



LIGHT

WEEKLY BULLETIN

July 4th, 2023 - Vol. 46 No. 01



Rotary International President
RTN. GORDON MCINALLY



District Governor
RTN. HIRA LAL YADAV



Club President
RTN. SHWETA BOSE BARUA



Thalassemia
Awareness

STRIKE OFF THALASSEMIA

Rotary Garden Reach's 2227th RWM

FAMILY CORNER

Birthday Greetings :

Jul 4th : Rtn. Shweta & PP Prosenjit Barua

Rtn. Sudip K Dey

Jul 8th : Rtn. Abhijit Das

Jul 10th : Spouse Rajshree, Wife of PP Sanjay Bhatt



Attendance last RWM: 18

Anniversary Greetings

Jul 8th : Spouse Sagarika & PP Subir Singha Roy

My call to Action

President, Rotary International

This year, we're prioritising projects to support mental health. This effort is deeply personal to me. I know what it's like to see someone suffer in silence. I have also witnessed the power of personal connections, the value of discussing emotional and mental well-being, and the lifesaving impact of preventive care and treatment.

Research shows that performing acts of kindness is an effective step any of us can take to protect our well-being. And by building peace within, we become more capable of bringing peace to the world.

Building peace is the essence of Rotary. Many of our service projects foster the conditions for Positive Peace. We work tirelessly to overcome barriers and create new connections. This year, we'll promote virtual international exchanges for members to strengthen those vital connections.



Peace isn't a dream, and it's not passive. It's the result of working hard, earning trust, and having open conversations that may be difficult. Peace must be waged persistently — and bravely. Everything we do across our areas of focus has the potential to foster the hope that can make peace possible.

The spirit of connection and purpose should inspire every Rotary member. When club leaders focus on offering an excellent club experience, we retain more members and attract more prospective members. We must make our clubs as welcoming and as engaging as we can.

Our goal is to create a sense of belonging, from our club meetings to our service activities. We need to continue creating inclusive, welcoming environments where everyone can be their authentic selves. All people of action need to be able to imagine a place for themselves in Rotary — it's up to us to ensure they can do so.

Over the next year, I will be putting a focus on continuing our journey in diversity, equity, and inclusion — ensuring that Rotary reflects the communities we serve and continues to take significant steps toward accessing the full range of human talents and experiences, so that we can better serve humanity. And we will continue to empower women and girls by helping them unlock the potential already within them.

As we begin this journey together, I take inspiration from Scotland's national poet, Robert Burns, who in the 18th century spoke of all the world becoming kin, promoting “**sense and worth, over all the earth.**” This has long been my call to action, and I share it now with you.

Let us build peace within and spread it freely. Let us create belonging and imagine the future of Rotary afresh.

Let us work together joyously and Create Hope in the World.



Rotary Movement in India



IBCMJS

Although Rotary district were established for the first time in 1912, clubs India, Burma, Ceylon, Malaysia, Java and Siam did not come under any District. They were grouped together as the IBCMJS area and was placed in charge of Hon. Commissioner Sir Frederick James.

Provisional District A

In 1931, India, Burma and Ceylon were formed into Provisional District 'A' and Commissioner FE James continued in charge.

District 89

On July 1, 1936 Rotary International decided that India having 16 Rotary Clubs – the number increased to 24 in the following year – should be granted district status. India became Rotary District No. 89. In 1937-38, the first Governor of the District was Sir Pheroze Sethna of the Rotary Club of Bombay, while Sir Frederick

James of Madras continued to be the Commissioner. He later became the Governor in 1938-39.

District 88

In 1939, District 89 was bifurcated. Clubs in our region found themselves in District 88 under District Governor BT Thakur. Rotary International honoured him by making him a Director and subsequently a Vice President of Rotary International.

District 90

From 1942-43, the District was again renumbered as a result of the increase of the number of Rotary Club in India, and became the 9th District. Dr. AC Ukil of the Rotary Club of Calcutta was the first Governor of the new District.

District 91

The legendary Rtn. Nitish Laharry became the District Governor of District 90 for two terms in 1944-45 and 1945-46. With the renaming of the District to 91, he served as Governor for the third time in 1946-47.

District 53

Rotary in India continued to be active, forming new clubs and soon new District had to be formed to prevent the old geographical areas from becoming too unwieldy. Rotary District 53 was unique in that it covered in those days 18 Rotary clubs located in no less than three countries viz., India, East Pakistan and Burma. The Indian Territory included West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, Assam and a portion of Madhya Pradesh.

District 325

At the end of the decade (1957) the District was regrouped and renumbered with three digits into District 325 and 326. Our District 325 consisted of Burma, India, including Assam, Nagaland and West Bengal. Nepal and Sikkim and that portion of Bihar within the territorial limits of Rotary Club of Asansol, West Bengal. Raj Kishore Prasad (1957-58) was the first Governor of this District.

District 3290

From 1990 Rotary International introduced 4 digits in its District numbering system and District 3290 came into being. This comprised 11 revenue districts of West Bengal viz., Kolkata, 24, Parganas North, 24, Parganas South, Bankura, Hooghly, Howrah, Murshidabad, Nadia, Paschim Medinipur, Purba Medinipur and Purulia; Andaman & Nicobar Islands and the Himalayan Kingdom of Nepal.

District 3291

In 2008, following a redistricting, the 11 revenue districts of West Bengal and Andaman Nicobar Islands came to be known as District 3291, while Nepal was christened 3292, Rotary Emblem Already given [Magsaysay](#)





Awardee Fought His Own Battles to Rescue 9000 Mentally-ill Patients

Dr. Bharat Vatwani, an Indian psychiatrist, has been rescuing, rehabilitating and reuniting mentally-ill persons living on the streets with their families for over 30 years through his organisation Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation. In 2018, Dr Vatwani received the Ramon Magsaysay Award, Asia's premier prize and highest honour, for his tremendous courage and healing compassion in embracing India's mentally-afflicted destitute, and his steadfast and magnanimous dedication to the work of restoring and affirming the human dignity of even the most ostracised in our midst. Here are excerpts from the interview..



Have you struggled with mental health?

Dr. Vatwani: This was put up on a huge board in the waiting room of my consulting chambers a good 22 years ago. It is still very much there.

"Some time ago, when I was going through a very depressive phase myself and was almost suicidal, I happened to seek solace from a friend of mine. During the course of our conversation, I was spontaneously asked by him whether I had ever, ever, ever had a dream. I could not answer him then, because being depressed, I did not know whether there was anything worth living for, worth caring for, worth dreaming about. But over the years, my thoughts have crystallized and the gloom of depression has given way to a dream".

The idea behind sharing these writings was to make the patients seeking me out believe that I was one of them and had been through psychiatric issues myself and overcome them.

How did your patients react to you sharing your experiences?

Dr. Vatwani: My attempt at breaking the stigma surrounding mental illness did not work out as well as I would have wanted. At times, the patients left the waiting room thinking that if the psychiatrist whom they were about to consult had gone through illness himself, how could he be trusted to treat another person?

How could they place their well-being in my hands?

While this attitude towards 'stigma' associated with mental illness has diminished over the years, I believe that India and perhaps the entire world still have a long way to go. The mentally ill, the world over, are invariably shunned, rejected, neglected and a denied lot.

Does mental illness carry a stigma?

Dr. Vatwani: Mental illness does carry a stigma, which could be:

- ✓ the prejudices/discriminating behaviour by society towards people (and their relatives) labelled with psychiatric illness (social stigma)
- ✓ the internalising by the patient of their perceptions of discrimination (self-stigma)

What are the fallouts of stigma?

Dr. Vatwani: Exclusion, low self-esteem, poor social support. Stigma causes mentally-ill people to feel ashamed for something that is in reality, out of their control. There is social isolation and social loneliness.

Worst of all, stigma prevents the mentally ill from seeking the help they need.

Stigma has a detrimental effect on treatment outcomes. Stigma remains the cornerstone of stumbling blocks in the addressing of mental illness.

Can stigma be overcome in the long run?

Dr. Vatwani: Deeply entrenched issues in society like racial discrimination, caste discrimination, and gender inequality are invariably slow-burn issues involving decades, if not centuries for them to be addressed. The stigma associated with mental illness falls in the same category.

While one may believe that one has contributed, more often than not, the contribution becomes miniscule, given the gigantic overwhelming gestalt of the problem. But one has to persevere and persist. In the final analysis, the acknowledgement of mental illness by the patients and their caregivers to their own selves and significant others within their communities becomes the cornerstone of a better prognostic outcome.

This becomes all the more significant when one looks at the graveness of the prevalence of mental





illness worldwide, reflected by WHO estimates which claimed that by 2030, Depression would be the leading global disease burden.

The key to the acknowledgement of mental illness is empathy and compassion.

Could you elaborate on the work you are doing?

Dr. Vatwani: Shraddha rescues wandering mentally ill destitute, brings them to their institute and provides them care, food, shelter and appropriate psychiatric treatment. Once psychiatric wellbeing is achieved (often taking 2-3 months), these destitute are helped in tracing out their antecedents, from wherein the reunion with the original family and native home takes place in the farthest corners of India and nearby countries.

All these services, from the moment they are rescued from the streets till the time they are reunited with their families in their native village, are rendered absolutely free of cost.



What inspired you?

Dr. Vatwani: The unfortunate men and women whom you often see wandering on the roads, lost in their own world, laughing and talking to themselves, with dirty long matted hair, half naked, and skin and bones appearance. They could be just barely surviving on garbage, gutter water and whatever leftovers of food are thrown at them by passers-by. They were invariably in much worse shape than the poorest of the poor because they had no one, absolutely no one to look after them. They could be on the roads for days/weeks/months/years/decades without clothing, shelter or food. No one would give them a second glance and often no one would care whether they lived or died.

They were stripped of all human dignity, but we realised that they were humans nevertheless.

Shraddha Rehabilitation Foundation was founded to deal with the above tragedy of the homeless mentally ill destitute wandering aimlessly on the streets of India.

And we decided to do whatever bit we can for the cause of this last man standing on the streets - vis-à-vis the wandering mentally ill destitute.

Let's embrace new Challenges, Opportunities & Past wisdom

Anirudha Roychowdhury, RI Director, 2023–25

My dear Rotarians,

It is with great enthusiasm and a deep sense of responsibility that I write to you today, marking the beginning of a new Rotary year 2023–24. Being part of a team dedicated to driving the organisation forward is indeed an honour. When individuals come together with a shared vision and collaborative mindset, they can accomplish remarkable things.

Rotary has a rich history of service and impact, made possible by the collective efforts of passionate individuals like



all of us. Our organisation's ability to make positive changes across the world rests on the strong foundations built by past leaders. It is our duty to honour that work and continue their success. Each of us here has a vital role to play in continuing this legacy. Rotary International is a global service organisation which follows a specific leadership structure to ensure continuity and effective governance. This leadership structure and succession planning help to maintain continuity and effectiveness within Rotary, allowing for the consistent pursuit of the organisation's mission to promote world peace, goodwill and understanding. As we navigate the dynamic and ever-evolving world around us, it is essential to recognise the importance of both change and continuity in





leadership. While change brings with it new opportunities, challenges and perspectives, continuity allows us to maintain the momentum, knowledge and experience gained over time. It ensures a seamless transition, enabling us to sustain our ongoing projects and initiatives.

The world is constantly evolving, presenting us with new challenges and opportunities. As changemakers, we must foster an environment that encourages fresh ideas, embraces technology and explores innovative approaches. By amalgamating the wisdom of the past with the new-age technology and innovation, we can address the pressing issues of our time and make lasting impact. Furthermore, we need to invest in the development of future leaders, nurturing their potential and instilling in them the values of Rotary. Mentoring and supporting the emerging leaders will act as an investment in the sustainability of our organisation.

As we embark on this new chapter, let us commit ourselves towards service and action by uniting our strength, our experience, and our diverse perspectives to make a lasting difference in the lives of those we serve.

Thank you for your trust, dedication and unwavering commitment to Rotary. Together, we can continue to Create Hope in the World.

India Has Millions of Hectares of These 'Biological Supermarkets'; You Can Protect Them

If forests are the lungs of the plant, wetlands are the kidneys, and here's all you can do to protect them.



India has a diverse wetland regime, ranging from the high-altitude lakes of the Himalayas, the floodplains and marshes of the rivers Ganga and Brahmaputra, the salinas of the arid region, the numerous tanks and reservoirs of the Deccan, the mangroves, intertidal flats, lagoons and estuaries of the east and the west coast and coral reefs straddling the coastline. As per assessments by Space Application Center, our country has 15.98 million ha of wetlands, roughly equalling 4.8% of its geographical area. A majority of wetlands (nearly three fourths) are lesser than 2.25 ha in area.

Wetlands provide a range of benefits to society – if forests are its lungs, wetlands are the kidneys. Wetlands help stabilize water supplies, cleanse polluted waters, protect shorelines, and recharge groundwater aquifers. The extensive food chain and biological diversity in wetlands make them '**biological supermarkets**'. Wetlands are valuable as sources, sinks and transformers of many biological, chemical and genetic materials. In addition, wetlands have special attributes as cultural heritage of humanity and have deep connections with our beliefs and practices.

Yet, wetlands are also one of the most rapidly degrading ecosystems globally and in India. As per our assessments, nearly one-third of natural wetlands in the country have been lost in the last three decades alone.

Citizen participation in wetlands conservation

Active citizen partnership is at the heart of wetlands conservation and wise use. India has a long-standing tradition of citizens being at the forefront of nature conservation, including wetlands.

The distinct recognition of wetlands as *audaka* in Kautilya's Arthashastra and *anupa* in Caraka-Samhita were gradually lost when a revenue centric land administration system was put in place by the Mughals and firmed up in colonial times. A limited understanding of the benefits of wetlands led to their classification within wastelands – and their drainage and reclamation were incentivized within policies for wasteland reduction. Post-independence, when India went into a spate of famines and expansion of area under agriculture was the primary policy for achieving food-security, wetlands were reclaimed under government patronage from Kashmir to Kerala.

Wetlands conservation policy and programming as we see today in India drew its roots from recognition of their roles as water bird habitats, drawing in parts from water bird centric wetlands conservation movements in Europe





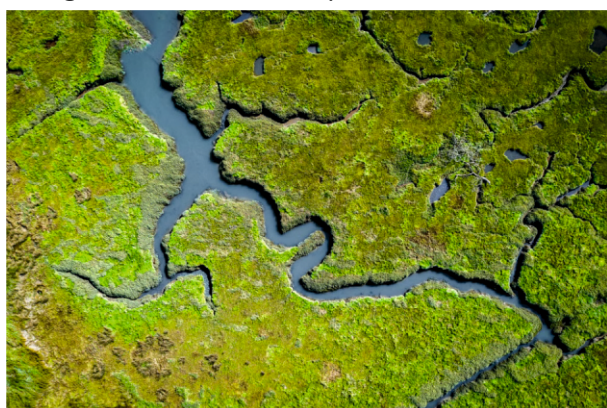
and North America. Erstwhile rulers, several of who were also avid game hunters, laid the foundation of a network of wetland protected areas. Decades of work on Indian birds laid the foundation of a network of wetland protected areas supporting a large congregation of water birds. However, the 'fortress conservation' approach remains plagued with several problems, and efficacy remains somewhat mixed. The ideas of pristine nature are themselves socially constructed, the impacts on social inequities have been equally high, and the fact the 'conservation gains' may have come at a 'social cost'. Beyond Protected Areas, for most wetlands, there is no single department or agency responsible for conservation and wise use. Often, there are different departments managing wetland waters (such as irrigation and flood control), resources (fisheries and agriculture) and land (revenue), but no one owns the wetland. This leads to sectoral pursuits and ultimate neglect of these ecosystems.

The diversity of wetland governance arrangements has narrowed down over time to be anchored in government departments and agencies. Community participation in management has been reduced mainly to user groups, who have little say in governance matters.

Much of the degradation of the wetlands that we see today are indicators of individual and societal apathy towards these ecosystems. When wetlands are used as waste dumping areas, converted for housing, and water inflows diverted, the image of these ecosystems being wastelands is portrayed. No amount of surveillance, protection, and enacting laws can bend the curve of wetlands degradation and loss unless concerted action for individual and societal behaviour change towards wetlands conservation and wise use is taken at various levels. And these changes cannot be done merely by organizing awareness generation activities, nature-education programmes or campaigns alone – the interventions have to be deeper and systemic.

Ways in which citizens can contribute to wetlands conservation

The predominant view of nature in recent times is that of a resource – which provides for livelihoods and income generation opportunities or indirectly secures productive assets through buffering capabilities – such as wetlands buffering communities from the impacts of floods and droughts. However, this view precludes the role of nature in shaping cultural relations and identities – way beyond being a resource. In this worldview, 'nature is us' – not only because it provides benefits, but because of our intrinsic relationships with our being and identity. A resource view of nature limits citizens to users and beneficiaries; the latter relational view places citizens in a much broader role of being stewards and champions. The latter view should serve as the basis of citizen participation.



That brings us to the question – How can citizens contribute to wetlands conservation? I see this playing out at least at three levels. At the individual level, the foundational role is played by awareness – of where wetlands are, their values and benefits, the reasons for their degradation, organizations entrusted with management responsibilities, and rules and regulation on wetlands conservation. An aware citizen can contribute to wetlands conservation through their conscious consumption choices. These can include reducing individual water footprint (as wetlands are the primary sources of freshwater), reducing waste (as much of the treated and untreated sewage and solid waste ends up in wetlands), not buying assets (such as houses) on

converted wetlands, and not promoting products out of unsustainable use of wetlands (such as shrimps from aquaculture farms which have been created from clearing mangroves).

In the professional space, citizens can deepen engagement with wetlands by gainfully utilizing their skills and capacities for wetlands conservation. This includes participating in wetlands management planning, and monitoring, including citizen science programmes.

In the third space, wherein the citizen acts as a part of broader society, wetlands conservation can be supported by playing the role of a watchdog to ensure that activities that degrade wetlands are flagged and brought to the notice of authorities. This role can be fulfilled by keeping a regular watch on wetlands and maintaining a record of





changes, such as new species, invasive species, changes in water availability and quality and others. This also includes keeping an eye for activities leading to wetlands degradation, such as dumping solid waste and sewage, construction within wetlands, blocking water channels, and others. This information should be immediately brought to the notice of authorities.

Notably, several public interest litigations filed by concerned citizens have resulted in the National Green Tribunal and the Supreme Court passing orders for conservation action on wetlands.

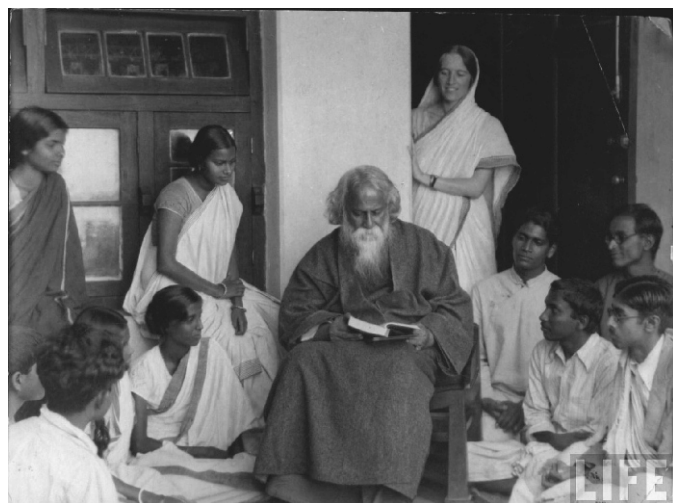
In 2021, Wetlands International South Asia partnered with Mongabay-India to showcase examples of affirmative citizen action for wetlands conservation. We were delighted to publish 25 such stories in the series 'Wetlands Champions'. The activities of these champions have included restoration of tanks and ponds, organizing citizen action groups for conservation, educating the community on values and benefits, preventing pollution, and taking recourse of judicial action for protecting wetlands.

Wetlands conservation is essentially an "all of society" endeavour, not just the responsibility of government departments and agencies. Actions by everyone in the society count – and affirmative actions by concerned and well-informed citizens are the most potent of these.

How Tagore's Love for Strange Food Paved the Path for the Modern-Day Adda!

Ananya Barua

From cauliflower 'sandesh' to a fish curry with no fish, the Nobel Laureate appreciated creative expression not just with words but also on his plate.

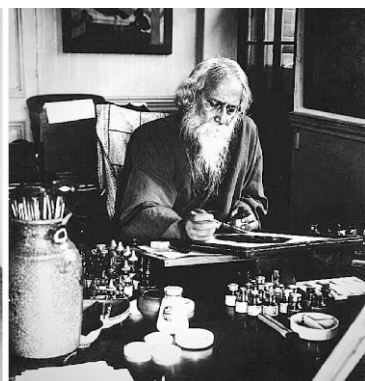


An annual tradition held few weeks before May; I remember rushing home from school, to finish my daily quota of studies and homework, all to keep the evenings free for the inevitable creative ventures planned for Rabindra Jayanti – the birthday of Tagore. Hours would pass and evenings would fade into late nights, yet we all would continue perfecting the steps, running the lines and adjusting the pitch, alongside steaming cups of tea and an ever-flowing supply of deliciously crispy *shingaras* (samosa).

Amidst all the hard work, it was off-track *addas* and interesting trivia on Tagore shared by elder members that kept us oblivious to the outside world.

"What comings and goings we used to see: how merry were the rooms and verandahs with the hum of conversation and the snatches of laughter!" someone

would spontaneously recite, quoting Tagore's memoir, **Jibansmriti** (My Reminiscences).



The nostalgic piece gives a peek into the formative years of the great poet and encapsulates his long conversations with sister-in-law Kadambari Devi, brother Jyotirindranath and many friends like poet Bharilal Chakravarti.

Known as an exceptional conversationalist, Tagore's memoir emphasised on the importance of '*majlis*' or '*adda*', predicting how it would become an integral part of Bengali cultural discourse in the following years.

A part of Bengali parlance, '*adda*' on the one hand involves long engaging conversations based on





rational arguments, dialogue and comic expression, on the other, it manifests itself as an artistic and tasteful display of an individual's wit, intellectual prowess and humour, all at the same time.

"His fortitude and his kindly sense of humour remained with him till the end. Those who attended on his sick-bed treasured as their greatest reward the pleasantries and witticisms he constantly exchanged with them," writes Krishna Kripalani (Tagore's biographer) in her account of the poet's final days.

According to the students of his institute in Santiniketan, Tagore was known for his skilful use of rhetorical devices like puns and metaphors juxtaposing them with altered syntactic patterns, and this eventually led adda to become an educational tool.

Interestingly, it was a tradition for them to gather around Tagore as he engaged in storytelling, word-games and various light-hearted literary exercises often encouraging students to join in.

Origin of Kham Kheyali Sabha

The cultural and literary luxury of laid-back conversations was not always a common phenomenon in Bengal. With the onslaught of colonialism and the propagation of utilitarianism, Tagore's beloved art of conversations was coming to an end.

"We no longer have the thing called a majlis. We still meet for business or politics but never for the pleasure of simply being together I can imagine few things more ugly than this social miserliness," he critiqued the increasing influence of modern greed and selfishness that was closing doors to intellectual and literary freedom among others.



It was this realisation that prompted the establishment of Kham Kheyali Sabha (Assembly of the Whimsical), an informal club where Tagore and his friends would mingle and feast over delicious delicacies and dialogue, in 1896.

The group included prominent individuals like Deshbandhu Chittaranjan Das, author Sarat Chandra Chattopadhyay, Atul Prasad Sen, poet and humourist DL Roy, scientist Jagadish Chandra Bose, classical vocalist Radhikanath Goswami and Pramatha Chaudhuri, with whom Tagore would often participate in heated arguments about art, politics, society,

or even playful friendly banter filled with humorous anecdotes.

Creative discourse on pages, speeches and food

'Do not blame the food because you have no appetite'—would be the usual response to reluctant foodies who would infiltrate the Rabindra Jayanti rehearsal halls for casual flirtations with dancing dames.

Like many today, Tagore too was extremely serious about his food, and so it's not a surprise that his whimsical taste in words and food would find expression at the Kham Kheyali Sabha.

Adda and khabar hence became the twin agent of ultimate satisfaction for Bengalis.

To be true to its name, Tagore had to maintain its reputation of being whimsical, and nothing served at the sabha could dare be ordinary. His wife Mrinalini Devi would come to the rescue at such instances.

From jackfruit yoghurt fish curry without a single piece of fish in it, mustard mutton curry cooked with parwal and served with prawn raita, to cauliflower *sandesh* and *dahi malpua*, his unique demands would be brought to life by Mrinalini Devi.

The poet's innate wanderlust also often inspired his gastronomic adventures that manifested in the kitchen of Jorashankho Thakurbari, where cooks toiled hard to create magical dishes that revolutionised Bengali cuisine.

A few reports on Tagore's taste buds claim that the great poet would fear chillies in his food, and because of this, any dish he consumed was always generously sprinkled with sugar.

Interestingly, this has become a prominent aspect of the state's culinary expertise.

With his wit and unflinching penchant for experimentation, on pages or the plate, the poet has left behind a treasure trove of memories that we call culture today





Minutes of the 2226th RWM held on June 27th 2023 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President called the RWM to order and requested the members to rise for the National Anthem.
2. President informed about the District Award Ceremony and congratulated all the awardees for receiving the awards in different categories.
3. President also informed Change-over Ceremony on July 1st, 2023 at GD Birla Sabhaghar
4. In aid of the Thalassaemic patients, the club will organise a Blood Donation Camp at Nabarun Samity on July 16th, 2023.
5. President expressed his gratitude and thanked to all the club members for their support for the whole year.
6. Rtn. Mritunjay Singh, Rtn. Samiran Das & Rtn. Dr. Biplab K Nandi names have been struck-off from RI website.
7. President gave his best wishes to PE Shweta Bose Barua and Secretary Dr. Subrata Lahiri and the team for the Rotary year 2023-24.
8. Rtn. Tamal introduced a prospective member, Mr. Subhojit Chatterjee and he has expressed his willingness to join Rotary. The Membership Committee will decide upon.
9. Club Secretary, Rtn. Debasis conducted the Club business.
10. Minutes of the last RWM were confirmed. President terminated the meeting.!

