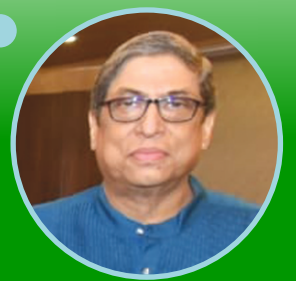




Rotary
Garden Reach



IMAGINE
ROTARY



LIGHT

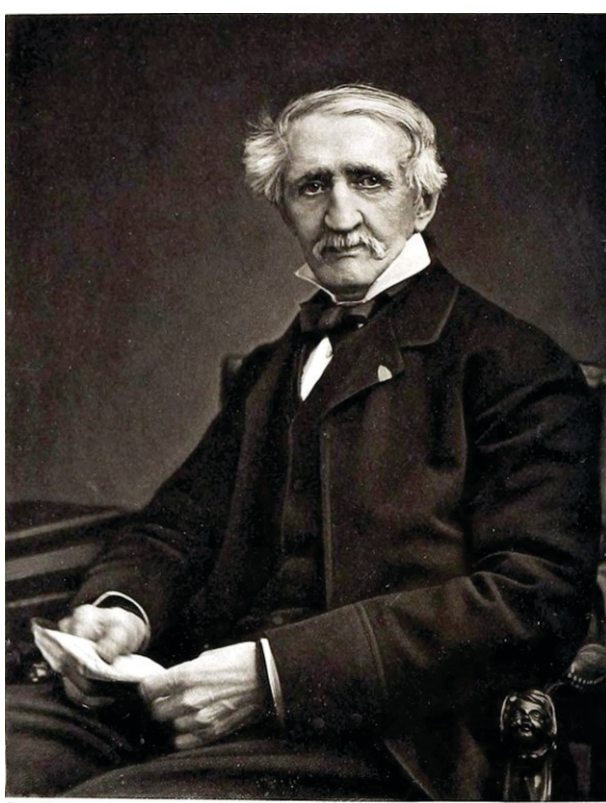
WEEKLY BULLETIN November 5th, 2022 - Vol. 45 No. 16

President - Rtn. Abinash K Singh • Secretary - Rtn. Debasis Das • TREASURER - Rtn. Chiranjib Sha • Editor - PP Tanu Roy

History might have been a bit different

On April 16th, 1853, the first passenger train in India ran from Bori Bunder Station to Thana but had it not been for some unusual circumstances, history might have been a bit different.

In the 1830s the earliest proposals for a railway started appearing in the Madras province where there was a growing demand for cotton for its textile industries. Sir Arthur Thomas Cotton proposed a railway connecting Bombay to Madras and the idea was well received.



Arthur Cotton

Meanwhile, in the Bengal province, the idea of commercial railway lines was mooted by businessman Dwarkanath Tagore. To facilitate the movement of coal between Raniganj and Salkea Ghat in Howrah a survey was taken, one of the first of its kind. After the initial planning and promotional phase, a couple of companies came up to handle the projects in various regions of the country. The GIPR (Great Indian Peninsula Railway) was incorporated in 1849 to connect the western peninsular cities to Bombay and Madras.

The EIR (East India Railway) was formed in 1845 with members like Rowland Macdonald Stephenson taking up the task of forging



connections between Calcutta and various commercial points in the eastern part of the country. Work began vigorously in laying the tracks; in October 1850 the foundation stone was laid for the GIPR line in Sion, Bombay. By the end of 1852, the line between Thana to Masjid Bandar of South Bombay was completed.

Trial runs were held between Byculla and Parel stations and at the beginning and end of 1852, the locals were quite awestruck at the sight of the steam engine roaring through their backyard and fields, they named it 'lokhandi rakshas' or a fire demon in Marathi. After a few months in April of 1853 after much deliberation and a few trial runs, the first train made its maiden run from Bori Bunder to Thana. Carrying almost 400 passengers in 14 carriages; the train made the 33 km journey in about 75 minutes.



While it was jubilation time for the GIPR on the eastern part of the country for EIR things were not going so smoothly. By the end of 1852, they had completed 61 km of track and were scheduled to have the first passenger run in the same year as GIPR. There were however some complications, the line went through French-occupied Chandernagore and it took a while to get the required permissions. Then the ships which

were bringing the carriages sank at the Sandheads just off Diamond Harbour.

The carriages then had to be locally built which caused a huge delay, adding more to this delay the ship HMS Dekagree which was bringing the locomotive lost its way and went to Australia. It only reached Calcutta in 1854. After the trials were held the inaugural commercial run from Howrah to Hooghly happened on 15th August 1854. Regular Services were introduced from the same day, morning and evening with stoppages at Bally, Serampore, and Chandannagore. A fortnight later, the line was extended up to Pandua, and within six months, laying of tracks up to Raniganj, Both the sections, Pandua to Burdwan and Burdwan to Raniganj, were thrown open for passenger and freight services on 3rd February 1855.

If you ever visit the Howrah station today, you might notice that platform number 16 is oddly missing, that space is reserved for freights and closed for passenger movement, many believe that is where the first train started its Zero mile journey.

Today is our 2196th

Members attended last RWM: 11

Birthdays Greetings :

Nov 1st : Spouse Sunil, Husband of PE Dr. Mahamaya
Spouse Susmita, Wife of Rtn. Sudip



Today is our "Bijoya-Diwali Utsav"

Presidential Message

November 2022

Being asked to Imagine Rotary can seem like a big, heady exercise, but the most important element of it is something quite small, even personal.

Not too long ago, Rotary members were expected to perform our acts of service quietly. I understood and appreciated the thought behind that — humility is a wonderful trait, and we should continue to nurture it in other ways.

But keeping Rotary to ourselves has a cost. and by sharing our Rotary moments, we are being generous with others and giving them an opportunity to understand the impact of Rotary.

It brings to mind that wonderful aphorism: “People will forget what you said. People will forget what you did. But people will never forget how you made them feel.”

So how do we make people feel Rotary? The best way is to share our Rotary moments. We have all had them — when the ordinary collides with intention to create something extraordinary.



Some people have those Rotary moments the first time they go to a meeting. For others, it can take years, before seeing the joy in the eyes of someone we serve. Or perhaps in hearing from another member something that hit close to home.

As Nick and I share this journey, we are amazed at the work you are performing and the lives that are transforming. Throughout the year, I’m going to share with you the sights and the stories that made those tours meaningful for us.

I hope you can do the same in your corner of Rotary. It can be something you share in meetings or on social media. For the most savvy and ambitious, it could be an event you publicize with local media. Even sharing your stories with friends has impact.

We need ambassadors for Rotary’s message and our dreams for a better world. The best ambassadors are

you. The more you share stories — and share them from the heart — the more you encourage others to partner with us, to join us, and to stay.

To give you just one small example, in the months ahead, I will be turning over this column to Rotary members who will share their personal stories as they relate to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organization. It's important that we hear these stories directly from the people who experienced them as a way of feeling the importance of DEI for the future of Rotary.

In everything we do, what people feel about Rotary will shape our future. I can only imagine what you will inspire through the stories you'll tell.

Why I support The Rotary Foundation

Edward Hicks, a member of the Rotary Tulsa, Oklahoma

I first became acquainted with The Rotary Foundation and its Fellowship for Undergraduate Study Abroad in 1970, as a sophomore at the University of Oklahoma. My faculty adviser suggested I apply for the fellowship. Little did I imagine how much it would change my life. I used the fellowship to study Economics at the University of Melbourne in Australia during the 1971 academic term.



Australia was very far from Oklahoma. There were no cell phones or internet service available for the typical college student. There were one-page aerograms which carried news to and from home that was already over a week old by the time it reached the reader. International telephone calls were few and far between and could quickly deplete a student's discretionary budget.

Fortunately, the family of my Rotarian host and the Fitzroy Rotary Club quickly made me feel at home by welcoming me to the beautiful city of

Melbourne. Many Rotarians in Melbourne and other areas graciously invited me to their homes, businesses, and sporting events so that I could get a taste of the culture down under.

Melbourne University was on a trimester system and the breaks between the sessions and occasional weekend trips provided ample time for me to travel and become acquainted with other parts of Australia. I was able to spend time in all major Australian cities except Perth. My host club, Fitzroy, used their contacts to make sure I always had accommodations and a host for my travels during the academic breaks. I was also very fortunate to be able to attend the Rotary International Convention which was held in Sydney in 1971.

Upon my return to the United States, I concluded my undergraduate degree and enrolled in Law School at the University of Oklahoma. A year or so later I received a call from the chief executive of the telephone company in Oklahoma. He was a member of the Oklahoma City Rotary Club and was chair of their Rotary Foundation Committee. He explained that his speaker who was to talk about the Foundation had to cancel due to an emergency. He asked if I could come and talk about my experience in Australia. It was finals week, but I did not have a test that day. So perhaps remembering the dozen Service Above Self talks I had heard at various Australian Rotary clubs, I could not refuse.

After graduating from Law School, I served as the head of the Contracts and Real Property Division of the city attorney's office in Tulsa. After 10 years there, I spent 25 years on the bench as a trial judge for the state.

Shortly after I moved to Tulsa, my father (who had become a Rotarian after I had returned from Australia) met the gentleman who I had helped by agreeing to present a talk. This Rotarian contacted a member of the Tulsa Rotary Club and insisted that he sponsor me as a member. I accepted the invitation and joined on 11 October 1976. Forty-six years later, I am still an active member.

I support the Rotary Foundation because it made my life better. And I will continue to support the Rotary Foundation and my club's foundation because they are working in new and important ways to improve the lives of people around the world.

Mumbai Rotary comes to aid of a stranded student

Jaee Bhilare

I am a student at Amity University in Mumbai, India. I have routinely been taking the bus from Pune to Mumbai for the past two years. But a few weeks ago, I had the most unexpected journey.

My bus broke down and I was dropped off at a food court near Khalapur Toll. I saw this private bus parked opposite us. I didn't know what to expect, but decided there would be no harm in asking for help. So I approached a group of ladies and asked if they had an extra seat on their bus.



From the very first, they were extremely compassionate. Shivani Bansal consulted with all of her friends, and within a few minutes, they had agreed to give me a seat, drop me off, and began helping me with my bag.

Once aboard, I realized that it was a private charter by the Rotary Deonar. They were returning from a picnic fellowship at Mahabaleshwar, Maharashtra. I talked with several individuals of different ages and experiences, and met Tanisi Jaydeep, a daughter of one of the Rotary members, who is studying the same subject as I am.

Although I didn't know any of them, I instantly felt safe and comfortable. They were fun and kind and the entire bus had this family vibe. I feel women have a sixth sense and they know when something isn't right. I never felt that throughout the journey.

I have never been a part of Rotaract and this was my first interaction with Rotary members. But it is honestly something I will never forget.








I hope I can pass forward the help I received.

Seven ideas to celebrate World Children's Day in your community

Claudia Urbano, Service & Engagement Senior Communications Specialist at Rotary International

World Children's Day takes place each year on 20 November. It is UNICEF'S global day of action for children, by children, marking the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The theme for 2022 is **"Inclusion, for every child."** Kids will stand up for a more equal, inclusive world. UNICEF is calling on partners and supporters to share a positive message of equality and inclusion for every child. Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation are one of UNICEF'S largest partners for polio eradication

since 1988. You and your club can help raise awareness about World Children's Day. Here are some ideas:

-  **Partner with one or more Interact clubs in your district to develop shared workshops and projects that raise awareness of the importance of child rights.**
-  **Engage in Youth Service.** *As one of the five Avenues of Service, Youth Service recognizes the importance of empowering youth and young professionals through leadership development programs.*
-  **Turn the world blue.** *Show your support for child rights by wearing something blue or changing your profile picture online on World Children's Day.*
-  **Help children know their rights.**
-  **Invest in Rotary's young people.** *Review Rotary's youth protection resources for clubs and districts that participate in youth programs to foster a safe and positive environment for young people.*
-  **Take this short course** *on child rights and why they matter to transform and/or refresh your understanding of child rights and a child rights approach, introduce you to UNICEF's mandate as it relates to child rights, and inspire you to apply a child rights lens to our everyday work and life*
-  **Help children 'take over' high-visibility** *roles in media, politics, business, sport, and entertainment normally held by adults to shine a spotlight on issues that matter to them.*

Post your project on Rotary Showcase to inspire Rotary members around the world to take on similar initiatives. You can also share your project on social media using your club hashtag (**#Rotary #Rotaract or #Interact**) and **#WorldChildrensDay**.

The Sundarbans: Disaster, Damage and Displacement

Abhijit Chakraborty

'If you ever need an essay to be written on how to rebuild houses, let me know,' said Akhil Maity, a resident of Gobardhanpur village, with a forced smile in a bid to hide his pain. 'I have rebuilt my house at least 9 to 10 times. Can you see that area on the river? I used to live there once. The water keeps swallowing my house, and we keep receding back.'

The waterbody Akhil pointed at, some 500 meters away was the Bay of Bengal. Akhil's village (on G-Plot island, Patharpratima Block) could be said to be the southernmost tip of the world's largest river delta— the Sundarbans. Apart from Gobardhanpur village, Baliara and Kusumtala villages on Mousuni Island (Namkhana Block), and Bakkhali and Shibpur on Sagar Island, are heavily affected from riverbank erosion and rising sea levels. This riverine marshland is in a constant state of flux. Rivers and rivulets change their courses continuously. Saline water inundate homes and agricultural fields twice every day during the high and low tides. Sudden appearance of sand bars in the midst of river channels or swift erosion of river banks is a natural phenomenon. Data shows the Sundarbans have lost more than 400 square kilometres of land in the last 100 years. Islands like Lohachara and Suparibhanga have totally disappeared from maps. Erosion has reduced Ghoramara Island to a mere 4.43 square

kilometres from 8.51 square kilometres. Once home to 40,000 people, Ghoramara has faced mass exodus due to habitat loss. The 2011 census counted only 5,000 odd people still struggling on the island.



The Sunderbans comprises 54 inhabited islands out of total 102 islands on the Indian side. The delta stretches into neighbouring Bangladesh and has been recognised by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site for its outstanding biodiversity and ecological significance for both countries. Although located in a swamp, population density in the Sundarban islands is high. Many

small-scale industries operate here. Unscrupulous owners of brick-kilns and bheris (pond for pisciculture) often make holes in embankments to harvest river water in their premises. The river water brings in fish, which help pisciculture, while the alluvial silt provide raw material for the brick kilns, totally free of cost. However, such kind of illegal activities weaken the embankments and ultimately they get breached.

The Sunderbans delta is formed by the River Ganga entering the Bay of Bengal. In this last phase of its journey, the river deposits huge amount of silt on river beds. Long-term silt accumulation has been raising the water level gradually. At present, villages are just about 1.5 to 3 meters above the average sea level. During the full moon or the new moon, when tides can reach five to six meters high, many villages get flooded, and sometimes entire villages have collapsed and sunk without trace. Crude mud embankments form the only protection from the high water level. Though concrete embankments were constructed at some places after Cyclone Aila, they are in very poor condition or still incomplete. The danger of being submerged by rising water levels is all too real for people living here.

‘We used to live by the river. We used to farm our land nearby. The river took everything away. Then we started living at the head of 12 Sowel. After Cyclone Aila (2009), increased riverbank erosion ate up our house. Displaced since then, we came here 7-8 years ago. Until last year, our new house used to get flooded too. Water entered even through the windows. This year we could stop the flooding by increasing the height of the hut. Where shall we go? We need a place to live peacefully with our children,’ said Sheikh Sadek, Sheikh Naju, Asma Bibi and others of Baliara village on Mousuni Island.

Tropical cyclones have become a recurring feature in the Sundarbans in recent times. Three deadly cyclones hit the Sundarbans in the last decade; each more destructive

than the one before. In 2009, Aila made landfall hitting 110 km/hour wind speeds. In November 2019, Bulbul recorded wind speeds as high as 130-135 km/hour. Super cyclone Amphan hit in May 2020, clocking wind speeds of 185 km/hour, highest ever recorded in the state. During Aila, embankments collapsed in more than 100 places, inundating several islands. As a result of increase in salinity in the soil, farmlands have lost soil fertility. Now people can only catch a few fish and crabs or gather sticks from the forest in the once rich cultivable lands. Thousands have lost their lands, homes and jobs, and have become 'climate refugees'.

Dr Kalyan Rudra, Chairman of West Bengal Pollution Control Board, explains the plight of the Sundarbans in so many words, 'Water level of the Bay of Bengal is rising faster than other seas. Moreover, the regular coastal subsidence along the Bengal coastline has worsened. The coastal land is subsiding at a rate of 2.9 mm every year. When we combine the two factors of coastal land subsidence and rising of seawater level (3.6 + 2.9), we find that water in the Bay of Bengal (in Bengal basin) is rising by 6.5 mm each year. In short, the sea is advancing rapidly. A 2012 report from the Centre for Science and Environment says that the Bay of Bengal is warming at a rate of 0.500 per decade, while temperature of other seas is rising at a rate of 0.070. This is the reason for increasing number of cyclones occurring in the Bay of Bengal.'

After Cyclone Aila hit in 2009, the West Bengal Government initiated a plan to construct a series of embankments with a low slope angle. The reason for keeping the slope at a low angle was to allow embankments to withstand the immense pressure of water hitting it and the lashing by high-speed winds. The construction of this kind of embankment requires a lot of land. Petty local politics made people unwilling to give up their land for the embankments. As a result, concrete embankments could not be erected at many places. Emergency situations are met by ad hoc measures like raising the height of the embankment or by covering bamboo poles and bamboo fences(darma) with mud. More than 90 per cent of embankments in the Sundarbans are still made of soft alluvial clay.

'What is the solution?' I ask Dr Rudra. 'If we build an embankment after vacating a wide area where the tidal waves are active (the intertidal space), we can live in peace for many years. We have to plant mangrove seedlings in that intertidal space. This will ensure that the mangrove forest bear the brunt of huge waves coming from the sea. It was observed during Aila, Bulbul, and Amphan cyclones that islands having thick mangrove covering were less damaged. As the cyclone hovered over the mangroves for a long time, it weakened the force of the wind as well. Many trees must have got uprooted, but new trees grow on their own in undisturbed jungles. So, it is not that grave a danger. Rather it has been proven again and again that only a mangrove forest can protect local settlements from disasters.'

Sundarban enthusiast Jyotirindranarayan Lahiri asks, 'Why should the Sundarbans be

a slave to destiny? Why should anyone who lives next to one of the most famous forests in the world consider himself unfortunate?’ Jyotindra has experience of running an NGO in the Sundarbans for about a decade. He adds from his own experience, ‘Schools have to impart practical knowledge to students as to how to manage natural disasters (through mock drills), and teach them methods of survival. It is necessary to recognise that people living in the Sundarbans inhabit a disaster-prone zone and take preventive measures accordingly. For example, the recent Amphan cyclone showed that loss of life could be mitigated to a great extent if people took shelter in the Flood Centres during the storm.’

The Sundarbans is a liminal space: a space in transition, neither land nor water. What is created one day is destroyed the other. The Sundarbans is beautiful, but it is also dangerous. One cannot fight against nature every day, but that is what the people living here must do to live, blurring differences of ethnicity and religion in their daily struggle for survival. How many times can a person build his house from scratch? Every year the sea eats up little more land from beneath their feet or a cyclone strikes them from the sky above. This part of India is not part of the economic growth story, but the people of the Sundarbans deserve our immediate attention, because theirs is an epic story of survival against all odds.

Minutes of the 2195th RWM held on October 25th, 2022 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Abinash called the RWM to order and requested to rise for the National Anthem.
2. It was announced that on October 26th, Clothes distribution at Madhyakalyanpur to 40 elderly and needy women.
3. Rtn. Dr. BN Jha in his mother's name donated for further studies to, two bright students from Amta.
4. President announced that on November 5th, the club will have its Bijoya-Diwali Utsav. The registration of the same was discussed.
5. Medical Project at Daspur will be held on November 13th, 2022. Beneficiaries are small child & elder women.
6. 2nd Club Assembly will be held on November 8th, 2022 at the Club venue.
7. Club Secretary, Rtn. Debasis conducted Club business.
8. Minutes of the last RWM were confirmed. President terminated the meeting.