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## NEXT MEETING

Saturday  
28<sup>th</sup> September 2024  
at 12.00 noon  
at Rotary Club of Cochin  
Balbhavan  
Onam Meeting



BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF COCHIN

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# THE COCHIN ROTARIAN

## BUILDING TOMORROW: INSIGHTS FROM DIMITROV KRISHNAN ON SKILLING AND SUSTAINABILITY IN THE CONSTRUCTION EQUIPMENT INDUSTRY

**D**imitrov Krishnan, Managing Director of Volvo Construction Equipment India, recently shared an in-depth look into Volvo's journey, its commitment to sustainable growth, and the critical role of skilling in the construction equipment industry during his talk at the Rotary Club of Cochin.

Volvo Construction Equipment has a rich history spanning 192 years, originating in a small blacksmith village in Sweden. Acquired by Volvo in the mid-1950s, the company has since evolved into a global leader in construction machinery, currently valued at around \$10 billion globally. In India, the operation generates a turnover of approximately 2,500 crores, reflecting the rapid growth of the country's infrastructure sector.

### Volvo's Vision: Building Tomorrow

At the heart of Volvo's mission is the philosophy "Building Tomorrow," which embodies their commitment to creating sustainable infrastructure solutions. Dimitrov emphasized that infrastructure is driven by the needs of the growing global population, urbanization, and the demand for sustainable solutions. Volvo aims to meet these needs with innovative and environmentally conscious technologies.

Volvo's ambition is to become 100% fossil-free by 2040, transitioning from traditional diesel engines to electric propulsion systems, including battery-



electric and hydrogen-powered engines. Dimitrov shared that while combustion engines will not disappear entirely, Volvo is investing in developing zero-emission combustion engines, such as hydrogen-powered internal combustion engines expected to launch closer to 2030. By 2030, Volvo aims for 35% of its sales to come from electric products, demonstrating their commitment to a greener future.

### Skilling and Leadership Development: A Core Focus

Dimitrov highlighted that beyond products, Volvo's success is deeply rooted in its focus on people. Recognizing the importance of talent development, Volvo has established several initiatives to nurture leadership and skills within the industry. A flagship program is "ExcelHER," which aims to help women who have taken career breaks re-enter the workforce. This nine-month pro-

gram is not limited to technical roles but spans across functions such as human resources, finance, and other business areas. Since its inception, ExcelHER has successfully integrated 200 women back into professional roles, with a recent batch of 50 women professionals joining.

The program is designed with a supportive environment, including coaching, buddy systems, and a structured approach to rebuild the confidence of participants. Dimitrov noted that the program has seen women with career breaks ranging from one to 15 years, demonstrating Volvo's commitment to diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

### **Industry-Wide Skilling Initiatives**

As the Chairman of the Infrastructure Equipment Sector Council (IESC), Dimitrov discussed the broader industry efforts under the Skill India movement. The IESC, a sector skill council under the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and the Ministry of Skill Development, accredits training centers and organizes skilling activities specifically tailored for the construction equipment industry. The council works closely with industry partners to develop a skilled workforce, from equipment operators to technicians and supervisory staff.

Volvo's Customer Center in Bangalore plays a crucial role in these skilling efforts, providing an extensive training infrastructure that includes state-of-the-art simulators and workshop-based classrooms where large-scale equipment can be used for hands-on training. This center has been instrumental in training operators, sales personnel,

and technicians, ensuring they are well-equipped to meet the industry's evolving needs.

In addition to operator training, Volvo uses competitive learning programs to foster continuous improvement among its staff and partners. These include skill competitions like the "Gold Star" program, which tests knowledge, and the "Master Program," which challenges technicians to solve real-world technical problems in a competitive environment. Such initiatives not only enhance skills but also motivate participants through the spirit of competition.

### **Partnerships and Community Engagement**

Dimitrov also highlighted Volvo's dedication to societal and academic partnerships. A notable collaboration is with the GMR Varalakshmi Foundation, which provides vocational training to individuals affected by land acquisition. Volvo supports this initiative by supplying equipment, training content, and simulator-based training for students. These programs cater to individuals with minimal formal education, often dropouts from the eighth to tenth standards, who, after a 90-day program, become certified junior operators ready for employment in the construction industry.

Volvo's commitment to community development extends to Kerala, where they have partnered with the Indian Institute for Infrastructure and Construction (IIIC) in Kollam. This center, supported by the Kerala Academy for Skills Excellence (KASE) and the ULCC, Asia's largest cooperative for construction, trains local manpower for export to Gulf countries and other regions. Volvo has provided equipment and resources to facilitate operator train-

ing, addressing the high demand for skilled labor in the construction sector.

### **Competitive Landscape and Market Presence**

Despite operating in a highly competitive environment with global players such as John Deere, Caterpillar, Komatsu, and Hyundai, Volvo maintains a strong presence in specific market segments. In India, Volvo holds about a 6-7% market share overall, with a commanding 40-50% share in the mining segment due to their high-performance, fuel-efficient machines. In Kerala, Volvo's equipment is primarily used in quarrying and road construction, sectors that are crucial to the state's infrastructure development.

Dimitrov also discussed the importance of technology and digitalization in Volvo's operations. While AI is not yet embedded within their equipment, Volvo leverages AI and IoT in their support systems and product development processes. Their equipment typically includes multiple electronic control units, allowing for remote diagnostics and early detection of defects, thus enhancing safety and reducing operational costs for customers.

### **Looking Ahead: Sustainability and Innovation**

In closing, Dimitrov emphasized the importance of collaboration in driving innovation and sustainability. Volvo actively partners with competitors, academic institutions, and societal organizations to develop and scale new technologies that can address the industry's challenges. This approach not only fosters innovation but also ensures that Volvo remains at the forefront of sustainable infra-



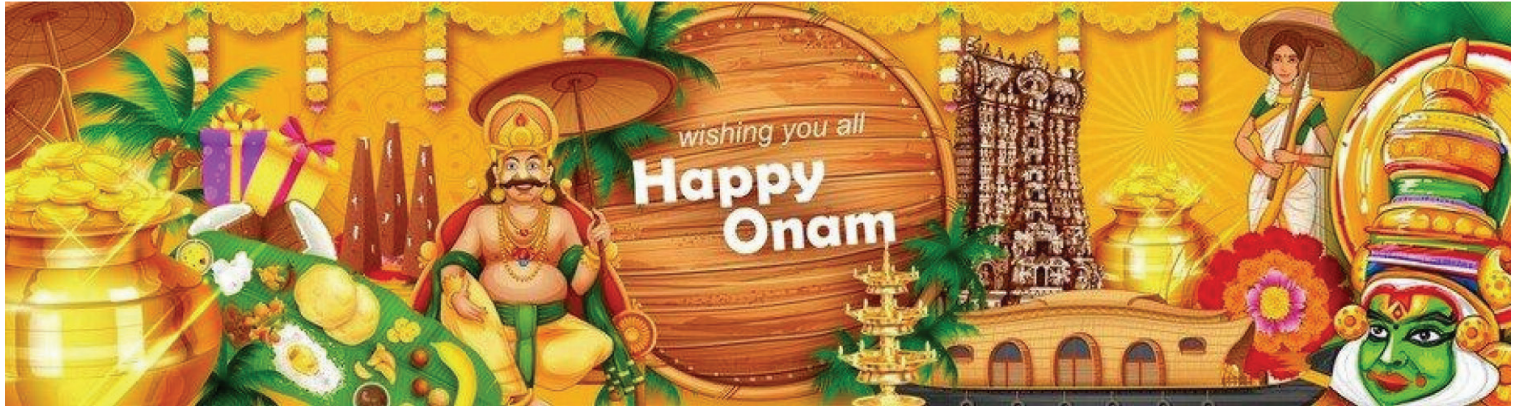
structure development.

Dimitrov Krishnan's insights provided a comprehensive perspective

on how Volvo Construction Equipment is shaping the future of the industry through a commitment to sustainability, skilling, and innovative partnerships. His leadership un-

derscores the crucial role of aligning business goals with broader societal needs, ensuring that Volvo continues to build the world we want to live in—sustainably and inclusively.

## ONAM: THE FESTIVAL OF UNITY, HARVEST, AND HERITAGE IN KERALA



Onam, the most vibrant and widely celebrated festival in Kerala, is a time of joy, togetherness, and cultural richness. This ten-day festival marks the beginning of the Malayalam calendar and is observed with immense enthusiasm across the state. Rooted in Hindu mythology and agricultural traditions, Onam is celebrated by Keralites irrespective of caste, religion, or creed, making it a truly secular festival that brings people together.

### The Legend of Mahabali

The origins of Onam are linked to the legend of King Mahabali, a benevolent Asura king who once ruled Kerala. Under his reign, the kingdom flourished with prosperity, equality, and happiness. However, his growing power and influence made the gods anxious, leading them to seek the help of Lord Vishnu. Disguised as a dwarf Brahmin named Vamana, Vishnu approached Mahabali and requested three feet of land. In his humility and generosity, Mahabali agreed, only to be pushed to the netherworld by Vishnu, who expanded

to a gigantic size and covered the earth and sky in two steps. As a final request, Mahabali was granted permission to visit his beloved subjects once a year, which is commemorated as Onam.

### The Harvest Festival

Onam is also a harvest festival, celebrating the new yield of rice and other crops. This aspect of the festival reflects Kerala's agrarian roots and the significance of agriculture in the lives of its people. It is a time when households prepare special feasts and offer thanks for the bounty of nature. The Onam sadya, a traditional vegetarian banquet served on banana leaves, is a highlight, featuring an array of dishes like avial, thoran, sambar, and payasam. The sumptuous meal symbolizes the abundance of the harvest season and the spirit of sharing.

### Rituals and Celebrations

The celebrations of Onam are marked by a series of rituals, cultural events, and community activities. The festival begins with Atham, the

first day of Onam, when people start preparing their homes with intricate floral arrangements called pookalam. These colorful and artistic flower carpets are laid at the entrance of homes, symbolizing a grand welcome to King Mahabali.

Another significant aspect of Onam is Vallam Kali, the traditional snake boat race that takes place in the backwaters of Kerala. Teams row the beautifully decorated boats in a spirited competition, drawing large crowds of spectators. Other cultural events include Pulikali (the tiger dance), Kaikottikali (a graceful folk dance), and various performances showcasing Kerala's rich classical arts.

In temples, special prayers and poojas are conducted, and devotees visit to seek blessings. The state government and various cultural organizations also arrange public events, parades, and exhibitions that capture the essence of Kerala's heritage.

### A Time for Togetherness and Giving

Onam is not just about rituals and

feasts; it's a time for families and communities to come together. People travel from far and wide to be with their loved ones during this festival. The spirit of Onam transcends barriers, fostering unity and camaraderie among Keralites. It is also a time for giving, with many engaging in charitable acts, sharing their wealth and joy with those less fortunate.

### **Onam in Modern Times**

While the essence of Onam remains deeply rooted in tradition, modern times have seen changes in how the festival is celebrated. The core values of love, generosity, and togetherness, however, continue to thrive. Onam

today is celebrated with grand parades, cultural extravaganzas, and digital engagements that connect Keralites globally. Despite the evolving nature of the festivities, the festival's significance as a symbol of Kerala's rich cultural tapestry remains undiminished.

Onam is more than just a festival; it is a celebration of Kerala's culture, values, and the timeless spirit of unity. As Keralites come together to honor their heritage and share the joy of the season, Onam stands as a reminder of the power of community, the beauty of tradition, and the importance of gratitude. Let us embrace the spirit of Onam, cherish our bonds, and look forward to a future filled with prosperity and harmony. Happy Onam to all!

**By Rtn Prathik Nayar**

## **MARK DANIEL MALONEY - TRUSTEE CHAIR 2024-25**

### **September 2024**

“The great use of a life,” wrote American philosopher William James in 1900, “is to spend it for something that outlasts it.”

Some leave a legacy through family and friendships, others through faith or principles, and still others through their professions. The Rotary Foundation offers another powerful option.

As a believer in the power of passing down a legacy through The Rotary Foundation Endowment, I was humbled that my wife, Gay, and I were able recently to help others in Rotary leave their legacy.

Our district (6860 in northern Alabama) had never organized a fundraising dinner focused on the Foundation's Endowment before, but we knew it was time. We called it a legacy dinner, emphasizing giving's long-term impact.

Progress was slow at first, and there were skeptics who doubted we could raise \$1 million, our initial goal. However, we remained optimistic, setting a date for 23 February 2024, Rotary's anniversary.

During this campaign, committee members traveled throughout northern Alabama, meeting with small groups



in fireside chats about contributing to the Endowment. Then, significant gifts began coming in. One Rotarian made a \$25,000 commitment, handing over a check for \$10,000. Soon, other members followed suit, and we had more than \$200,000 in gifts and commitments.

We still had far to go but if there is one thing I know about Rotary, it is this: If you present the opportunity to members, they will respond. Topping off the district's generosity were two surprises. One was a bequest commitment of \$500,000, and then another of \$560,000.

By the end of the campaign, our committee had exceeded our greatest expectations: We had raised \$2,729,863.14 for the Endowment, nearly triple our goal. The impact of those gifts will create a legacy that will keep on giving forever.

No single club or district alone will achieve our goal of fortifying The Rotary Foundation Endowment to \$2.025 billion by 2025. Not all of us can give \$25,000 now or as part of an estate plan. But I also know many of us can.

Please help us reach that Endowment goal and in doing so leave behind a legacy and further the work of future generations of Rotary members by visiting [rotary.org/legacy](http://rotary.org/legacy). On behalf of the Foundation Trustees, I am grateful for your Rotary legacy.