

BOND | BUILD | BRING CHEER



WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS | ISSUE 21 | November 24, 2024



Transformation of Street Walls by Interactors

Dear RCMers.

It has been estimated that 12,000 people in India die every year because of the unavailability of blood!

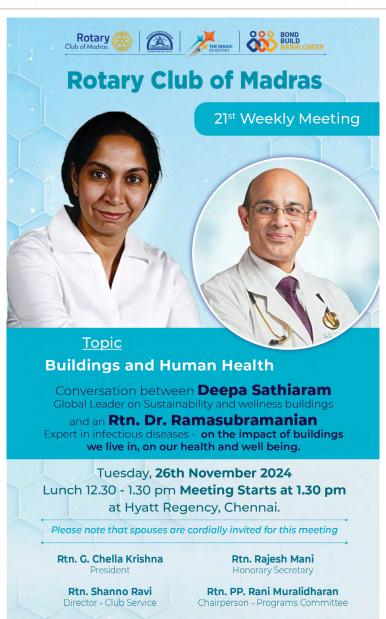
This issue covers RCM's ongoing efforts in blood donation.



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# IGHTHOUS

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# Rotary Club of Madras (RCM) Minutes of the 20th Weekly Meeting held on 19-11-2024

at Hyatt Regency, Teynampet, Chennai

### **Call to Order**

The meeting commenced at 01.20 PM.

Sergeant at Arms, Rtn. Jayant Hemdev, collared President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, who then called the 20th weekly meeting of the Rotary Club of Madras to order and requested all members to rise for a silent invocation.

### **Confirmation of Previous Minutes**

The President sought confirmation for the 19th weekly meeting minutes, which was passed and adopted by the members.

### Welcome and Introductions

President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna welcomed the Visiting Rotarians:

- Rtn. V. Nitya Kalyani from Rotary Club of Chennai Premier.
- Rtn. K. Banumati from Rotary Club of Chennai Premier. Guests and Probus Club members were welcomed thereafter.

### **Acknowledgments and Appreciations**

The President thanked Rtn. PE. Nikhil Raj for chairing the previous meeting in the President's absence.

Rtn. R. Ravishankar was commended for his efforts in rebuilding Rotary Nagar.

Rtn. Abdul Kareem Sait, Rtn. P. Ravishankar and Ann. Poornima Visvanathan were recognized for organizing the diabetes camp.

Rtn. M. Balasubramanian was applauded for mentoring the annual golf fundraiser, contributing ₹5 lakhs as a start up fund and obtaining special permissions from Tamil Nadu Golf Federation (TNGF).

Rtn. M. Sesha Sai was profusely praised for successfully leading 65 Interactors on a Malaysian Youth Exchange Programme.

### Youth Exchange Programme Reflections

Three Interactors shared their experiences:

- S. Aadhiya, President of the Interact Club of Vidya Mandir Estancia, highlighted cultural and educational visits, teamwork and personal growth.
- Advik Venkatesh from Sherwood Senior Secondary School shared how the trip enhanced his interpersonal skills and provided memorable experiences.
- Priyadarshan from Sri Sankara Vidyashramam, Thiruvanmiyur appreciated the opportunity to explore Malaysian culture and hone his soft skills.

### **Special Recognition**

Monish: Awarded ₹5000 for creating a video documenting the Malaysian exchange programme.

A group photo was taken to commemorate the event.

### **Nomination for District Governor 2027-28**

Nomination of Rtn. PP. Dr. Vijaya Bharathi Rangarajan for the position of District Governor for the year 2027-28 was announced. Rtn. Dr. Vijaya Bharathi expressed gratitude, emphasizing the club's legacy and its upcoming centennial celebrations.

### **World Toilet Day**

Rtn. PP. S.N. Srikanth highlighted that November 19 is celebrated as World Toilet Day .

He elaborated on the significance of World Toilet Day, emphasizing the global sanitation crisis and Rotary's contribution to addressing this issue.

As a Director of the WASHRAG (Water and Sanitation Rotary Action Group), he shared insights on improving sustainability in Rotary's WASH projects. He urged the club to adopt Failure Reports for better project evaluation and future improvements.

### Rtn. PP. George B. Cherian announced:

A Royal RCM Quiz to be held at Amir Mahal on December 1, 2024, led by quizmaster Mr. Asif Ali.

He expressed gratitude for the success of a recent blood donation camp at Sri Sankara Vidyashramam, Thiruvanmiyur, which raised 101 units. Special thanks was extended to the Interact Club of Sri Sankara Vidyashramam and contributing Rotarians.

### **Induction of New Member**

Rtn Anand Vurgese introduced the new member Ms. Roshan Cyrus Poncha, a Chartered Accountant with significant contributions to theatre, music, and community service.

Ms. Poncha was formally inducted into the Rotary Club of Madras and welcomed by all members.

### Secretary's Announcement

Secretary Rtn. Rajesh Mani acknowledged the generous sunshine contributions from Rtn. Dr. Anisha Ashok (₹3,000) and Rtn.Girdhar Hemdev (₹5,000).

Rtn. Rajesh Mani informed members about the next meeting on November 26, 2024, at the Hyatt Regency, featuring a discussion on The Impact of Buildings on Health and Wellbeing.

### **Introduction of Chief Guest**

Rtn. Bhupinder Singh, Assistant Governor, introduced the Chief Guest, Col. Bala Karthik, Shaurya Chakra awardee.

Col. Karthik's illustrious military career includes:

- Service in the Special Forces of the Indian Army.
- Extensive operational experience in Kashmir and the Northeast.
- Leadership in multiple adventurous expeditions, including raising the Indian flag at the South Pole.
- Recognition through numerous awards, including the Shaurya Chakra and the Army Commander's Commendation Card.

### **Chief Guest Address**

Col. Bala Karthik shared inspiring experiences from his military career, including operational challenges and leadership lessons.

### **Closing Remarks**

President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna thanked the chief guest, members and guests for their participation.





The Lighthouse | 24 November 2024











## A Braveheart of the Indian Army Speaks

t the end of the speaker's talk at the RCM meeting on the 19th Nov 2024, I headed towards the exit as always. I had reached the reception of the hotel, but something kept pulling me back. It kept playing on my conscience that I did not shake hands with this personality and I would regret this life long.

I am so glad that I could walk back and personally shake hands with Colonel Bala Karthik and tell him that it was an honour to do so. This was the profound effect the speaker had on the minds of all present at the meeting.

Shaurya Chakra winner Colonel Bala Karthik, born in 1983 in Madurai, is a decorated officer of the Indian Army. It is said about him that, out of the 41 years of his life, he has proudly been in uniform for 31 years, as he has always taken a keen interest in military activities since his childhood days in school.

He completed his training at the National Defence Academy and the Indian Military Academy in 2005 and was commissioned into the Special Forces of the Indian Army. With his grit and determination, he joined the very elite Para Special Forces of the Indian Army at the young age of 21.

He has been passionately involved in the training of Para Commandos in Bangalore and has also had a stint in North-East India. Colonel Bala Karthik is an ace marksman and a sniper. He holds the proud distinction of

hoisting the Indian Flag at the South Pole at -50°C.

Colonel Bala Karthik described the Special Forces as a part of the Indian Army that has unconventional

warfare capabilities. It is trained for special operations and receives training in highly specialised tactical equipment. As it is involved in many clandestine and high-risk operations, the unit's visibility is low, but the risk exposure is proportionately high.

All ranks of this force are physically and mentally toughened to adapt and perform in the most hostile and inhumane conditions, whilst preserving the honour of the country. The credit for the success of many heroic operations in the

country (e.g., The Mumbai Attack, Anti-Piracy Operation, Surgical Strikes, operations in the North East) goes to this force.

Colonel Bala Karthik proudly believes that it is the sweat, blood and efforts of the military forces that allow the citizens of the country to sleep peacefully.

strategy. The officer explained his first stint in the Kashmir vallev. where he was introduced to techniques like terrain mapping, camouflage dressing, identifying choke points and getting into the minds of the enemy.

The soft-spoken Colonel Bala Karthik was kind enough to share his experience of a deadly operation in Kashmir in 2008 for which he was

> awarded Shaurya Chakra. This 8-day-long operation recorded as one the longest gun fights to flush out terrorists in the valley.





a credible threat to disrupt the railway line work that had commenced in Kashmir. The army received concrete intelligence that anti-insurgent activity was being planned by the (P.O.K.) Pakistan-occupied Kashmir militants to sabotage this event. A team of 16 under the officer, Bala Karthik was readied to search for and eliminate this threat.

The operation was around a lake at the foothills of a mountain peak north of Srinagar. The intelligence indicated 13 terrorists. As the operation involved taking on the enemy having the advantage of height, normally the army would deploy its officers at the ratio of 10:1. However, the brave team of 16 under its officer took on this challenge as they considered themselves "Ek Baraabar Bees "(translated as each commando is equivalent to 20).

The operation started with a helicopter drop followed by an 18-hour gruelling trek in extremely challenging terrain. The team, with their rucksacks, moved forward and upward on a 15,500 ft snow-clad mountain. The task was made further difficult by the fact that it was devoid of cover, had very limited foot-holding and the temperatures dropped to sub-zero in the late evenings. Receiving the precise location of the terrorists, owing to a Satellite Phone Intercept, the team started triangulating it.

The enemy was spotted on the 24th of September and the hunt commenced. The search party lost one of its brave soldiers, who were peppered by seven bullets. It was heart-wrenching as the Colonel revealed that despite this, the wounded soldier kept supporting and pushing his team forward till his last breath.

The gunfight dragged on for 8 long days and the unit had to resort to unconventional strategies and on-the-spot improvisation. This unit ultimately eliminated all the terrorists one after the other and the operation was successful. Huge amounts of explosives, tools, weapons, dry fruit rations and currencies etc., were recovered from the bodies of the terrorists.

The Indian Army takes pride in its humanity even after such a deadly kill. The operation concluded with the team bringing the bodies down the hill and providing them with a dignified funeral as per the religious customs of the terrorists.

This operation won the team many awards including an Ashoka Chakra (Posthumous), three Shaurya Chakras, two Sena Medals and four Commendation Cards. The unit also received a proud unit citation during India's Republic Day ceremony in 2009.

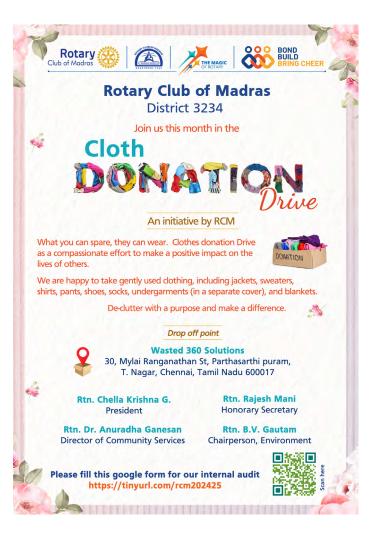
Colonel Bala Karthik shared his takeaways and learnings from numerous such operations. The officers of the Indian Armed Forces imbibe the following skills as

they serve their nation with such deadly and determined special operations:

- Knowledge of Terrain
- Local Awareness
- Determined Leadership
- Speed vs Suspense
- Offensive Spirit
- Fire Discipline
- Command & Control
- Patience
- Improvisation
- Act vs React
- Check. Check and Check

The members of RCM gracefully offered this very special guest a standing ovation as he ended his presentation with his favourite Zig Ziglar quote, "Success is when Opportunity meets Preparation."

Rtn. Himanshu Budhia





# Blood Donation Camp at Sri Sankara Vidyashramam

n 16th Nov 2024, the Interact Club of Sri Sankara Vidyashramam, under the umbrella of the Rotary Club of Madras, successfully organized a blood donation camp on the school premises.

This initiative noble was inaugurated by Rotary Club's President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, in the presence of Mrs. S. Sashirekha principal of Sri Sankara Vidyashramam, Rtn. A.M. Visvanathan Director of Community Service 2 (Health), Rtn. PP. George B. Cherian, Chairperson of Blood Donation Committee, Rtn. Rinku Mecheri Co-chairperson of Blood Donation Committee and Rtn. Sumit Kumar Kalra.

This blood donation camp marks the 23rd consecutive year it has been held at the school, a significant milestone in the Interact Club's 25year history.

### **Highlights of the Event:**

The Special highlight of this camp was the pledge from nearly 30 teachers of Sri Sankara Vidyashramam, who voluntarily came forward to donate blood, setting a strong example for the students.

We would like to thank the faculty coordinators, Ms. Punitha & Ms. Rajam, who have been the backbone of this effort. Special thanks to the principal for co-coordinating the blood donation camp.

- The Interact President Ms. Anushka Shankar and Interact Secretary – Ms. Rithika Shree, along with their team did an excellent job in raising awareness about blood donation in the neighbourhood.
- Donors were sensitized about the procedure to ensure a smooth and informed experience.











• Each donor received a certificate of appreciation upon completing the donation process.

In this camp, three of our Rotarians contributed blood: Rtn. Sumit Kumar Kalra, Rtn. Suman Voora and Rtn. PP. George B. Cherian.

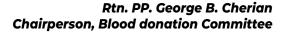
In addition to the blood donation drive, the interactors inaugurated Phase 2 of the Streetscape Project at the school. Rotarians, including President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna, participated in painting a blood donation-themed mural on the compound wall, further adding to the significance of the day.

President expressed his appreciation for the efforts of the interactors in coordinating this camp. He also shared a Quote "Every owner of blood should be a donor of blood."

He acknowledged the students who contributed to the Streetscape Art, as a visible example of their creativity and commitment.

The President and Director of community Service 2 (health), also discussed with the faculty on other possible areas of collaboration.

In total, 101 donors participated in the camp, making it a resounding success.









### **Goodwill Ambassador**

RCMers on overseas trips are encouraged to interact with Rotary clubs at cities visited and exchange ideas, provide outlines on RCMs activities and programs, learn about the visited clubs own programs and where willing, explore opportunities for future collaboration. Such visits enable RCMers to be true Goodwill Ambassadors of RCM.

One such visit was by our Chairman of International relations, Rtn Suresh Amirapu to the Rotary Club of Uptown Colombo.

The President of RC Colombo Uptown, Rtn. Nirmal Dissanayake, gave a rundown of his club's activities. Although a smaller Club (membership about 30) it was very active in CSR and other community related projects.

We exchanged flags of our respective clubs and and also presented Rtn. Nirmal with a copy of RCMs "Timeless Legacy".

We will explore further collaboration prospects with the Club.





# Malaysian Youth Exchange Program

he Malaysian Youth Exchange Program, organized by the Rotary Club of Madras in November 2024 was a transformative journey that helped us grow in confidence, public speaking skills, time management, teamwork and creativity. For many of us, especially first-time travelers, it was an once-in-a-lifetime experience to learn, explore and connect with new cultures.

Some of the trip's highlights included visiting the Batu Caves, the Royal Selangor Pewter Factory, Beryl's Chocolate Factory and the Pink Mosque, where we learned about Malaysia's rich culture and craftsmanship. We also explored the National Science Park, Bank Negara, Genting Highlands and Petaling shopping street, balancing education with fun.

This exchange program not only expanded our global perspective but also inspired us to actively contribute to community service and international collaboration. We are deeply grateful to the RYLA Chairman Rtn. M. Sesha Sai sir, Dinesh sir and Priyan sir, the entire team of the Rotary Club of Madras, our school and our teachers for their immense support.

We look forward to more opportunities like this, which empower us to become leaders who can make a positive difference in the world.

Thank you!













An Unforgettable Educational Adventure

When President Rtn. G. Chella Krishna and International Director Rtn. Sabina Narayan entrusted me with organizing an international trip for Interactors, I embraced the opportunity wholeheartedly. This vision turned into a remarkable journey to Malaysia, where 65 students embarked on an unforgettable educational adventure.

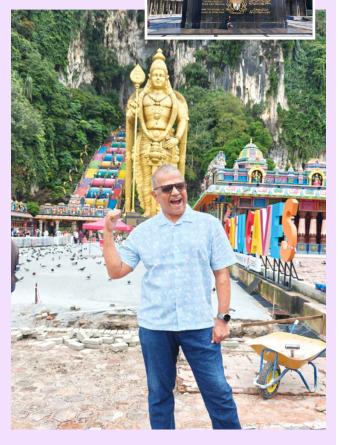
The group included students from Boys Town Society and Chintadripet Boys School, with generous sponsorship from our dedicated RCM Rotarians. It was a race against time, as some Boys Town Society Interactors received their passports just a day before departure. For nearly half of the students, it was their first flight, an experience filled with awe and excitement.

This trip was a perfect blend of learning and cultural exchange. The students immersed themselves in a new culture, interacting with diplomats, politicians, entrepreneurs, and startup founders. They also participated in insightful factory visits and engaged actively with Rotarians, Rotaractors, and Interactors in Malaysia, showcasing their enthusiasm and curiosity at every step.

Heartfelt thanks goes to the teacher coordinators who played a pivotal role in making this journey successful. Their guidance, encouragement, and unwavering support ensured the students gained the most from this unique opportunity.

Special gratitude goes to Mr. Dinesh Gajendran and Mr. Dharani Priyan from the Audacious Dream Foundation for meticulously curating this enriching program.

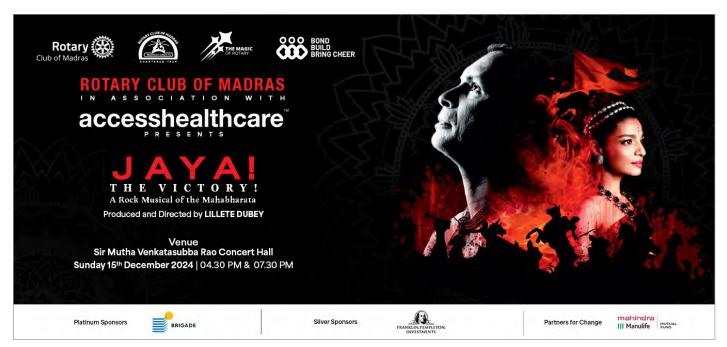
With the blessings of RCMers and the collective efforts of the Youth Service and International Service teams, this became a landmark event—the first-ever international trip



for Interactors in RCM's history. It was a journey of joy, growth, and connection, leaving a lasting impact on all involved.

Rtn. M. Sesha Sai,
 Chairman RYLA





thdays (25th Nov. to 1st Dec 2024)	
Rtn. Subbiah Viswanathan	25/11
Rtn. Dr. Anisha Ashok	26/11
Rtn. Kunal Patel	26/11
Rtn. Shoukath Sherif	29/11
Rtn. G.M. Udayanarayan	29/11
Spouses' Birthdays	
Ann. Dr. Khushali, Spouse of Rtn. Pranay H. Gambhir	25/11
Ann. Savithri, Spouse of Rtn. M.S. Nagarajan	26/11
Ann. Uma Varman, Spouse of Rtn. PP. Dr. N.V. Arulmozhi Varman	29/11
Ann. Somna Sachdev, Spouse of Rtn. Vipin Sachdev	29/11
Ann. Kamala, Spouse of Rtn. M. Sesha Sai	30/11
Ann. Niharika Akula, Spouse of Rtn. Ramakanth Akula	01/12
Wedding Anniversary	
Rtn. Sanjay V. Parikh & Rupal	26/11
Rtn. Vikram Chesetty & Supriya	26/11
Rtn. A. Gooch Kumar & Sangeetha	28/11
Rtn. Rohit Toshniwal & Ruchika Toshniwal	28/11
Rtn. Ravi Bhatkal & Priya	29/11
Rtn. Sanjay Tulsyan & Priya Tulsyan	29/11
Rtn. Suniel U. Lulla & Brinda	30/11
Rtn. J. Kishor Dandeker & Meghana	30/11



### **Induction of New Member**



### Rtn. Roshan Poncha

I am Roshan Poncha, born and raised in Mumbai, where I did my schooling at the Bai Avabai Petit Girls' High School in Bandra and went to college at Saint Xavier's. Being passionate about the performing arts, I joined a performing choir and simultaneously pursued my CA. I worked with Deloitte Touche and Voltas. That's when I met my better half, Cyrus, who was the reason I relocated to Chennai.

After moving to Chennai, I worked with the World Bank for a while but eventually took a break to focus on raising our two sons, Yeraj and Rustam, who are both now, teenagers. Yeraj is currently studying at MCTM School, and Rustam is in the 11th grade in Sishya.

This break also gave me the chance to return to the performing arts in Chennai and I have been a part of the Chennai theatre scene over the past few years. I have also been involved with community initiatives both with my choir, the Stop Gaps and during my service in Voltas. My father has also been a member of the Rotary Club in Bombay for over five decades and now I'm really eager to help serve the community here with you. Thank you so much for welcoming me.



Suggest the most quirky, whacky or creative caption/blurb for this photo (Maximum 15 words). The best entries will be reproduced in the next week's edition of Lighthouse.

Mail your captions to **editor@rcmlighthouse.com** on or before 26th Nov.







Issue 20 : **Best Captions** 

- 1. Jayshree: I have already checkmated Sridhar. He has absolutely no chance. *Rtn. Archana Shri Sanjay*
- "Of course The Queen wins hands down"
   Rtn. PP. A.S. Venkhat Ramani
- 3. "Marriage is a game of chess—she's the queen and he's out of moves!" *Rtn. N.K. Bhatia*
- 4. Checkmate or soul mate? When strategy meets love, every move is a winning one! Rtn. M. Sesha Sai
- "Neurosurgeon encounters two of Rotary's finest brains."
   Mr. Madhu C. Mathen



# Students' Creative Voice Against Cervical Cancer

The Rotary Club of Madras (RCM) has made significant progress in raising awareness about Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination and its role in preventing cervical cancer. A series of awareness events were conducted at Sri RKM Sarada Vidyalaya Girls Hr Sec School, to educate parents and students about the importance of HPV vaccination.

As a result of the program, many children not only gained knowledge about the importance of HPV vaccination but also felt compelled to express their thoughts creatively.

Some of the students wrote heartfelt poems and drawings, reflecting their understanding of cervical cancer and the significance of vaccination.

# There's a cloud overhead, You've gotten bad news. You can give you's fear On hope you can choose. You can choose to have hope, You can choose to have faith, You can choose to have guidance If you just shoose to pray. I know it's a struggle Moment by moment, To get through each day When you're feeling go broken But If you look to the lord, The God of all answers, There you'll find hope. There 's hope in your prayers Yo choose to be brave. Take hold of your fear. You choose to have hope When you choose to have prayer.

By Amrita Nayak - IX - C



By S. Deepalakshmi - IX - B



# Rotary Nostalgia

# ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS

1937 - 1943 - Part 2

(This is the second in the series of three articles on RCM during the period 1937 - 1943)

t was at this time that the Second World War struck. Recognizing that its service activities had to be steered towards supporting other, more urgent issues, the Committee at the Rotary Club of Madras passed a resolution on November 12th, 1940 to pause scholarship and other similar aid in favour of utilizing scarce resources towards better purposes.

It was a time of global war and the Madras Rotarians rolled up their sleeves to play their part. But even before that, it is necessary to record the impact that the war had on the world of British business in Madras, their social clubs and organisations such as Rotary, all of which had thus far seen either exclusive or at least dominant white memberships. Suddenly there was a depletion, as younger members of the community left for war duty, many of whom never to return. War absentees were treated as honorary members of the Rotary Club of Madras but that did not help either membership or the coffers. This may have been an important reason for the sudden drop in Club activities.

This was also the time when Indians began to play a larger role in the Club. Sir Mohammed Usman had been the first Indian to become President, and that was in 1935-36. The next year saw Sir Frank Birley, the Managing Director of Best & Co. take over, and assisting him as Secretary was an Indian – Capt. Abdul Hamid. Educated at the

Madras Christian College and then at Balliol, Oxford, this suave educationist was the first South Indian to be given the rank of a commandant in the Army in India Reserve of Officers (AIRO).

At the time of his joining the Rotary, he was the Principal of Government Mohammedan College, Madras. Abdul Hamid would have a long tenure as Secretary – from 1936 to 1941, perhaps a record in Rotary history. It is also perhaps reflective of

"This period also marked a significant change when Indians began to play a larger role in the Club.

Sir Mohammed Usman had been the first Indian to become President, and that was in 1935-36."

a severe shortage of membership. 1939-40, the first year of the war would see an Indian President and Secretary holding the fort – Abdul Hamid, never to become President, was Secretary and the presidential incumbent was Mariadoss Ratnaswami.

If Abdul Hamid was an Oxonian, Ratnaswami was from Cambridge, having qualified in law. He however seems like his Secretary to have preferred becoming an educationist, for after serving at Baroda, he became successively Professor of History, Principal of Pachaiyappa's College and later Principal of the Law College, Madras. He had also served as a member of the Madras Legislative Council for two terms.

Under the efficient leadership of President M. Ratnaswami and Secretary Capt. M. Abdul Hamid in the year 1939-40, the Rotary Club of Madras extended a helping hand to support one of their own-Mr J. Munro, a former member and Editor of the Eastern Rotary Wheel, a magazine founded by Rtn. Alistair McRae and published from Bombay in the 1930s.

The Club established a Munro fund amounting to Rs. 2,000, the proceeds of which were used towards the treatment of Mr J. Munro at the Sanatorium at Madanapalle.

Courtesy by: Rtn. V. Sriram Sourced by: Rtn. PP. N.K. Gopinath



# GO COLORS!

Leggings | Joggers | Ethnic | Palazzos | Jeggings | Pants | Denim | Culottes & more