.

As a husband and a father of five, Kessler prioritises incorporating family into Rotary events, projects and meetings whenever possible. All of his children have participated in Rotary, including through Interact, RYLA, Rotary Youth Exchange and other programmes. Kessler and his spouse, Vicki, also a Rotarian, live in Hopewell Junction, New York.

Muhammad Faiz Kidwai

RC Karachi Karsaz, Pakistan



Muhammad Faiz Kidwai is the chair of CG Global, a leading architecture, engineering, urban design, real estate development and hospitality firm.

He joined Rotaract in 1980 and is the first Rotary director from Pakistan. In 1986, departing from Karachi on a Rotary GSE trip to Canada, he survived a violent attack during the hijacking of Pan Am

Flight 73. “I pledged that, if given another chance to live, I would dedicate my life to the betterment of humanity,” he says. “This was the moment that influenced me to join Rotary.”

Kidwai joined Rotary in 1987 and became a charter member of RC Karachi Karsaz in 1993. He has been active in polio eradication efforts since Rotary began its work for the cause in Pakistan. In 1997 in the suburbs of Karachi, he established a Rotary Community Corps (RCC), which continues to work with his club on projects.

He is the founder and chair of the Rotary Pakistan Literacy Mission. He has received the Service Above Self Award, The Rotary Foundation Distinguished Service Award, and The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service.

Patricia Merryweather-Arges

RC Naperville, Illinois



Patricia Merryweather-Arges is the executive director of Project Patient Care, a nonprofit that brings together patients, families and caregivers to improve healthcare.

She joined Rotary in 2002; has served on Rotary’s Covid-19 task force, as a representative for the CoL and Council on Resolutions, an RRFC, RIPR and chair of the 2018 presidential peace conference in Chicago.

Merryweather-Arges has received the Service Above Self Award, the Avenues of Service Award, and TRF Citation for Meritorious Service. She and her spouse, George, who is also a Rotary member, are members of the Paul Harris Society and are Benefactors and Major Donors.

Lena J Mjerskaug

RC Enebakk, Norway



Lena J Mjerskaug is chief of administrative control at the Norwegian Armed Forces’ Defence Staff Norway, where she has worked since 1997.

She joined Rotary in 1997 as the first woman in her club and, at the time, its youngest member. She has served Rotary as an End Polio Now zone coordinator, Rotary coordinator, COL representative and RIPR.

In addition to her work, her farm, and Rotary, Mjerskaug enjoys sports, reading, and learning about the history and culture of the places she visits. She supports TRF as a Benefactor and a Major Donor.

Yoshio Sato

RC Okayama-South, Japan



Yoshio Sato is a certified public accountant who has owned his own consulting firm specialising in tax and general consulting services since 1986. He has also served as director of Chugoku Bank Ltd. since 2016.

A member of RC Okayama-South since 1989, Sato has been active in numerous district and national committees. He has served Rotary as chair of RID 2690 Rotary Foundation audit committee and as a member of the Rotary Japan Centennial Executive Committee and the Rotary International Japan Youth Exchange Multi-district. He is also a contributor to the Rotary Yoneyama Memorial Foundation, a project of Rotary districts in Japan that supports foreign students who are pursuing academic research in Japan.

Sato personally supports TRF as an Arch Klumph Society member, Paul Harris Society member, Benefactor and Bequest Society member.

Trustees

Barry Rassin

Trustee chair-elect, RC East Nassau, Bahamas



Barry Rassin is a director and former president of Doctors Hospital Health System in Nassau, Bahamas, where he retired after a 38-year career.

A Rotarian since 1980, he served as RI president in 2018–19, when he advocated for closer partnership between Rotary and Rotaract clubs and presented the measure that broadened the definition of membership in RI to include Rotaract clubs at the 2019 CoL. He has served RI in many other capacities, including as RI director, Rotary Foundation trustee and vice-chair, chair of both the Finance and the Shaping Rotary’s Future committees, RI training leader and seminar trainer. In 2010, Rassin coordinated Rotary’s disaster relief efforts in Haiti after a devastating earthquake. That included supervising the completion of 105 relief and development projects throughout Haiti that were made possible by the \$6.5 million raised by Rotary members worldwide. He is currently active on the Bahamas Rotary Disaster Relief Committee and is working on relief efforts in the wake of Hurricane Dorian and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Rassin has received the Service Above Self Award.

He and his spouse, Esther, are Rotary Foundation Major Donors, Benefactors, Paul Harris Fellows and members of the Paul Harris Society.

Bharat Pandya

RC Borivli, India



Dr Bharat Pandya joined Rotary in 1989. During his year as governor of RID 3140, his district contributed over \$2 million to TRF, making it the top contributor worldwide for 2006–07. He has led numerous projects, including water and sanitation projects funded by The Rotary Foundation grants that installed check dams so that villagers need not walk long distances to collect water.

Dr Pandya is a practising general and laparoscopic surgeon. He and his wife, Madhavi, a gynaecologist, own a private hospital in Mumbai. He is a fellow of the International College of Surgeons and has served on the board of the Jan Shikshan Sansthan vocational training institute, sponsored by the Indian government.

He served as RI director during 2019–21 and was its treasurer for 2020–21. Pandya has served as regional RI membership coordinator, training leader and member of Rotary's Membership and Convention Promotion Committees and India PolioPlus Committee. He has received RI's Service Above Self Award and The Rotary Foundation's Citation for Meritorious Service and Distinguished Service Award. He and Madhavi are Level-2 Major Donors to the Foundation.

Holger Knaack

RC Herzogtum Lauenburg-Mölln, Germany



Holger Knaack served as RI president in 2020–21. A Rotary member since 1992, he has served Rotary as treasurer, director, moderator, member and chair of several committees, CoL representative, zone coordinator, training leader and district governor.

Knaack is the CEO of Knaack KG, a real estate company. He is a founding member of the Civic Foundation of the City of Ratzeburg and served as president of the Golf-Club Gut Grambek. Knaack is also the founder and chair of the Karl Adam Foundation.

Knaack and his wife, Susanne, are Major Donors to The Rotary Foundation and members of the Bequest Society.

Martha Peak Helman

RC Boothbay Harbor, Maine



Martha Peak Helman is president of the Otto and Fran Walter Foundation, a nonprofit that has helped build schools in developing nations, provided scholarships for at-risk youth, and supplied humanitarian aid to Holocaust survivors. The Walter Foundation made history in 2021 when it announced plans to completely fund a new Rotary Peace Center in the Middle East or North Africa. The new centre is expected to welcome its first class in 2025. Helman was instrumental in realising the \$15.5 million agreement between the Walter Foundation and TRF.

Helman joined RC Boothbay Harbor in 2003 with her spouse, Frank, who died in June 2022. She has served Rotary as chair of the Peace Major Gifts Initiative and is currently a member of the site selection working group for the new peace centre. She has served on the DEI task force and as an RIPR.

A keen fundraiser for TRF, Helman put together a group to support the Sakuji Tanaka Rotary Peace Fellowship, which raised \$1 million for the Rotary Peace Centers.

Marty and Frank Helman chose to support the Foundation as Major Donors, Paul Harris Society members and inaugural members of the Legacy Society of TRF.

Greg E Podd

RC Evergreen, Colorado



Greg Podd is a retired certified public accountant and personal financial specialist who opened his own firm in 1979.

He joined Rotary in 1982 and has served RI as vice-president and director. During his time on the Board of Directors, he chaired committees including the Audit Committee and the Board Council on Legislation Advisory Committee. He also served on the Operations Review Committee and TRF's Investment Committee, among others. Other roles he's held include training leader, RIPR and CoL representative.

As a Rotary Foundation major gifts adviser, Podd organised his district's Million Dollar Dinner, which raised more than \$3.1 million in one night. He has received the Service Above Self Award and The Rotary Foundation Citation for Meritorious Service. He and his spouse, Pam, are Major Donors and members of the Arch Klumph Society, Bequest Society and Paul Harris Society. ■

A memorable friendship exchange visit to Brazil

Rasheeda Bhagat

Many of us have been enthralled by the heavenly aroma and great taste of Brazilian coffee. Now, thanks to a partnership between Indian and Brazilian Rotarians, an endeavour will be made in Gujarat to produce the organic fertiliser that contributes to Brazil producing some of the best quality coffee in the world.

This information is shared by an excited Praful Dewani, chair of Rotary Friendship Exchange (RFE),

RID 3060, for six years now. A past president of RC Vapi, he says that after a “long break due to the Covid pandemic, we had the opportunity to send our outbound team of eight Rotarians to RID 4560, Brazil, for two weeks in May 2022.”

Thanks to Brazil removing pandemic-related gathering and travel restrictions, DG Jose Carlos Azevedo (RID 4560), a good friend of Dewani, and DG Fredson Santos Dally (RID 4590) had organised an in-person multidistrict conference



RFE delegates learning the finer points of coffee.





RFE team leader Jignesh Vasani and delegates at a coffee production facility in Brazil.

We had told them before our visit that the entire team of Rotarians from India are vegetarian and they had taken great care to organise good vegetarian food for us.

in Aguasa de Lindoiya, Brazil, and invited a team from RID 3060 to participate in it, and the invitation was accepted by DG Santosh Pradhan.

Before the pandemic, a team of Rotarians from Brazil had participated in RID 3060’s district conference in Goa in 2020. Dewani adds that this friendship exchange visit allowed “our Rotarians to make new friends with Rotarians of RID 4560, 4590 (Brazil) and RID 4455 (Peru), who were also present at this multidistrict conference.”

Treated like celebrities

Jignesh Vasani, past president from RC Valsad, RID 3060, who

led the eight-member delegation told *Rotary News*, “We had an unbelievable time in Brazil, where we visited seven cities, and were put up either in the homes of local Rotarians or the villas that they had organised for us. We had told them before our visit that the entire team of Rotarians from India are vegetarian and they had taken great care to organise good vegetarian food for us.”

What he can’t get over is the fact that wherever the Indian Rotarians went, “we were treated as celebrities, not only by Rotarians but others. For instance, when we came across a marriage happening, the bride and the groom wanted to

click pictures with the Rotarians from India.”

He added that present at the district conference were many businessmen and industrialists, and a special business session was held there. This was attended by several ministers and 13 mayors, and “they offered us a lot of incentives to set up industries/businesses in Brazil. They are offering us a 10-year tax holiday and also providing land free of cost. At the conference a lot of interest was expressed for exploring business and investment opportunities in India.”

The result of the eight Rotarians’ visit to Brazil is that two teams will now come to India. The first is an RFE team of 12 Rotarians from Brazil who will attend the RID 3060 conference in January 2023. “They have also assured us

RFE teaches us that despite language, food habits and cultural differences, a Rotarian is received by another Rotarian so warmly that all barriers simply disappear.

that a larger delegation of 40–50 businesspersons, including some Rotarians, will visit Gujarat soon and explore investment options. They will be coming to Surat, Vapi and other places to explore opportunities in textiles, chemicals, pesticides and fertilisers.” This

includes setting up a facility to manufacture the special type of organic fertilisers that Brazil farmers use to grow top quality coffee beans.

The Indian delegation, which also included Vasani’s wife Kashmira, Kirtikumar and Daksha Vankadi, Vijay Kumar and Chetna Mangukiya (both the couples from RC Surat East) and Anil and Surekha Patil (RC Dhule), were later taken to a coffee production facility where they were taught the art of distinguishing between organic and ordinary coffee and other finer aspects to gauge the quality of good coffee.

Rotary projects

After attending the conference, the Indian Rotarians visited in different cities some Rotary projects mainly related to healthcare and literacy.





Indian Rotarians visit a school at Boa Esperanca, Brazil.



To help in improving medical care services through a project, RID 3060 has become the international partner of RI District 4560, Brazil, for a global grant, “and a sum of \$73,214 has already been sanctioned, of which the contribution of RC Vapi is \$5,835,” says Dewani. Through these funds radiological equipment will be given to the Santa Casa of Caridad Hospital in the city of Capitolio, where Rotarians are involved in some aspects of hospital management. The GG was sponsored by RC Capitolio, RID 4560, and titled ‘Health is life’.

Adds Dewani, “RFE teaches us that despite language, food habits and cultural differences, a Rotarian is received by another Rotarian so warmly that all barriers simply disappear.” ■

RID 3232 excels in projects, membership growth

V Muthukumaran

District conferences (discons) offer a unique opportunity to leverage the collective intelligence and capabilities of Rotarians to make their Rotary clubs vibrant so that they can tackle the challenges ahead by sharing their best practices, said RI Director A S Venkatesh. Addressing the three-day RID 3232's discon titled *Synergy '22*, he said while fellowship, bonding and network are spontaneous in Rotary conclaves, "we should go beyond this to informally share our ideas and best practices to make our clubs stronger."

A number of Rotarians have approached him with concern about the impending bifurcation of RID 3232 (Chennai clubs) as they have some reservations about this split in the Rotary district. He is ready to listen to those "who have time, inclination and desire to come up with some constructive suggestions, either opposing or supporting the move," he said.

RI vice-president Nicki Scott, RIPR, felicitated PDG Krishnan V Chari with the Service Above Self Award. Venkatesh recalled his long association with PDG Chari.

RIPR Nicki Scott releases a dove at the District Conference as RID A S Venkatesh (L) and DG J Sridhar (R) look on.





PDG Krishnan V Chari being felicitated with the Service Above Self Award by RIPR Nicki in the presence of (from L) Nallammai and PDG Abirami Ramanathan, RID Venkatesh, DG Sridhar, Nithya Chari and Punitha Sridhar.

To illustrate his ‘no-nonsense approach and leadership quality’, the RI director cited an incident 22 years ago at a discon in Chennai, when he was a member of the catering committee. “An angry Rotarian jumped across the long dining table and caught me by the collar for not including the leg piece in the chicken served to him. When I took up this issue with the then DG Chari, he nonchalantly asked me to tell him that a chicken has only two legs.” Chari was DG when India celebrated its 50th year of Independence and “he took up mass feeding of people through the year.”

In his speech, Chari recalled his 38 years as a Rotarian and thanked his

“good friends who were outstanding and tireless in their commitment to service.” Late PRID Sushil Gupta supported him a lot when “I built *Rotary News* from scratch at that time.”

Four priority areas

RIPR Nicki from RID 6450, UK, recalled her first visit to India “10 years ago for an immunisation event in Delhi. The country was polio-free for three consecutive years at that time, thus setting a great example for other polio endemic nations.”

Praising DG J Sridhar for the tremendous growth of clubs and the service projects, she said, “the impact such growth has on the less privileged will be phenomenal.”

Last year, Rotary had sanctioned \$21 million as disaster response grants and \$30 million as Covid grants. “In a way the Covid pandemic has accelerated rapid changes in Rotary clubs over the last two years than what was done in the previous 10 years,” said Nicki.

Record growth, projects

Earlier, DG Sridhar presenting a status report of his district’s clubs said, “so far we have done 5,130 service projects worth ₹38.9 crore touching 10.18 lakh lives. Our TRF giving stands at \$1.7 million till now.” The district has added

22 new clubs, taking the total to 168 with the number of Rotarians at 8,213, a membership growth of 14.8 per cent since July 1, 2021. “Our women’s membership grew by 18.56 per cent; and retention stands at 93.69 per cent. We have added 1,300 new Rotaractors taking their count to 21,000-plus.” The district has formed its first corporate club in RC Chennai Madhavaram with the staff of PDG J B Kamdar’s Nadi Group.

A disaster management manual was released by RI President Mehta with the clubs doing a number of Covid-relief projects and flood mitigation events in partnership with the Chennai Corporation. On a single day, 48 clubs inoculated 68,810 people in a mega vaccination drive at a total cost of ₹3.8 crore.

The vocational skill centres trained 9,157 candidates at a total cost of ₹1.3 crore; 82 dialysis machines were installed across Chennai hospitals; 31 RYLAs were conducted by 40 clubs, and District clubs are executing 16 GGs. District trainer PDG Kamdar, councillor PDG Abirami Ramanathan, conference chair Vinod Saraogi and district secretary Ravi Shankar spoke at the inaugural session. *Synergy* discon had 3,000 Rotarians and Anns, and 500 Rotaractors.

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

In a way the Covid pandemic has accelerated rapid changes in Rotary clubs over the last two years than what was done in the previous 10 years.

Nicki Scott
Vice-president, Rotary
International

Shekhar Mehta, as RI President in June 2022, presented the Rotary Award of Honour to Prince Charles at a private audience during the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Kigali, Rwanda. Mehta expressed appreciation for his dedication towards sustainability and biodiversity and highlighted Rotary's shared commitment to protecting the environment. The Prince of Wales appreciated Rotary for its humanitarian work.

The Rotary Award of Honour was established by

Right: RI President Shekhar Mehta and Rashi present a Rotary banner to Prince Charles.

Below: President Mehta with WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Melinda Gates, co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Prez Mehta at the CHOGM in Rwanda

Team Rotary News



Rotary International in 1990 to be given to heads of state and other dignitaries who have made a significant contribution to international understanding and goodwill.

At the CHOGM in Rwanda, Mehta met Rotary's longstanding partners of the polio eradication programme, WHO director general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus and Melinda Gates, co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. ■

A Rotary home for a woman



Members of RC Vellore South with a beneficiary in front of the newly constructed house.

RC Vellore South, RID 3231, constructed a low-cost shelter for an underprivileged woman. Built at a cost of ₹1.75 lakh, the 180 sqft house is fully furnished. Club members have donated essentials and groceries for one month.

Club honours pilot



Mahasweta Chakraborty receives the award from PDG Ajay Agarwal.

RC Calcutta Metro City, RID 3291, at a recent event, honoured 24-year-old pilot Mahasweta Chakraborty with the Swayam Siddha Award for flying 800 Indian students home from war-torn Ukraine.

Deepak Shikarpur conferred Service Above Self Award



Deepak Shikarpur receiving the award from TRF trustee Bharat Pandya in the presence of (from L) DG Dr Anil Lalchand Parmar, PDGs Dr Shailesh Palekar and Pankaj Shah.

The RI Board of Directors recently conferred the *Service Above Self Award* on PDG Deepak Shikarpur, member of RC Pune Shivajinagar, RID 3131. He has served as the DRRFC and RPIC.

Empowering girls



(From L): Club president Santosh Senapati (2021–22), PDG Aswini Kar and club member Bijoylaxmi Kar handing over the sewing machines to the beneficiaries.

Under the club's *Joy of Giving* and Women's Empowerment initiative, RC Bhubaneswar Meadows, RID 3262, donated sewing machines to three needy girls to help them earn a decent living.

The challenges in women's empowerment

V Muthukumar

Empathy and ability to create strength, power of conviction, a process of constant learning and unlearning, and always trying to succeed in out-of-your-comfort zones workplace were qualities that four successful women leaders put forth in a panel discussion moderated by RID A S Venkatesh at RID 3232 district conference titled *Synergy '22*.

Addressing the session named 'Inspirational women leadership — the new horizon,' he said right from the *Black Lives Matter* movement in the US which later spread to other countries with different dimensions, "the DEI bug has come to the front burner with organisations adopting this principle to embrace change. Our 117-year-old Rotary will have its first female president in Jennifer Jones from July 1,

and she will be supported by her vice-president RID Nicki Scott. The DEI Task Force in RI is now looking into racial, gender, skill and age diversity to strengthen the organisation and prepare for future challenges, he said. In 2021–22, the RI Board had nine women out of 19 members.

Here is a synopsis of what the women panellists said:

Ponni Concessao, architect: Though I got an admit card to join NIT, Tiruchi, the principal refused admission just because I was a woman. I threatened him with dire consequences; including a legal suit, as I knew my case was very strong and even the Indian Constitution would back me. I was the only female among the 3,000 male students in that batch.



TRF Trustee Dr Bharat Pandya being felicitated by DG J Sridhar (2021–22) in the presence of event chairman Vinod Saraogi and RC Madras then president Mohan Raman (R).



When I landed in Cornell University, New York, I was the first Indian woman to join that institution. Later on, it was not easy to convince men to give me business orders for my enterprise. Unlike in law, medicine or other professions, in the construction business there is what is called the 'likeability factor'. An ambitious woman is not liked in this industry, whereas there are no such limitations for men.

Jaya Vaidyanathan, CEO, BCT Digital: I was 10 years junior to Ponni at the Cornell. In the 1990s, when I declared that I wanted to have children, my colleagues, investment bankers, said it was a career suicide. It is important for women to be accepted in the workplace, and liked in your profession. More women taking up work will definitely push up the country's GDP.

The stark reality is that only 10 per cent of Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members are women, though women represent over half the population. We need 50 per cent reservation in legislatures for a good political representation, though I am against the quota system. Women are better at multitasking than men.

Pratibha Batchu, head, Bosch Service Solutions, India: There are



From L: Jaya Vaidyanathan, Pratibha Batchu, RI Director A S Venkatesh, Ponni Concessao and Prabha Srinivasan at a panel discussion.

still unconscious, subtle biases against women in the workplace as social conditioning is difficult to break. My three-month training in Germany was tough as there were no women software engineers there many years ago. When I began my career, it was just a 150-member team, but now we have large teams of over 27,000 workforce across the world for product development. Right attitudes matter a lot while climbing the hierarchy, and we should be ready to unlearn quickly for steady growth.

Prabha Srinivasan, CEO, Ventura Paranas: When I joined my company, men were not ready to work under a woman CEO. But we moved on, and now 40 per cent of our staff is women. We have a natural talent for parenting as our biological system plays a great role in shaping our future.

Addressing the conference, TRF Trustee Bharat Pandya said Rotarians should remember that success is always accompanied by hard work, and be smart enough to achieve their goals. “You should focus on

Grow Rotary initiatives, not just in membership, which is at the heart of Rotary, but also on building public image, supporting TRF, engaging new members and taking up big impactful service projects,” he said.

Over the last two years, the Covid pandemic has spread darkness and despair everywhere. “You flip the pages of newspapers, and they are full of grim news. This includes the Russia-Ukraine war, terrorism and starvation. But the commitment of Rotarians amid the dark times is unwavering.” Coming out with a simple formula he termed ‘PhD’, Pandya said, “passion to do good in the world, hunger to excel in service projects and discipline in paying attention to minute details to keep doing the right things again and again despite heavy odds, will see through Rotary in difficult times.”

When the 14-year-old Romanian gymnast Nadia Comaneci was asked the secret of her success after winning the gold in Montreal Olympics, 1976, scoring the perfect 10 out of 10, she said it in two words: practice and discipline.

On membership growth, he suggested Rotarians keep asking their spouse, relatives and friends, and put

into action the call given by RI President Shekhar Mehta through the *Each One, Bring One* mantra. More important is to engage and involve the new members to retain them, he said.

Pandya added that voluntary donations from Rotarians to TRF are critical to drive the global programmes and projects through the Annual Fund. “Our Foundation is the backbone of Rotary as it allocates funds for global projects to provide shelter to the homeless, medical care, water and sanitation and education.” Rotary ensures a high degree of financial stewardship and transparency for its global grant projects, he said, as “92 per cent of all funds received are spent on service projects. TRF funds are spent effectively, wisely and in complete transparency.”

If all the Rotarians keep investing in TRF, “we can ensure a bright future with a great life for our children and grandchildren. The Foundation enjoys a legacy of goodwill. In 2006–07, when I was the governor of then RID 3140, our TRF giving was \$2 million, topping the world, and this was made possible with a donation of \$1 million by Rtn Harshad Mehta. That was 16 years ago.”

Pictures by V Muthukumaran

Meet your



Rajesh Kumar Chura
Mining, RC Bikaner, RID 3053

A blood bank, two dialysis centres & membership his priority

Education, environment and disease prevention will be the three focus areas of the clubs spread across Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. “We are one of the largest districts in India and I have plans for the clubs to hold 2–3 health camps a month to benefit less privileged families, especially in rural areas,” says Rajesh K Chura. At present, there are 75 clubs with 3,000-plus Rotarians in the district and he is targeting a 10 per cent net growth in membership and clubs. “Skill development of women and other people from weaker sections will also be our thrust area of action this year.”

The district clubs will hold a number of fellowship events such as family get-together and entertainment shows to attract new members, he says. “We will publicise and create awareness about the global projects of TRF to enhance our public image in major cities and towns.” On the Rotaract front, Chura wants to introduce skill development courses for Rotaractors too. “There are around 1,000 Rotaractors and we want to register a 10 per cent growth in this number.” He will be applying for a GG to set up two dialysis centres, one in Jodhpur and another in a major city in Rajasthan.

RC Alwar will be setting up a mega blood bank at a cost of ₹1 crore through a mix of GG and member contributions. For TRF giving, he is aiming at over \$200,000 in Annual Fund alone.

Chura was inducted into Rotary during the installation of Shashi Mohan Mundhra as president of RC Bikaner in 2005.



Anil Agarwal
Printing & packaging
RC Prayagraj, RID 3120

From an Interactor to Governor

A strict disciplinarian, Anil Agarwal wants to shut down 10 clubs in his district “as they have less than 12 members and have not done any noteworthy projects in the last 3–4 years.” With 91 clubs and 3,900 Rotarians in the district, he hopes for a 10 per cent net growth in membership. “I will charter 20 new clubs in areas where Rotary is not present.” All the new clubs will have at least 25 charter members to do service projects, he says.

While 64 Rotaract clubs are there on paper, only 22 are active. “I want to triple the number of Rotaractors to 600, as youth power needs to be channellised and they should be under the guidance of Rotarians.” He has drafted seven areas of action for his clubs: blood donation and awareness camps; creating 15 micro forests, each 2,500 sq m, through an MoU with the state environment ministry; restoring 100 ponds; child immunisation and vaccination for cervical cancer; each club to adopt a less privileged colony for regular health camps; sponsoring the education of children from KG to PG; and a GG project to install 12 sanitary pad making units (₹1 crore) at SHGs. His target for TRF giving is \$100,000 with thrust on endowment funds. A third generation Rotarian, Agarwal rose to the rank of a governor from being an Interactor. “I was forced to become a Rotarian by my friend Dr Avaneendra Agrawal. My father too had a role in my joining Rotary in 2005–06,” he recalls.

Governors

V Muthukumaran



Jinendra Jain

Water pipelines

RC Bhopal Shahpura, RID 3040

Health camps to benefit rural families

One of the challenges for Jinendra Jain is to retain the existing 2,700-plus Rotaractors in his district as “a large number of them may quit following the new rule of mandatory dues for Rotaract clubs. But I am confident of starting at least 20 new Rotaract clubs.” With 112 Rotary clubs and 2,800 Rotarians, he is hopeful of starting at least eight new clubs and getting a 20 per cent net membership growth in this year.

More than 50 eye donation camps will be held across the district and he will apply for a global grant to set up three dialysis centres (\$100,000) in Madhya Pradesh. Over the last 10 years, the district clubs have done a series of multispecialty health camps in rural areas where mother and child care, diabetes screening and awareness on blood donation were taken up on a war-footing. “A mammography van from Amravati tours our district to screen vulnerable women for breast cancer. All clubs will be urged to do 2–3 health camps a month with focus on rural beneficiaries,” says Jain.

On TRF giving, he says, “it is a tough challenge to meet the target. But this year it will be not less than \$130,000.” Inspired by his elder brother PDG Narendra Jain, he joined Rotary in 2012. “I am simply happy to be a Rotarian to serve the less privileged people. My aim is to enhance the public image of Rotary through programmes that impact the common man,” he says.



Dr Dushyant Choudhary

General physician

RC Jammu Tawi, RID 3070

Mammography van is his dream project

The quality of Rotarians is more important than adding clubs in the district, says Dr Dushyant Choudhary who is content with the existing 130 Rotary clubs in his jurisdiction. “There are 3,600 Rotarians across parts of Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and the UTs of J&K and Ladakh. I am aiming for a 20–25 per cent membership growth in the existing clubs which should have at least 35-plus members in each club to take up noteworthy projects,” he says. He will also work to achieve a 50 per cent growth in Rotaract membership which now stands at around 500 Rotaractors.

A Rotary eye hospital will come up in Jammu through a GG worth ₹1 crore. “My dream project is to launch a mammography van (GG: ₹90 lakh) as breast cancer is common in this part of the country. I am confident of getting this done before Jan 2023.” Another big plan is to install the Rotary logo at every city in the district to boost Rotary’s public image. “Every citizen should know about Rotary, what it stands for and its global achievements. My hope is that Rotary will be present in every nook and corner of my district, thus becoming a household name,” explains Dr Choudhary. His target for TRF giving is \$300,000.

He joined Rotary as the charter president of RAC Government Medical College, Jammu, in 1997. A Level-1 Major Donor, he has ambitious plans to enhance the visibility of Rotary through mega events.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Future-proof your health

Bharat and Shalan Savur

When I heard that the legendary singer Bhopinder Singh had passed away after suffering ‘health complications including urinary problems,’ little alarm bells went off in my head. Two of my friends were having similar problems too. One had to undergo surgery of the urinary tract and is thankfully fine now, while the other has days when she’s all there and some days when she is delusional.

Dear friends, every one of us must future-proof our body and mind so that we don’t allow any illness to creep in through the doors of stress or injury or neglect in our later years. Care today, carefree tomorrow should be our axiom. As baseball player Mickey Mantle joked, ‘If I knew I was going to live this long, I’d have taken better care of myself.’ He passed away at 63.

Please take better care of yourself. It means watching your intake, being a little more active and a little more vigilant. Years ago, we both suffered from acute acidity. It was so uncomfortable;

we couldn’t think straight. Our family doctor asked, ‘What do you have first thing in the morning?’ ‘Coffee’ we said. ‘Start with a cup of tea,’ she said. We did. It worked like magic. It’s small changes like these now and then that make that healthy difference.

The water way

More recently, a naturopath advised in an interview, ‘If you are prone to headaches, have a cup of warm water first thing in the morning. You can have your tea or coffee later.’ *Poof!* Not a throb since then. Water is a great medicine. Drink it warm first thing in the morning. And two sips frequently throughout the day. Urinary infections and disorders are largely due to dehydration. Future-proof your urinary tract by drinking as much as your body allows you to. Too much water

can cause acidity. So, the key here is: just enough. Some of us need one litre a day, some two or more. Find out how much your body needs. *Tip:* Don’t wait till you’re thirsty. Keep sipping even when on vacation or a business trip. I’ve noticed, many people are diagnosed with UTI (urinary tract infection) after an out-of-town trip where they’ve binged on almost everything except water!

Keep your gut happy

Medical experts say a healthy gut makes for a healthy mind. A part of our nervous system called the enteric nervous system runs through our entire



We really need to be calm and relaxed when we eat.

When excited or stimulated, we tend to overeat or eat too fast, when unhappy, we may eat too little or not at all.

digestive tract — from the esophagus, through the intestines right down to the anus. There's a conference going on all the time between the gut, brain, nervous system, hormones and immune system. Researchers have discovered that microorganisms in the gut actually regulate the body's immune response. And an unhappy gut can lead to illness starting with anything from constipation to ulcers to depression and even to Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases.

Watch your intake of food. Don't eat anything and everything mindlessly. If you are allergic to any food, even the much-loved chocolate, nuts, cheese or corn, keep miles away from it. *Tip 1:* Don't lament over it and stress yourself. You can't keep bombarding your system with foods it can't stomach. It progressively weakens the body and leads to all kinds of disorders and illnesses. *Tip 2:* Focus on keeping the gut healthy and happy. Go for these foods:

- * Beans, oats, beetroots, sweet potatoes, ladyfingers. Rich in fibre, they ensure efficient cleansing of the gut.
- * Yoghurt, garlic, onion, avocados, cloves, ginger boost friendly bacteria in the gut. Carrots, bottle gourds, beetroots bring in polyphenols which support good bacteria.

Feel-good eating

The attitude we bring to the table is also important. We all know over-eating can lead to obesity with its accompanying disorders such as high blood pressure and heart disease. Be calm and relaxed while eating. When excited or stimulated, we tend to over-eat or eat too fast, when unhappy, we may eat too little or not at all. And when the mind is calm, it's amazing how wonderful the aroma is and how little you need to eat to feel good. You don't leave the table feeling hungry or full, you leave the table feeling good.

The secret is to keep experimenting. See what suits you and what doesn't. For example, recently, I discovered corn doesn't suit my system. So out it went. We have to be careful even about fibre intake. A friend who was medically advised to choose brown rice over white rice, found it caused bloating and pain in her stomach which lasted two days. On the doctor's advice, she returned to 'a moderate helping' of white rice and is perfectly healthy now. It's all very individualistic.

The high of happy hormones

Exercise keeps our gut happy by increasing the production of happy hormones — the endorphins. Walking briskly, exercising vigorously, climbing stairs, running or dancing raises these powerful hormones — they are natural pain-killers or pain-reducers, they decrease discomfort and increase our high.

I've found my high by weight-training, doing abdominals and floor exercises on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays, and resistance band workouts coupled with a variety of leg and arm swings on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays. Through the entire week, I do stationary cycling for 40 minutes per session and on Sundays, I work out on pulleys. They have definitely improved my physical and mental well-being.

Be stable to be able

The Covid situation has created a lot of havoc in almost everybody's life. Change can cause ripples of discomfort and negative changes do overwhelm.

Remember the wonderful phrase 'This too shall pass' attributed to King Solomon. It helps to know that whatever situation we are currently experiencing will not last. It cannot because that's the way life works. The way is to enjoy the good times when they last and be patient when the bad times arrive.

Remember the wonderful phrase 'This too shall pass'. It helps to know that whatever situation we are currently experiencing will not last. It cannot because that's the way life works.

Start noticing the small good things happening all around you: Home-delivery of something you ordered. Interest or dividend amounts from your investments landing up in your bank account on time. As Oprah Winfrey says, 'Be thankful for what you have; you'll end up having more.' *Tip:* Whenever you feel sadness coming over you, decide to be thoughtful, not moody. This way you raise the bar of the mind. You touch your intelligence and keep the steering wheel of your mind steady. Stability raises ability.

Don't change your plans frequently — it's counterproductive. Stick to your schedule of diet, meal timings, regularity of workouts, warm baths, meditation, sleep, spending time with family and friends, doing whatever keeps you on an even keel. Forget what the social media influencers or television anchors say — they are masters of flavour of the day, what is trending today and so on. Instead, choose mastery over your own daily life with your personal routine. Present-proof and future-proof your health, your life...

The writers are authors of Fitness for Life and Simply Spiritual – You Are Naturally Divine and teachers of the Fitness for Life programme.

From RI South Asia Office desk

Global Grant contribution

Cash contributions to global grants (GG) should not be sent prior to its approval. If the application is not approved, the contributions will be credited to the Annual Fund-SHARE and can't be reallocated after that. All GG contributions are considered irrevocable contributions to TRF and will not be refunded.

District Response Grants

During the pandemic, the Foundation had approved and disbursed disaster response grant to districts to provide help to communities. TRF assumes that these grant funds have been utilised for the purpose for which it was disbursed and requests districts to send the final report for these grants. The reports must be filed manually. These are not available in the Grants Center. For more details, visit <http://www.rotaryfoundationindia.org/reporting/>.

Guidelines for contribution to Rotary Foundation (India) by cheque/demand draft

- Contribution form/covering note mentioning all the donor details (name, membership ID, fund designation and PAN)
- Permanent Account Number (PAN) is mandatory for all contributions
- Corporate letter if the contribution has been made from donor's self/family-controlled business/trust account.

via Rotary.org

- Use My Rotary login to avoid duplicate ID generation and receive timely credit of your contribution under your club
- If you do not have a My Rotary login, create one, or use your registered email address while making online contribution
- In case of contributions from family trust/company, send cheque/bank draft to RISAO. Do not make these contributions through My Rotary
- Re-check your PAN before clicking on submit for ensuring right PAN on your 80-G receipt.

Learning Center courses

Rotary's online Learning Center offers several courses to assist you in your leadership role. Take the new Fundraising Basics course for tips on identifying and cultivating donors. Visit the Foundation Giving learning topic to find brochure ideas, reference guides, PPTs, and fundraising tools that your colleagues have

posted. Find a list of all available courses in the course catalogue.

Rotary's licensed vendors

Rotary has licensed over 130 vendors worldwide that are permitted to manufacture and sell merchandise with Rotary marks and logos. A portion of all sales from licensed vendors is paid to Rotary, which benefits the operational services provided to clubs and districts everywhere. This can help limit the production and sale of unauthorised or pirated Rotary merchandise.

By using our licensed vendors, you are supporting Rotary and ensure receiving quality branded merchandise. Pirated merchandise can hurt Rotary's brand or image. For a list of our vendors visit <https://my.rotary.org/en/member-center/licensed-vendors>. Unlicensed vendors can be reported to rilicensingservices@rotary.org.

For your reference, details of licensed vendors from India are given below:

Licensed Vendors	Address
Better Services	Office #350, A To Z Industrial Estate, Ganpatrao, Kadam Marg Lower Parel (W) Mumbai 400013
Mohan Plastics	63, Roshanara Plaza Complex Roshanara Road New Delhi 110007
Tej Brothers	4806/24, Bharat Ram Road Darya Ganj, New Delhi 110002
Sacheti & Co	Shiwaji Nagar, Opposite Jain Temple, Kishangarh 305801 Rajasthan
Naveen Enterprises	No 11, Naveen Mansion 11 th Main Road, Aurobindo Marg, 5 th Block, Jayanagar Bengaluru 560041
BK AD Gifts	130 C, Kottur Road Palayamkottai, Tirunelveli Tamil Nadu 627002

For more details, contact the RI Licensing team at rilicensingservices@rotary.org or 847-866-4463. You may also contact Rajesh Anand, manager, Legal and Stewardship, at rajesh.anand@rotary.org.

Bharuch medical camp screens 5,500 people

Team Rotary News

IPDG Santosh Pradhan (R) and his wife Sunetra distribute nutrition kits to children at the medical camp.



A mega medical-cum-surgical camp was organised by RC Bharuch, RID 3060, in partnership with the Indian Medical Association, Indian Dental Association and Bharuch Homeopathy Association, in which 5,500 less privileged people were screened for general illnesses. Medicines were distributed.

The then DG Santosh Pradhan, AG Tushar Jinwalla, district collector Tushar Sumera, SP (Bharuch) Dr Leena Patil, and office-bearers of partner associations were present at the inaugural ceremony. “The main aim of the camp is to provide free consultations,

medicines to needy people, and refer them for specialised treatment or surgery, if necessary. We make sure that people who are referred for surgery get timely healthcare at the right time,” said Bharuch MLA Dushyant Patel, a Rotarian and event ambassador.

Around 215 doctors from various specialties and 300 health workers were present at the camp to treat patients. “Seven years ago, we started this annual medical camp realising the importance of healthcare for the poor. After every camp, we maintain a record of surgeries to be done and patients are sent to

the referred hospitals for follow-up procedures,” said Rachana Poddar, club secretary (2021–22).

Pre-event publicity

The camp was preceded by a month-long publicity campaign over social media, distribution of leaflets and the volunteers at the RCC Bharuch fanning out to nearby villages to spread the message of free medical treatment at the camp, said club president Dr Vikram Premkumar.

A team of paediatricians examined children. Around 1,500 nutritional kits and sufficient supplies of multivitamin supplements to last for a month were distributed to

malnourished children. “We have reached out to 2,150 children with nutrition kits so far and plan to distribute them throughout the year,” he said.

“We are thankful to Rtn Dushyant Patel, deputy chief whip of the Gujarat government, doctors and paramedical staff for their expertise, time and service,” said Anish Parikh, event chairman.

Maahiben Solanki, a beneficiary, was gifted a wheelchair at the camp. “Now I can move around better, go out of my home anytime I like and to school without being a burden to my parents who used to carry me earlier,” she gushed with pride. ■

Rotary's mission is to change lives

V Muthukumar

All the 39 district governors in India have done an amazing job by adding 20,000 new members in just one year (2021–22) as compared to a membership growth of 40,000 in the preceding 10 years, which only goes to show that RI mantras, *Grow more, do more* and *Each one, bring one*, have been a resounding success in our zones, said PRIP Shekhar Mehta speaking at an awards and thanks giving event hosted by RID 3231 in June at Kancheepuram, near Chennai.

He recalled his global tour with wife Rashi to see Rotary projects and meet heads of state during his

presidential year and found that “empowering girls has been the overarching goal of club activities around the world.” In Africa and different parts of the world, “I saw young women doing work with a shine in their eyes. In the 37 years of my Rotary life, I have never seen this much of emphasis on issues such as MHM, skill development and girls’ education as in the last year.”

Rotary clubs across India would have given over 10,000 bicycles to school girls, mostly in rural areas, to help them commute to and from school and prevent their dropout, Mehta said. “Women are half of

humanity, and they should have half the opportunities in the world. Men should ensure that women get equal opportunity in every field.”

TRF, the best for giving

If one is donating to TRF, he or she can decide on the way the money should be spent in Rotary, Mehta said. “Our Foundation is the best and most trustworthy charity in the world. The donor can decide where the money should go, be it for End Polio, water and sanitation, Happy Schools, or environment projects.” Fifty per cent of TRF giving comes back to the district as DDF in three years, and along

RID 3231 DG Nirmal Raghavan and his wife Nandhini felicitate RI President Shekhar Mehta and Rashi at the awards event held at Kancheepuram in June.



with a global partner the district's club can do a global grant project. "Every Rotarian must contribute to TRF every year as it is the vehicle of change for millions of people, for whom daily life is very tough going."

Service Above Self must be the credo of Rotarians for "we are on a mission to change millions of lives. It is a godsent opportunity as you have the power of Rotary to bring in that change and leave your footprints in the sands of time." When Indian PM Narendra Modi asked Rotary to celebrate June 25 as World Yoga Day during his inaugural address at the Rotary convention in Houston, he was recognising the power of Rotary to bring in impactful change, said Mehta.

The calibre of 20,000 Rotarians from seven RI districts in Tamil Nadu is much more than state ministers and officials, and "the chief minister

must seek opinion from Rotary governors on a development scheme or how to go about it." Decrying 'fake clubs' being chartered in some districts, he said creating new clubs for vote banks to get elected as governors must stop as "such clubs will not last long." While the Rotary India Humanity Foundation had set an annual target to install 125 dialysis machines across India, "DG J Sridhar, RID 3232, alone has put up 134 machines at Chennai hospitals in this year (2021–22), which is a remarkable feat," said Mehta.

Eight club presidents who have added over 25 new Rotarians were given gold pins; and 18 Rotarians, including a Major Donor, who had contributed over \$1,000 to TRF were honoured. Around 1,300 citations were given by DG Nirmal Raghavan (2021–22) to best performing clubs, presidents, secretaries and noteworthy

projects; apart from special recognitions to Rotarians and clubs for their singular contributions. Dr Praveen Raj, bariatric surgeon from Gem Hospital, Coimbatore, who has popularised the anti-obesity surgery, and G Saravanakumar from Minmini Printers, Kancheepuram, were given the Young Achiever Awards.

PDGs CR Chandra Bob, district trainer, A Sampathkumar, district counsellor, DGE JKN Palani, DGN P Bharanidharan and DGND M Rajan Babu were felicitated. "Around 400 Rotarians, including 86 club presidents, and their spouses took part in the awards ceremony. There are 96 clubs and 3,700 Rotarians as on date," said Prakash Sampath, chairman, Thanksgiving, from RC Arcot East. Last year, the district inducted 670 new members and chartered six new clubs, said C Baskaran, membership chair, RID 3231. ■

RC Dombivli inaugurates a Happy School

Team Rotary News

A decrepit zilla parishad school at Jambhurde village in Murbad taluk of Maharashtra was transformed into a Happy School by RC Dombivli, RID 3142, thus benefitting over 120 students.

Club president Ulka Savla (2021–22), project chairman Dr Shirali and coordinator Sanjeev Tambe made several visits to the school for planning material supply, labour and supervising the renovation work. "We chose this school as its condition was pathetic and the village has a population of 2,000," said past president Shankar Sathawane. A number of renovation work including setting up a main gate, repairing the roof, compound wall, building gender-segregated toilet blocks, computer room, e-learning kits and two smart TVs, library books with a bookshelf, a handwash station, water purifier and sports equipment were done in a phased manner.

During the inaugural, the then DG Dr Mayuresh Warke appreciated the club for completing the project without delay and following the guidelines of RILM, thus ushering in change in the lives of deprived students of this village. Gram panchayat sarpanch Vaishali Patil and zilla parishad



RID 3142 IPDG Dr Mayuresh Warke (third from L) with members of RC Dombivli at the inaugural of the Happy School.

education officer Shelawale expressed happiness that the school was upgraded and assured all further help.

President-elect Dr Pravin Sawant (2022–23) and CSR representative Sanjay Acharya were present at the inauguration of the school. ■



Taking baby steps, literally!

Preeti Mehra

A little innovation can make childcare an eco-friendly exercise.



Childbirth is a natural process, and normally all efforts are made to keep any intervention as close to nature as possible. Similarly, the agreed view among experts is that this principle should also hold true for parenting from the moment the child marks his or her presence in the world.

When a child is expected into the family, apart from traditional ceremonies, there is a scurry of activity to get together a whole lot of things that the newborn and mother would need. In many homes an entire nursery is planned for the infant.

For those who have a deep respect for mother nature and wish to go green, this is an opportunity to use sustainability as much as possible when nurturing your child. And the first step would be to breastfeed the baby for as long as possible. This is the most zero waste and healthy feeding option, cost-effective and needs no bottles or cups, though sometimes new mothers need a nursing pump to help them along. Even then, this is far better than resorting to formula milk, though sometimes due to unforeseeable situations, this option has to be exercised.

If for any reason your baby has to be bottle-fed, opt for sustainable bottles instead of plastic ones. Today there are several designs available in good stores. For non-toxic options, choose a glass bottle as most come with a silicone cover to protect the glass and helps the baby grip the bottle easily. There are also stainless steel bottles that have a silicone nipple attached to them. If plastic bottle is used, ensure that it is BPA (Bisphenol-A)-free. Inferior products could lead to plastic



done best by using material available at home. Used clothes can be transformed into pretty frills. Look around for a second-hand crib and dress it up in soothing colours. Or you could even make your own crib with natural materials such as bamboo and straw. All it needs is imagination and a bit of planning.

However, there are many second hand cribs available as parents can't use them beyond the first 18 months after which toddlers mostly move to a bed and the parents look around for new parents to hand them over. It is the same story with strollers. Instead of strollers ending up in landfills, it would be great if they could become part of a circular economy and could actively be passed on within the family, colony, or community when a child outgrows them.

Similarly hammocks can be made from old dupattas, or other pieces of cloth found at home.

Where there is a child, there is play time, but the topic of eco-friendly toys and accessories is an exhaustive one. Let's explore that in another issue.

The writer is a senior journalist who writes on environmental issues

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

leaching that is detrimental to the baby's health.

Later when the child moves on to a sipper make the same choice in the material.

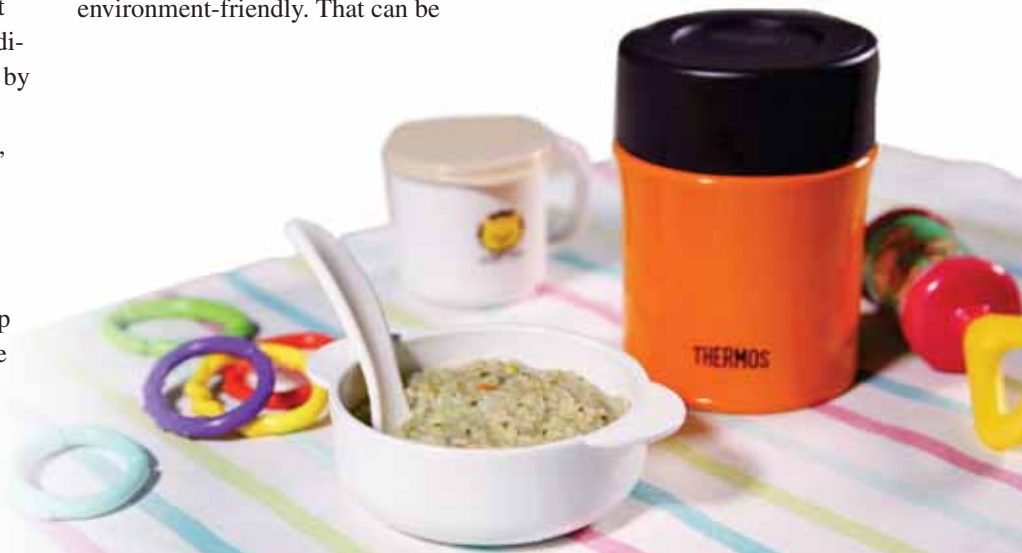
Let's move to the child's diet. Commercial baby food has been a common answer for many mothers. But making your own baby food at home is a better and safer option. Not only is it cheaper, it is also healthier. Most doctors and nutritionists recommend that you puree fruits and vegetables in the mixer at home. If this cannot be done on a daily basis, it could be prepared in batches for two-three days at a time and refrigerated. There is some great millet-based porridge that is traditionally made and available in almost every state in our country. When it comes to nurturing babies, the traditional wisdom of women justified by their own logic goes a long way.

Let's move to a baby essential, diapers. Urban stores are flooded with use and throw diapers and parents buy them because they are convenient. However, they are also non-biodegradable and end up cluttering the landfills. It would be prudent to keep a couple of packets of use and throw diapers for

emergencies or when taking the child out, but by and large if you could use diapers made from old soft organic cotton and wash them with a dash of an antiseptic solution, you would have done the environment a great favour. Some companies are making cotton diapers as well.

The same rule applies to bed-sheets, pillow covers, diaper bags and bibs. These could be made from old muslin saris. The softer cottons are better and healthier. Baby dresses made with eco-friendly materials are much more comfortable for an infant.

Building a nursery for an infant can be fun and you can be innovative. It is best to keep things simple and make it environment-friendly. That can be



Grocery kits for people hit by Godavari floods

Team Rotary News

Around 600 grocery kits were distributed by Rotarians from RID 3150 to the flood victims living on the banks of Godavari River in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana. People living at island villages were the worst affected as the river was in spate following the floods in July this year. Each kit consisted of rice, dhal, cooking oil and other essentials to last for 10 days for a family.

The flood relief project costing ₹ 5.4 lakh was jointly organised by RCs Mangalagiri, Tadepally and Guntur Aadarsh with the support of the Indian Red Cross Society, Mangalagiri chapter. “Around 3,000 people belonging to 600 families benefitted from our project,” said Tripuramallu Satish Babu, president, RC Mangalagiri. ■



Flood victims with their grocery bags provided by RID 3150 Rotarians.

Doing good with TRF help

Anaemia detection camp in Kolkata



Booklets on anaemia being distributed to women at the camp.

Seventy women were screened at a health camp for anaemia patients hosted by RC Salt Lake Metropolitan, RID 3291, under Project *Matri Raksha*. The club has partnered with RC Nidau-Biel, Switzerland, RID 1990, for this global grant project. While 43 had normal haemoglobin, 27 had low count requiring medication.

Those who had low count were given iron tablets, deworming for six months was advised and an anaemia awareness booklets were given to them. The camp was also attended by councilor Rajesh Chirimar, AG Mouli Nath Majhi, club president Archana Goyal (2021–22) and other members. ■

Rotary Breast Milk Bank saves infants

Team Rotary News

It is ten years now since the Rotary Breast Milk Bank was established in Thane. When it was set up in May 2012, it was the district's first such facility and the 10th in the country, says Dr Laxmikant Kasat, a paediatric surgeon and founder of the milk bank. He was then the president of RC Thane North End (then RID 3140) and the Thane Academy of Paediatrics (TAP). The bank has collected 793.5 litres of human milk from 16,426 mother donors, and has distributed 716.9 litres of milk benefitting 2,704 infants over these 10 years until Mar 2022, he adds.

The facility, that cost ₹12 lakh in 2012, was set up with the support of TAP, RC Mumbai Nariman Point and a district grant which was sanctioned by the then DG Vijay Jalan. It was later refurbished in 2019 with the help of RC Mumbai Elegant and CSR funding from Axis Electrical Component.

Any healthy lactating mother with a healthy baby can become a



PDG Vijay Jalan (R) and Dr Laxmikant Kasat (L) at the inauguration of the human milk bank in 2012.

donor. She should not be on harmful medication or radiotherapy; suffering from infectious diseases or behavioural disturbances; or be addicted to drugs, alcohol or tobacco, warns the paediatrician.

milk that had passed the tests is stored in a deep freezer. The containers are numbered and marked with the date of pasteurisation and other details.

Milk is distributed only upon receipt of order from a departmental head. Babies of non-lactating mothers; mothers with multiple births who cannot secrete adequate breast milk; abandoned and sick neonates; temporary interruption of breast feeding and babies whose mother died in the immediate postpartum period; low weight or premature babies and babies with deficiencies of sucking are given priority. Once discharged from the hospital, the relatives continue to get the milk daily from the bank till the stipulated six months after which the babies are usually weaned off breast milk. ■

How does the unit work

Breast milk is collected from donor mothers manually or using breast pumps into pre-sterilised, leak-proof containers provided by the milk bank. The milk from various donors is collected in sterile steel containers, pasteurised and refrigerated immediately. Samples from each container are tested and the safe



Breast milk collected from donor mothers being stored in a sterile facility.



Wordsworld

Utterly butterfly original



Sandhya Rao

For all its massive size, the most recently named winner of the International Booker Prize is perfectly offset by its light-weight, quirky writing.

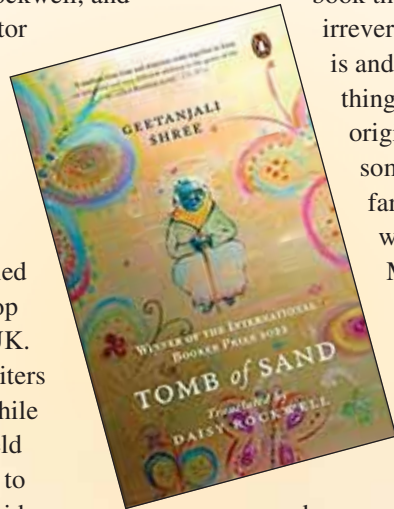
Yes, *Tomb of Sand* is utterly, butterfly original, all 700-odd pages of it. It's no wonder that Geetanjali Shree, whose novel has won the International Booker Prize this year, has infused the Indian literary scene with new energy. This is the first time that a novel originally written in Hindi (*Ret Samadhi*) and translated into English, has won international recognition on such a prestigious scale. Actually, any Indian language, save English. Of course, the credit goes equally to

the translator, Daisy Rockwell, and both author and translator share the award and the prize money.

There has been some confusion because of the word 'Booker'. To clarify: There is something called the Booker Prize, the top literary honour in the UK. Earlier open only to writers from the UK and erstwhile British colonies, the field was opened up in 2014 to include authors worldwide, so long as the work is in English and is published in the UK. Indian authors (or authors of Indian origin) who have won this Booker are VS Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Kiran Desai and Arvind Adiga. On the other hand, the International Booker, which is what *Tomb of Sand* has won, is awarded to a writer of any nationality for a book in English or translation into English. Recent winners include David Diop, Marieke Lucas Rijneveld, Jokha al-Harhi, Olga Tokarczuk, David Grossman and Han Kang. Stirring this pot for a few years was the Man Booker Prize, sponsored by the Man Group of companies.

At this point, a confession: If *Tomb of Sand* had not won international recognition, I might not have even heard of the book, let alone read it and that would have been entirely my loss.

What is this literary sensation that has got everybody all excited? For one, it belies its appearance. Despite being hefty along the lines of a *War and Peace* or *Ulysses*, *Tomb of Sand* has none of the darkness or density of the two classics, either in form or content. Geetanjali Shree has offered us a



book that's light, peppy, irreverent, a novel that is and does its own thing. Completely original. I have read some 500 pages so far, and it hasn't worn me down. My arms ache so I can read only a few pages at a time, but my mind is set afloat, my brain

dances, my eyes sparkle and sometimes I laugh out loud. The writing is bold, unique, almost stream-of-conscious, and the wordplay delightful. There is a plethora of references to people, places, events that trigger memories; the reader has no choice but to stop and reflect, even if you don't quite get what's going on.

Yet, it moves inexorably forward in the most peculiar manner, playing with words and meanings and contemporary references. You feel the author is not just telling her story in a fantastical manner, she's actually having fun in the process. Generally, you think of good writing as crafted very carefully,

My arms ache so I can read
only a few pages at a time,
but my mind is set afloat,
my brain dances, my eyes
sparkle and sometimes
I laugh out loud.

every word and sentence and thought put there in a certain way for a certain reason. *Tomb of Sand* so brilliantly camouflages the effort that you feel a sense of freedom as you read on. For instance, at one point when the novel plunges into the world of crows, there's this little passage: 'So there's still more left to the tale of our young crow, Jackanapes. But since we've said *so*, there must be a *just so* tale as well. Such a tiny word, *so*, but nonetheless not as insignificant as one might think. Important linguists, since the time of Sanskrit to the present moment of Annie Montaut, have been quizzing the meaning of *so*, wondering what makes it so puzzling.' The reference is to the book's French translator!

Then, around page 575 that I flipped open at random, there's mention of the painter Bhupen Khakkar: 'Many years ago, there was a painter named Bhupen Khakkar. He told stories with a brush. ... He knew that a story cannot be locked into a box, or a canvas, or a gaze.

... Because stories never end. They jump through windows and cracks or other such openings, or create them by shaking causing the earth to quake. From Bhupen's unspoken unwritten unfilled space. Where do they go?... Vanished. Unfettered, unworried. Customs thrown to the winds. Crossing borders. ... Arisen from samadhi. Religious fanatics and governments do not care for samadhis, nor stories, nor Bhupen Khakkar. They like to shut them all



up. In files, boxes trunks.' A few paragraphs later, there's a reference to writer Paul Zachariaah.

It's really not possible to say what this book is about because it seems to be about everything, about life. What we understand is that there's an elderly woman (Amma), clearly depressed, who sleeps facing the wall, back to the world, maybe grieving. Her son (Bade), daughter-in-law (Bahu), and daughter (Beti) don't know what to do with her because she responds to nothing. And then she does. In an interview, the author has talked about the old lady's movement from *nahi nahi* (no no) to *nayi nayi* (new new).

Perhaps the most remarkable thing about *Tomb of Sand* is how the absurd becomes the sane; at one level you think what on earth is she talking about and at another you feel yes, yes, that's absolutely right. The words dance crazily and yet make sense. In an interview to the *Financial Express* recently, the author said she never thought about readers while she was writing. And about her use of language she said, 'From my experience over the years and working with theatre, I think what I have learned is that language is an entity by itself. It is not just something to be used as a vehicle. Words have an identity of their own. It's the power of

language that really takes over and makes me write in certain ways.'

In the person of Amma, the author acknowledges the influence of writer Krishna Sobti on her work, of how she lived life to the fullest.

Those familiar with *Ret Samadhi* say that Daisy Rockwell has done a magnificent job with the translation, and the wordplay in particular. This encourages me to try and read the original. For

those interested, Geetanjali Shree's other books include *Mai*, *Hamara Shahar Us Baras*, and *Khaali Jagah*. It's not an easy choice for a read, but if you do decide to take it on, you will not be disappointed by *Tomb of Sand*.

Postscript: Alongside *Tomb of Sand*, I've been reading an author who has appeared in these pages before: Pallavi Aiyar. Although she is best known for journalistic nonfiction, she also has fiction titles featuring the adventures of a pair of cats called Soyabean and Tofu. I've been reading *Chinese Whiskers* (set in Beijing) and *Jakarta Tails* (set in Indonesia). A completely different experience from Geetanjali Shree, these two are easy reading that's down to earth but enjoyable. Besides, you get to know a little more about people and places in a straightforward way. And, there's a glossary for Chinese and Bahasa Indonesia words used in the books. And they're slim.

Still, also take a shot at the weighty one is what I suggest.

The columnist is a children's writer and senior journalist

RC Panruti — RID 2981



The club distributed footwear to students studying in a tribal school in a village near Panruti. The Rotarians also sponsored the annual school fees for the less privileged children.

RC Nasik — RID 3030



Portable incubator, CPAP and pulse oximeter were donated to the neonatal ICU of the Civil Hospital, Nashik. IPDG Ramesh Meher and DGE Asha Venugopal were present.

RC Karur — RID 3000



A groundwater sump (₹80,000) was donated to the Government HS School, Kaniyalampatti, for providing drinking water to students.

RC Ahmedabad Greater — RID 3054



Rtns Dr Monish Kohli and Dr Ritesh Dave conducted a dental check-up for 300 children at a school where an Interact club was chartered in June 2022.

RC Visakhapatnam — RID 3020



IPDG M Rama Rao inaugurated a digital library which was funded by A G Jagapathi Raju. This facility will bridge the knowledge gap among the people.

RC Surat East — RID 3060



In a two-day camp, 157 artificial limbs were distributed to 127 amputees. The event, held in association with RC Emory-Druid Hills, Atlanta, US, was funded by Kalamandir Jewellers.

RC Phagwara Midtown — RID 3070



Annapurna Day was celebrated at the Guru Nanak Mission Netarheen Birth Ashram in Phagwara. Club president Raj Kumar Heer was present.

RC Kushinagar — RID 3120



Ration kits were distributed to 60 families at Laxmipur Tola, Kasia, in association with RC Gorakhpur Midtown and Nine Foundation. Over 500 ration kits have been distributed so far.

RC Chandigarh — RID 3080



Ration kits were distributed to 30 HIV positive patients in Haripur village, Panchkula. A medical camp was held for them and medicines were given.

Rotary E-Club Pune Diamond — RID 3131



Reusable sanitary pads (₹1.5 lakh) were distributed to 500 women in a joint project with RCs Pune Cantonment and Ahmedabad Greater at the Jeevan Teerth Centre.

RC Kanpur Aryans — RID 3110



The marriage of Swati Gautam, daughter of a poor couple Vijay Gautam and Somvati, was sponsored by the club jointly with RC Kanpur Shikhar. Household items were gifted to the newly-wed couple.

RC Bombay Airport — RID 3141



Two classrooms and a lab were inaugurated on the newly-built second floor at the Adivasi Ashram School, Maswan village at Palghar.

RC Nizamabad — RID 3150



An anaesthesia workstation (₹7.28 lakh) was donated to the Government Hospital, Nizamabad. It is expected to do five surgeries a day.

RC Shimoga Central — RID 3182



Cash prizes were given to top scorers in the Class 10 board exams at the Shettykere Government High School.

RC Bailhongal — RID 3170



Over 500 cataract surgeries were done with the support of the General Hospital. The beneficiaries were given medicines and dark glasses.

RC Bangalore Downtown — RID 3190



A painting competition was held for Interactors at the Police Public School to mark World Environment Day with students displaying their awareness on ecology.

RC Mysore North — RID 3181



DG Prakash Karanth flagged off a digital video-equipped bus (₹35 lakh) and an excavator (₹32 lakh) during the installation of club president Jagadeesh SH.

RC Coimbatore Vadavalli — RID 3201



Along with RCC Vadavalli, the club members planted over 200 saplings at the Rotary Adarvanam, Peedampalli. Food was distributed at Anbu Illam, an old-age home.

RC Pollachi — RID 3203

Foley catheters (₹37,500) were donated to Dr Gowri, joint director of medical services, Coimbatore, by club president PTS Maheswar. It will benefit 500 patients.



RC Greater Tezpur — RID 3240

The house of an indigent lady which was washed away by floods in Balipara taluk of Assam was reconstructed. She thanked the club for the gesture.



RC Sivakasi — RID 3212

A fridge (₹14,000) was donated to Sivakasi GH for storage of medicines at the Maternity and Child Care ward.



RC Jabalpur Premier — RID 3261

An interactive session on dental and general health was held at the Ryan International School for 120 students. Dr Aatif Ansari spoke on oral hygiene.



RC Madras Central — RID 3232

Forty donors took part at a blood donation camp held at the Rotary Central VHS Blood Bank to mark the installation of new president KP Srikumar.



RC Jatni — RID 3262

An ambulance was flagged off at an eye hospital. Club president Rasiklal (2021–22) and president-elect Padarbinda Shaoo were present.



Compiled by V Muthukumar

A slew of projects was executed by RC Virudhunagar Elite, RID 3212, during the installation of its new club president KB Kamalasekaran and his team of office-bearers. PDG Arumuga Pandian was the chief guest at the event. The club will sponsor computer education of five girls at the CSC Computer Education at a project cost of ₹1.08 lakh.

Sarees were donated to 60 women (₹6,000) at the installation held at the SSK Mahal, Virudhunagar. “We sponsored 5,000 water bottles to students at the KVS HS School where around 4,600 children wore face mask of former chief minister K Kamaraj to enter the India Book of Records,” said Uma Maheswaran, club secretary. The project cost ₹18,500.

Youth Achievement Award was given to Deepak Chandru of KVS School for securing 199 out of 200 at the engineering entrance test, while nine-year-old Monitha Shri from Kshatriya Girls HS School was presented with Youth Excellence Award for her yoga skills. The club inducted three new members during the installation ceremony. During the installation of DG VR Muthu hosted by the club, PDG PNB Murugadoss gave a cheque for ₹40 lakh for The Rotary Foundation. ■

Multiple projects during club installation

Team Rotary News



DG VR Muthu receiving a cheque for ₹40 lakh from PDG PNB Murugadoss at the installation ceremony. Malarvizhi Muthu is seen on the right.



Nine-year-old Monitha Shri being awarded by PDG Arumuga Pandian during the club installation.

Happy Schools with Japanese help

Team Rotary News

Six government schools in Indore got a digital makeover with RC Indore Uptown, RID 3040, executing a global grant project worth \$77,500 to install 70 computers with software, six interactive panels having operating systems, six printers, UPS units for power back-up, tables and chairs for these equipment, apart from setting up drinking water systems and handwash stations for the institutions.

PRIP Kalyan Banerjee through his Term Gift and PRID Seiji Kita from RC Urawa East, Japan, RID 2770, are the major contributors to the Happy



DG Jinendra Jain inaugurates a Happy School in Indore. PDG Sanjeev Gupta is seen on his right.

Schools Project. For the successful completion of this project, DRFC Takeshi Nakagawa, DRF division chairman Saku

Fujimura, RC Urawa East president Toshiki Sano, past presidents Minoru Noguchi, Shigeru Saito, primary contact Shigeru

Matsumura and secondary contact Takashi Sugahara, all from RID 2770, Japan, have contributed in a timely manner. ■

RC Madras sets up dialysis centre

Tamil Nadu health minister Ma Subramanian inaugurated a dialysis centre set up by RC

Madras, RID 3232, in partnership with the Pushpavati Babulal Kamdar Charitable Trust and

Chandrakanth Mohanlal Tolia family. This is a global grant project with TRF contributing ₹99 lakh, following donations for this purpose from the club and Tolia family.

Nadi RCM Tolia Dialysis Centre at Madhavaram, a city suburb, has 12 beds and it can serve 36 patients a day. Set up at a cost of ₹2.5 crore, the Kamdar Charitable Trust has donated ₹1.08 crore and balance ₹43 lakh is met by contributions from others. Then DG J Sridhar, club president Mohan Raman, PDG JB Kamdar and government officials were present at the inauguration. ■



Tamil Nadu health minister Ma Subramanian inaugurates the dialysis centre in the presence of (from L) RC Madras IPP Mohan Raman, IPDG J Sridhar and PDG JB Kamdar.

The feminine art of gift-giving



TCA Srinivasa Raghavan

Gift-giving has always posed an insurmountable problem for me. When I first acquired a girlfriend about half a century ago, at the age of 24, I was amazed at how she could give different people different gifts which never failed to please them enormously. Mine, in contrast, evoked a mere thanks. So I have always envied people who come up with innovative ideas about gifts. My imagination stops at books and whiskey for men. For women, I immediately think of saris. Safe. Predictable. And boring, is how my wife describes it. She has also accused me of buying books that I want to borrow, whiskey that I want to drink and, in the early years of marriage when smoking was permitted by wives, cartons of cigarettes I could smoke! This, I must say, is substantially true. I can hardly wear a sari, can I?

But over the years I have been shown how to expand my mind. A string of girlfriends, two sisters and one wife have drilled into my head a simple truth: application of mind. And they get their gift-giving right because they spend hours thinking about what to give. Sometimes they spend a great deal of money on merely going to the place which sells it. Once, in 1976, I drove a friend 90 km, one way, to buy a bronze figurine about 6-8 inches tall. The figurine cost ₹125, the petrol ₹50 and

the lunch on the way back was ₹35. The gift was a super hit. It became a standard item for her and her friends for a year or two till they found something new.

But marriage solves many administrative problems such as gift-giving. I outsourced it to my wife. She knows exactly what to give who and how much to spend on it. Needless to say women get better and more expensive gifts. In the first few years of marriage, the benchmark was ₹100 plus minus 20 per cent. The plus was for women. Now it is ₹1,000 plus minus 25 per cent. Happily the percentage of our incomes spent on gifts has come down from about five per cent per cent annually to the equivalent of a bread pakora at roadside kiosks.

My wife has accused me of buying books that I want to borrow, whiskey that I want to drink and, when smoking was permitted by wives, cartons of cigarettes I could smoke!

And, to make things simpler, two new gift items have appeared in the market in the last decade or so — wine and potted plants. Both offer a huge range in content and price. In Gurgaon where I live, you can get a bottle of wine for as little as ₹1,000 and a potted plant for just ₹100. Both have an uplifting quality and believe it or not, there is no transport cost. The shops selling both are within walking distance. If there is a gift-giving heaven on earth, it's here in Gurgaon.

But just as every solution must have a problem, having to choose between different wines and different plants is unexpectedly hard because you don't really know what you are buying. In the case of wines, we go by label and price. In the case of plants, by the foliage and size of the pot. The wine, however, can be lousy and the plant, no more than a leafy branch stuck into a pot of mud. Both are thrown away after a couple of days and the person who you gave the gift to thinks you are a stingy fool. Total waste of money and goodwill.

So recently I proposed that we simply transfer cash electronically. The recipient could buy whatever he or she wanted. The idea was squashed with great force. "You idiot," said my wife, "why do you think I go to such pains to remove the price tag?" ■

DGs on RNT's Executive Committee (2022–23)



From L: DG N Nandakumar (Treasurer, Governors Council), DG Dushyant Choudhary (Chairman, Governors Council), DG Venkatesh H Deshpande (Secretary, Governors Council) and DG Dinesh Kumar Sharma (Advisor, Governors Council).

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