



Light

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

May 20th, 2025 - Vol. 47 No. 41

2312th Regular Weekly Meeting
Today is 11th Board Meeting
Attendance: 11

Five Youth Leaders Who Will Change the World

From India to the US and New Zealand to South Africa, young people are rising to demand greater action on climate change, biodiversity loss, hunger, malnutrition, food waste, plastic pollution, and more.

The climate strikes and other socio-political movements have made these global issues a part of the political conversation, arguably because of the immense pressure from the younger generation.

While Greta Thunberg is a key driver of the battle to fight climate change, there are plenty of other brilliant young leaders working to help us avoid a social and ecological collapse.



Here are five Youth Leaders who we think will change the world:

Xiuhtecatl Martinez (19)

Since the age of six, Xiuhtecatl Martinez has been campaigning for Environmental Justice, speaking at climate summits around the world. Today, the 19-year-old indigenous activist is the global youth director of Earth Guardians and one of 21 young people suing the Trump administration for failing to combat climate change.

Martinez uses hip-hop to deliver powerful messages and ultimately guide a global, youth-led movement dedicated to protecting the earth. And it is working.

Addressing world leaders at the United Nations (UN), given TED talks, receiving the United States Community Service Award from President Obama, and gathering hundreds of people in joining the climate strikes, Martinez is definitely making waves.

Yola Mgogwana (11)

Born and raised in Khayelitsha, one of Cape Town's impoverished townships, 11-year-old Yola Mgogwana "sees the effects of climate change every single day." One day it is hot, the next day it's heavily raining, and farmers and ultimately the whole community is suffering from its consequences.

Earlier this year, Mgogwana decided to do something about it. She started volunteering with an organization called the Earthchild Project, which works to educate school children and communities about the environment.

Through the organization, she has spoken to thousands of young people in Cape Town, empowering them to take action for a better future.

Ankit Kawatra (27)

India has 195 million hungry people. Ankit Kwatara wishes to end that. The young activist founded Feeding India, a not-for-profit aiming to solve hunger, malnutrition and food waste in the country.

By picking up food donations from weddings, individuals, restaurants, and offices, Feeding India delivers food to people in need, as well as serving nutritious meals at shelter homes and beneficiaries.

Kawatra was recently selected for the Queen's Young Leaders awards as well as the UN's Young Leaders for Sustainable Development Goals.

India Logan-Riley (25)

As a member of the organization Te Ara Whatu, India Logan-Riley is fighting to advance the rights of the indigenous people, who have always been at the forefront of environmental causes around the world.

The activist from Aotearoa/New Zealand was part of the first indigenous youth delegation at the 2017 UN Climate Change Conference. Speaking to the leaders of the world, she addressed that "it's really important that the wider climate movement aligns itself with the aspirations of indigenous communities and amplifies the solutions that we advocate for."

Globally, over two million people depend on land help by Indigenous people for food, water, and air quality. These critical ecosystems are often protected by indigenous groups.

Boyan Slat (25)

The Dutch inventor Boyan Slat dropped out of his aerospace engineering studies to start The Ocean Cleanup – a foundation using advanced technology to clean the world's oceans of plastic.

Over five trillion pieces of plastic are currently littering our oceans. The largest garbage patches are located between Hawaii and California, and if left to circulate, the plastic will impact our ecosystems, our health, and our economy.

In 2018 the world's first ocean clean-up system was launched from San Francisco, soon after followed by deployment inside the Great Pacific Garbage Patch. A full-scale deployment of The Ocean Cleanup system is estimated to clean up 50 % of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch every 5 years.

Philanthropy in action: The Rotary way

Bharat Pandya, TRF Trustee

Philanthropy is a form of altruism that consists of “*private initiatives for public good, focusing on quality of life.*” The word philanthropy comes from ancient **Greek word *philanthrōpía* — ‘love of humanity’, from *philo-* ‘to love, be fond of’ and *anthrōpos* ‘humankind, mankind’.** That’s an apt description of our support to TRF.



Don Quixote in *The Man of La Mancha* sets out on a quest to find ‘good’ everywhere. This was a seemingly impossible quest. But he went on “to dream the impossible dream, to fight the unbeatable foe, to go where the brave dare not go.”

In Rotary too our quest is to find good and do good everywhere. But in Rotary the impossible becomes possible because Rotarians are dreamers with an important difference. They are practical in their dreams. In their daily lives they think of the other fellow. They pick up the broken glass in the street so that the boys and girls in the neighbourhood will not cut their feet while playing.

So, let me say a prayer: “May god bless all Rotarians with courage and commitment to think that they can make a difference so that Rotarians continue to do those things, work those projects that others say cannot be done.” And the best way to work on that, to do good everywhere is through The Rotary Foundation.

One such good way is our humanitarian grants programme. Through the various grants TRF transforms your gifts into service projects that change lives, closer home, and around the world. Hence supporting the Annual Fund becomes very important. It is our Annual Fund contributions today which help us do grants tomorrow. So, my request to all is to invest in the Annual Fund today. Your contributions to the Foundation’s Annual Fund empower Rotary members to reach out where help is needed most.

As we move forward positively and work to end polio, supporting the Polio Fund is more critical than ever. Without Rotarians’ contributions we cannot achieve our dream of a polio-free world.

Endowment Fund is the future of TRF. Our investment in the Endowment Fund will ensure that future generations of Rotarians will carry on the good work of Rotary.

Together, we can and we will change the world. ***That’s the Magic of Rotary.***

Wish you and your family great blessings, peace and happiness.

57 years of Rotary Youth Exchange

Ivan Vianna, Rotary Youth Exchange, Chair-Emeritus of RID 4760 & Rotary Belo Horizonte-Pampulha, Brazil

Whenever I speak about or write about Rotary Youth Exchange, my mind goes back to my teenager years and I have good memories. No doubt that year as an exchange student, 1968, did provide me with experiences for all the years ahead.

It took 22 years after my exchange year to join Rotary as a member. The main reason was that nobody invited me. From my first day as a Rotarian, I became a member of the Youth Exchange District Committee. In 1991, my district had fewer than 15 outbound students. That drove me to find new partnerships by participating in Rotary International Conventions, Youth Exchange pre-conventions, regional meetings in North America and Europe, and a trip to Russia.

As time went by, I participated in several national and international organizations, including some outside Rotary related to my engineering





PEACE AND CONFLICT
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT



WATER AND
SANITATION



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND
LITERACY



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT



SUPPORTING THE
ENVIRONMENT

field, which helped grow my network. Being active and serving in several organizations as a member of the board, director, or president, enabled me to spread the news about Rotary's Youth Exchange Program as well as Rotary itself.

A close friend became president of Brazil, and later governor of my state. I was there to assist and do my best to serve my country during his terms. It was beyond any expectations I ever had.

Our District 4760 Program expanded to nearly 100 outbound students, both long and short term, before the program was suspended due to the pandemic. When it returned, our numbers had shrunk by about a third. A few years ago, I stepped down as district committee member, accepting the title of Chair Emeritus (more a label of distinction than a role with daily responsibilities). But I remain ready to step in whenever needed.

I did step in to help my district re-establish partnerships we used to have, and to contact our previous Youth Exchange Officers who became friends through the years. A fringe benefit/reward for anyone who serves as a **YEO: you make friends all over the world**. I did so, and it's always a good time to renew those friendships, whether related to exchange partnerships or not.

My granddaughter Isabella is being hosted in Owego, New York, only 50 miles away from Montrose, Pennsylvania, where her father Gustavo and I were also hosted. Three generations of Rotary Youth Exchange students have been hosted in that small area within a 57-year span. Has the world become smaller, or is this coincidence?

I have tried to keep in contact with outbound students from my club, and am a proud sponsor of 18 Rotarians in my Rotary club.

Last February, I joined a safari in Tanzania, led by my dear old friend Tom, himself a Youth Exchange Officer in the state of New York, whom I first met during the Rotary International Convention in Melbourne, Australia, in 1993. When the safari was over, we met a girl in Tanzanian who had been a Rotary Youth Exchange student in Owego two years ago. What a surprise when I told her my granddaughter is currently being hosted in Owego at the same high school. I was able to share how Isabella kept hearing stories about the student from Tanzanian who everyone loved. *Isn't Rotary magical?*

So, if you know someone you think would make a good Rotary member, don't delay. Bring them to a club meeting and begin the process of making a life-long friend.

Wheelchair Basketball tournament in Mumbai

The Rotary District 3141 →Disability to Ability →Avenue, along with Rotary →Ghatkopar West, hosted the Women's →Wheelchair Basketball tournament at the YMCA Grounds in Ghatkopar. "Our aim in conducting the event was to →highlight Rotary's inclusivity →initiative and celebrate the resilience, determination and sportsmanship of the differently-abled women. Many of them fell out of their wheelchairs, yet they were up and about in seconds," said Avenue Chair, Kala Shridhar.



The event was held under the guidance of the Wheelchair Basketball Federation of India, Wheelchair Basketball Association - →Maharashtra and the Wheelchair Sports Association.

The event was supported by NGOs Project Mumbai who contributed towards the prize money, and ACC-RED as accessibility partner. Rotary Clubs Deonar, Mumbai Neo, Bombay Pier, Neo Mulund Valley, Juhu Beach and Sobo were the

Co-hosts.



This start-up's Eco-friendly games are teaching kids to fall in love with Indian Culture

Chennai entrepreneur Charanya Kumar started “Chittam” to help children connect with Indian culture through games. Today, her eco-friendly, storytelling-based kits are bringing families together — one story, one state, one card at a time.

With the summer holidays in full swing, and kids spending more time on screens, many parents are on the lookout for ways to mix things up. What if, instead, you could spend that time playing something fun — something that brings you closer to your child and opens up a window into India’s history, culture, and stories?

Imagine sitting with your little one and playing a game that introduces them to Indian history, culture, and mythology — while also strengthening your bond. That’s the idea behind ‘Chittam’ — using simple, thoughtful games to spark joy, reflection, and conversations around Indian stories and values.

A question that sparked a movement

No school teaches children how to navigate emotions or face challenging situations. It was this realisation — and a simple question — that led Charanya Kumar, a Chennai-based entrepreneur, to create Chittam.

In Sanskrit, chittam means the psyche or the mind. And that’s exactly what Charanya hopes to nurture: young minds that are curious, self-aware, and rooted in their identity.

“Kids today are often exposed to learning systems that show

everything as black or white. There’s no space for grey,” she says. “Through Chittam’s games, I want to create that grey area — where children can think deeply, make decisions, and find their own clarity.”

Launched in January 2023, Chittam is now two and a half years old and has a collection of 17 games. From board games to storytelling kits and activity-based formats, each one brings children (and adults) closer to India’s heritage and values.

So, how do they turn stories into games?

If you ask Charanya to describe a game, she will probably pick ‘Bharath Villas’, a card game inspired by Rummy.

“In Rummy, we have four suits. Similarly, in Bharath Villas, we have four types of cards — a monument, a weave, a dance form, and a food. Each set is based on a particular Indian state. So, if you collect a monument, weave, dance, and food from the same state, you form a full set — and you win. The cards were carefully curated to reflect the culture of different states,” she explains.

The game is designed to introduce children to the cultural identity and diversity of Indian states — something they rarely encounter in textbooks. “We believe in drawing similarities across states so that children can both appreciate diversity and discover common ground,” the 39-year-old entrepreneur explains.

Another game that stands out is ‘Suprabatham’, an activity-based family kit.

“How many of us really sit and talk with our family anymore?” Charanya asks. “This game encourages exactly that. It includes stories followed by small activities for the whole family, like speaking kindly to one another, doing a chore together, or simply shifting perspectives for a day. Then, everyone comes back to share how it felt.”

There’s also My Aadhar, a set of 21 questions for kids about their homelands and culture. “These questions make children more curious about their background and culture, and that curiosity sparks learning,” she says.



Most of Charanya's games begin with a simple concept. From there, she digs deep: reading, researching, speaking to experts, and slowly shaping each game so it's fun, age-appropriate, and rooted in real stories.

What's more, all Chittam games are eco-friendly. "We use paper, cardboard, and wood. The dice and pawns are made of wood, while the boards and accessories are crafted from paper and cardboard, making the games eco-friendly and durable," Charanaya shares.

Taking play to the next level

In just two and a half years, Chittam has already collaborated with brands like Sweet Karam Coffee (a traditional snacks brand) and Zishta (makers of heritage cookware), helping gamify their inspiring brand stories.

The start-up has also won angel investments and grants, including a Rs 10 lakh prize from the nationally televised Britannia Marie Gold Her Start-Up show.

But for Charanya, the mission goes deeper than success. "We sow seeds of culture today so children can find strength in them tomorrow." She's now working on integrating technology, exploring cultural robotics, and building more B2B collaborations — all while keeping the human connection intact.

"Entrepreneurship isn't lonely for me," she smiles. "It's a spiritual journey."

As accolades come in, her greatest reward remains the same: watching children light up as they rediscover who they are — through story, play, and shared experience.

"If we can help even one child feel less alone, more anchored, and deeply proud of who they are, we've succeeded."

How Indian Railways Helped Unify the Nation During the Freedom Struggle

The British may have brought in India's railways to gain profit and control. But Indians turned those very tracks into powerful tools of resistance and unity. From carrying revolutionaries to spreading ideas, trains played an unforgettable role freedom struggle.

When you think of India's fight for independence, what comes to mind? Probably images of massive protests, fiery speeches, and fearless revolutionaries standing up to the British. But there was another most powerful tool that united India's vast and diverse land. No, they weren't weapons or words but steel tracks!

Yes, the Indian Railways, introduced by the British for their own gain, quietly played a pivotal role in connecting people, ideas, and movements across the subcontinent during the freedom struggle.



Tracks that connected more than just cities

When the first passenger train chugged along on 16 April 1853 between Bombay and Thane, little did anyone know that it would one day serve a purpose far beyond transporting goods and passengers. Over the decades, railways helped knit together a country that was as fragmented — culturally, geographically and politically.

Suddenly, people from the North could travel to the South, the East could meet West, and a shared sense of identity started to grow. United India was no longer just an idea; it became a physical reality that people could experience.



“The railway system linked far-flung regions and brought the people of India into contact with one another on an unprecedented scale,” writes historian Ian J Kerr in his book *Engines of Change*.

A highway for ideas and movements

With improved connectivity, ideas began to move as quickly as trains. Newspapers, pamphlets, and speeches advocating swaraj (self-rule) reached people even in the remote corners. Freedom fighters used trains to travel across the country, hold meetings, organise protests, and mobilise support.

Movements like the Non-Cooperation Movement (1920), Salt March (1930), and Quit India Movement (1942) saw unprecedented nationwide participation, thanks, in part, to the reach of our railways.

Mahatma Gandhi used railway's third-class to not just travel, but to connect with the common people and villagers by gaining first-hand experience of the ordinary lives of fellow Indians. These journeys were instrumental in shaping his inclusive vision for an independent India.

Rebels on the rails

Railways weren't just carriers of people and ideas, they also mobilised resistance. Revolutionary leaders like Bhagat Singh and Chandrashekhar Azad used the railways to move covertly between cities, often keeping up with the nation's independence struggles.

Sabotaging rail tracks became a strategy for some revolutionaries to disrupt British communication and supply chains. At the same time, railway stations turned into battlegrounds, venues for protests, gatherings, and violent crackdowns. Major stations like Howrah, Mumbai VT, and Lahore witnessed landmark events like the Civil Disobedience Movement, Lahore Resolution, etc in the independence movement. These weren't just transit points — they were symbols of the colonial machinery that Indians were fighting to dismantle.

Strikes on the steel tracks

Back in colonial India, the Railways were one of the biggest employers around — and with such a huge workforce, it's no surprise that many railway workers became part of the freedom movement. Railway workers were among the first to unionise, and their strikes often took on a political colour.

The All India Railwaymen's Federation, established on 16 February 1925, didn't just fight for better wages but also supported the call for freedom. It was affiliated with the socialist trade union centre Hind Mazdoor Sabha.

From exploitation to empowerment

The irony is hard to miss. A system built by the British to exploit India's resources ended up helping Indians rise against them. While the British saw the railways as a way to tighten their grip, the freedom fighters turned them into a tool for empowerment and unity.


Christian Wolmar, in *Railways and the Raj*, sums it up well: “The railways, intended to strengthen British control, instead ended up encouraging nationalism and undermining colonial rule.”

Today, when you watch a train wind its way across rice paddies, deserts, or mountains, remember — it's more than just a journey. It is a reminder of how the railways once helped ordinary Indians dream of something extraordinary: Freedom.



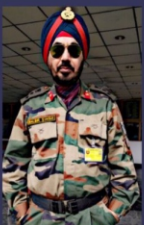








Minutes of the 2311th RWM held on May 13th, 2025 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach

1. President Biswajit welcomed the members and requested them to rise for the National Anthem. As a mark of respect, the President requested all members to observe A Minute of Silence in memory of the tourists who lost their lives at Pahalgam.
2. Thalassemia Awareness Programme in association with the Interact Club of JDS, Howrah on May 8th, 2025. Four other schools had participated. The program was graced by Rtn. Subhojit Roy, District Public Image Chair, who spoke on the prevention of Thalassemia and urged everyone to support the theme: "Uniting Communities, Prioritizing Patients". Members attending the event was attended by President Biswajit, Secretary Bandaru, PP Tanu Roy and Rtn. Tamal Ray.
3. 11th Board Meeting scheduled on May 20th, 2025. Fellowship & Dinner sponsored by PP Tapan K Roy, PP Timir Roy, PP Dr. Sumanta Dasgupta & PP Amitav Ganguly.
4. District Training Assembly (DTA) scheduled on May 25th, 2025 at Dhana Dhanyo Auditorium, Alipore. Members were requested to register.
5. A payment of Rs. 10,000 was made to Calcutta Corporate, the auditing firm, for auditing the 2023-24 Club accounts and filing the ITR.
6. Regarding the club's venue charges, the revised charges were discussed at length. It was decided to propose a 100% hike over the earlier rates. Secretary PE Bandaru will prepare a new draft letter for review by senior members before submission to the Club authorities on May 14th or 15th, 2025.
7. Club Officers Training Seminar (COTS) is scheduled for May 27th, 2025. PDG Ravi Sehgal will serve as Chief Guest and conduct the training session.
8. Proposed date for Medical Camp at Kalikapur is on June 8th, 2025. Further arrangements to be coordinated by the President with concerned institutions.
9. The Club Secretary conducted the Club Business.
10. Minutes of the last RWM was confirmed. President Biswajit terminated the meeting.



District Training Assembly R.I District 3291

25th May, 2025
9am onwards

 BRIGADIER BALBIR SINGH (VETERAN)	 Mamata Shankar Padma Sri Awardee	 Rtn Dr. Ramendu Homchaudhuri District Governor (2025-26) R.I. District 3291	 Rtn. Dr. Bharat S. Pandya TRF trustee	 Rtn Anirudha Roychowdhury R.I Director
 Mr. Saniv Kumar Sinha, CMD, Hindusthan Copper	 UNITE FOR GOOD Rotary	 PRIP Rtn Shekhar Mehta	 PDG Sharat Chandra Rotary Membership Co-ordinator, Zone 6	

Venue: Dhono Dhanyo

Don't miss out—secure your spot now!

Host Club: Rotary Club of Kabitirtha Calcutta

