

The Lighthouse

Rotary
Club of Madras



WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS

ISSUE 23

December 07
2025



SERVICE ABOVE SELF

BIRTHDAYS 🎂



Rtn Balasubramanian M	4th December
Rtn Amandeep Singh Kandhari	4th December
Rtn Bharat B Mohindra	7th December
Niharika Akula, Spouse of Rtn Ramakanth Akula	1st December
Chandrika, Spouse of Rtn Sankara Narayanan A	3rd December
Narayani, Spouse of Rtn Ravi Moorthy	6th December

ANNIVERSARY 🎉



Rtn Doulat Jain & Gulab Jain	3rd December
Rtn Vummidi Shailesh Raj & V Sushma	4th December
Rtn Hiren Bhaskar Shah & Nita	4th December
Rtn Rakesh Jaiswal & Ar Smita	7th December



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Rtn Prasanna Rajagopalan

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Rtn Balakrishna S

PRESIDENT - NOMINEE

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YATRTECHS

Send in your articles, news and stories for consideration in the Lighthouse bulletin to: lighthouse@rotarymadras.in
Stay updated with our very own RCM magazine!

Rotary Club of Madras (RCM)

Minutes of the 22nd Weekly Meeting held on 2 December 2025

1.30 pm at Hotel Hyatt Regency, Teynampet, Chennai

Call to Order

President Rtn. Nikhil Raj called the 22nd weekly meeting to order and the Rotary song was rendered.

Confirmation of Previous Minutes

The minutes of the 21st weekly meeting was confirmed.

President's Announcements:

The President welcomed all members and guests including the guest speaker Ms. Aparna Popat, Mr. Hemendra Shah, son of Rtn. D.K. Shah, a former club member, and Probus Club members Mr. Namashivayam and Mr. Ram Mohan.

The President announced that PP Rtn S Ravi has been officially elected as District Governor Nominee Designate for the year 2028–29. He said that this is a historic moment with back-to-back Governors from RCM: 2027–28 – PP Rtn Dr Vijaya Bharathi

Rangarajan and 2028–29 – PP Rtn S Ravi. The last time this happened was in 1988–89 (Rtn. V. Chidambaram) and 1989–90 (Rtn Dr. M. Nataraj). PP Rtn S Ravi will be the 20th Governor of our club.

A centenary workshop was conducted with over 30 participants, to brainstorm archiving and documentation plans for RCM's 100th year. Rtn. Dr. Anuradha Ganesan will present the plan in February 2026. Several initiatives begin this year and will culminate in the centenary year.

Project Updates:

President Nikhil Raj and Rtn Arjun Ananth visited the Kalaignar Centenary Super Speciality Hospital, Guindy, where two dialysis machines donated by Tecnicas Reunidas (through Rtn Antony Lobo) were installed. The hospital now has 32 functioning machines, but demand continues to be very high.

Donation Updates:

As announced by the President at the 19th weekly meeting, this year, Anurag Jain (through the Jain Family Foundation) had contributed USD 250,000 to the Rotary foundation as directed gift for projects of RCM. Anurag Jain has conveyed to the President that this contribution is in memory of his father-in-law, the late Sushil Gupta, former RI President Elect.

Karnataka Bank has sanctioned Rs. 25 lakhs for the HPV Vaccination Program thanks to the efforts of IPP Rtn Chella Krishna G and Shri Ganapati. The target for the year is 10,000 vaccines and we have completed approximately 7,000 so far.

President Nikhil Raj acknowledged the efforts of several members in raising funds for the golf event, including Rtn. Ishwar Achanta (Rs. 2 lakhs from Chennai Port Trust), Rtn. Govind Parekh, Rtn. Prasanna Rajagopalan and Rtn. Krishnamurthy Vijayan (Rs. 5 lakhs from IDFC Bank Ltd), Rtn. Dhananjaya Das and Rtn. Iqbal Sait (Rs. 5 lakhs from Tube Investments),

Rtn. Iqbal Sait (contribution from Apexon), Rtn. Harish and Rtn. Shankar Menon (contribution from Chakiat Shipping), Rtn. Hemant P. Chordia (contribution from Omega Healthcare), Rtn. Vijay Balaji (contribution from Unifi) and Rtn. P.S. Jagdish (Contribution from Enam & Suryoday)

Secretary's Announcements by Rtn. Prasanna Rajagopalan:

Secretary announced that wearing name badges is now mandatory. Sergeants will ensure compliance from the next meeting. Members are requested to return the badges after each meeting.

The 21-day AGM notice has been circulated. Financials for Rotary Club of Madras (RCM), Rotary Club of Madras Charitable Trust (RCMCT), Rotary Club of Madras Boys Town Society (RCMBTS) have been shared. There will be back-to-back Meetings on 9 December 2025 and 10 December 2025. On 9 December, there will be a regular afternoon

Guest Speaker :

Rtn. Ishwar Achanta introduced Aparna Popat, highlighting her exceptional achievements and her impact on Indian Sport. Aparna shared insights into her journey,

Vote of Thanks:

Rtn. Rachna Muralidharan proposed the Vote of Thanks.

meeting with Guest Speaker Dr. Jaishree Gopal speaking on “Ozempic, Mounjaro & Obesity”. The 10 December meeting will be an Evening Meeting for felicitation of DG-Nominee Designate Rtn. S. Ravi .

Secretary announced the birthdays, spouses' birthdays and wedding anniversaries for the week (1st Dec to 7th Dec 2025)

discipline, mental strength, and experiences representing India on the global stage. President Nikhil presented her with RCM's Timeless Legacy Book.

Adjournment:

The President adjourned the meeting.

APARNA POPAT: THE UNSTOPPABLE SHUTTLE QUEEN

A CONVERSATION BETWEEN RTN ISHWAR ACHANTA AND BADMINTON LEGEND APARNA POPAT



In a riveting session held on a rainy afternoon, the Rotary Club of Madras hosted one of India's most decorated badminton stars, Aparna Popat. Introduced by Rtn. Ishwar Achanta as a player who “practically owned the courts” for a decade, Popat brought alive the grit and glory of Indian badminton from an era long before Instagram reels and viral fame.

The Making of a Champion

The conversation began with Popat's early love for sport. As a child, she played anything she could—cricket with the boys, gymnastics, and finally, badminton, which she discovered at the age of eight. Her first coach, Anil Pradhan, made a bold prophecy on day one, telling her parents:

“I'm going to take this child and put her on the map of Indian sport.”

But the ascent was far from smooth. After becoming a national champion at 11, she hit a rough patch in the under-15 category, losing to the same opponent nine times in a row. Following a tearful loss in the national finals, Pradhan promised to transform her game in six months. True to his word, the next time they met, Popat won the first game 11-0.

That turnaround, she said, taught her a lifelong lesson: a win is yours only for a limited time; every match begins at “love all”.

Discipline and Sacrifice

At 16, Popat left home to train at the Prakash Padukone Academy in Bangalore—no small decision in an era without mobile phones or today's easy connectivity. She spoke about the cultural and personal adjustments she had to make, including shifting from a strict vegetarian diet to eating eggs and sandwiches to meet the nutritional demands of elite sport. Her academics were no less demanding. Her school principal allowed her to travel for tournaments on one non-negotiable condition: her grades could not drop.

The result of this single-minded discipline? A staggering record of 16 National Championship titles, including nine consecutive senior national titles!



Battling the Odds: Blisters, Illness, and Injury

Drawing her out with pointed questions, Rtn Achanta invited Popat to share how she coped with adversity. She recounted three remarkable instances where she won against all odds:

The Miracle Blister

During a team championship, she developed a massive heel blister that made even wearing shoes excruciating. Through deep meditation and what she described as “a miracle,” the blister healed in a day and a half, allowing her to step on court and help Karnataka beat the Railways team for the first time.

The Lucknow Blackout

At the Nationals in Lucknow, severe food

poisoning left her too weak to even warm up properly. In the finals, just as she began to struggle, there was a sudden power cut. That unexpected pause gave her a precious window to recover her strength—enough to go back on court and win the title.

The Ninth Title

In 2006, playing her final National Championship, Popat faced a young Saina Nehwal while nursing a serious wrist injury. She had been unable to practice on consecutive days, yet she promised her physiotherapist that she would win. Keeping her word, she defeated Nehwal to claim a record-equalling ninth national title, with her mentor Prakash Padukone watching from the sidelines.

The Evolution of Indian Badminton

The discussion then shifted to how Indian badminton has evolved.

Popat recalled that in her time, the government sponsored only eight tournaments a year, sending four boys but just one girl. On one trip to Taipei, she was even booked on a cargo flight, prompting an airline official to ask her, only half-jokingly, “Are you a package?”

In contrast, she noted, today’s athletes play

20 or more tournaments a year, backed by a robust ecosystem of sports science experts, nutritionists, physios, and government funding, especially after the 2010 Commonwealth Games.

“Confidence comes from evidence,” she said, emphasizing that mental strength is not magic, it is built on preparation, support systems, and a professional environment.

sh Padukone watching from the sidelines.



Reflections, Ruthlessness, and Legacy

When asked about the supposed lack of “ruthlessness” in some current Indian athletes—citing, for instance, Lakshya Sen’s narrow miss at the Paris Olympics—Popat was quick to defend the new generation. Today’s players, she argued, are training to be confident and aggressive, but sport often comes down to a single point, a split-second decision, rather than a simple absence of killer instinct.

On a lighter note, she confirmed that she had once played an exhibition match against Deepika Padukone, who briefly trained as a junior at the academy. And when Achanta asked how many rackets she had broken in frustration over her long career, her answer

was instant and emphatic: “Zero.”

For Popat, the court is a sanctuary, and the racket is a weapon to be worshipped, not smashed.

In closing, she was asked what advice she would give her 10-year-old self. Her response captured the spirit of a true champion:

“Detach yourself from your titles... The harder you work, the luckier you get.”

Rtn Ishwar Achanta wrapped up the session by thanking Aparna Popat for her candour and resilience, and for setting the benchmarks that have allowed today’s Indian badminton stars to dream and achieve even bigger.



HISTORY REPEATS, LEGACY GROWS: PP RTN S. RAVI ELECTED DISTRICT GOVERNOR 2028–29



Heartiest congratulations to our PP Rtn S Ravi, on his election as our club's 20th District Governor for the Rotary year 2028–29. This is a proud and fitting recognition of his leadership, and we at Rotary Club of Madras must celebrate this milestone with him.

Throughout his years with us, he has shown a rare and inspiring passion in everything he took on whether in Rotary service or other endeavours. That passion, combined with exceptional people management skills and a warm, friendly demeanour, has earned him the respect and affection of his colleagues and friends alike. Time and again he has aimed high, proved doubters wrong, and successfully completed ambitious goals; the qualities that serve the district and our club extraordinarily well.

If there is one constructive note to offer, it is his drive and directness, born of great commitment, that can sometimes unintentionally step on toes. We are confident, however, that with broad responsibility and perspective this office brings, any rough edges will be smoothed and his natural finesse will be further honed.

That his governorship coincides with the Centennial of RC Madras makes this moment even more special. It is indeed in the fitness of things to have a Governor from our own club during our Centennial Year—an advantage that will augur well for seamless planning and for involving all the Southern districts in the South of India in our celebrations and programs.

As a club, let us extend our warmest wishes for a successful, fulfilling, and impactful year as District Governor. We stand ready to support him in every way as he leads us through that historic year.

Finally, history is repeating itself, for after 38 years, we will have two of our members, don the mantle of District Governor, consecutively in the Rotary years 2027-28 and 2028-29.

The last time this happened was in the years 1988-89 and 1989-90.

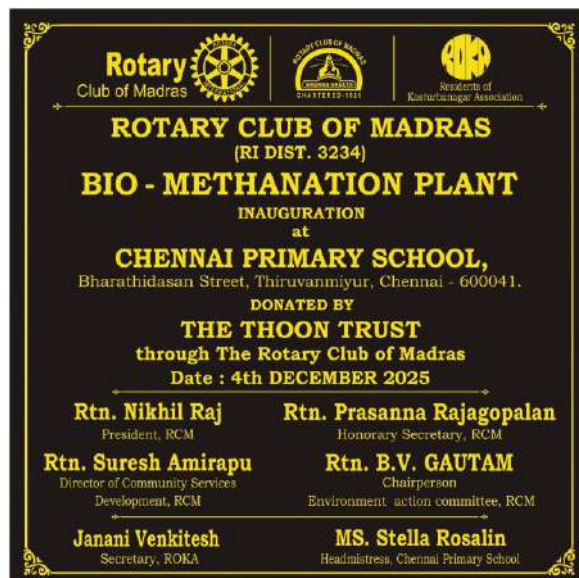


**-Best wishes
PP Rtn N K Gopinath**



The Bio-Methanation Plant at Chennai Primary School, Thiruvannmiyur, was generously donated by The Thoon Trust, the philanthropic trust of our own Rtn Kadiresan Adityan R. Through this initiative, Rotary Club of Madras and Thoon Trust reaffirm their commitment to sustainable waste management and a cleaner, greener neighbourhood. The plant

was inaugurated by our President Nikhil Raj, joined by members of the Environment Committee and RCMers, Rtn P B Prasad, Rtn Vikram, Rtn Sabina Narayan, Rtn Sumit, Rtn Dr Hande and his wife, volunteers from the Kasturba Nagar RWA, and the School Headmistress.



- Rtn B V Gautam

The Interact Club of CSI Ewarts Matriculation Higher Secondary School held its installation ceremony on 27 Nov 25, during which Ms. Swathi was formally installed as President.

President-Elect Rtn Bobby Balakrishna, Secretary Rtn Prasanna Rajagopalan, and PP Rtn Venkhat Ramani were present and graciously graced the occasion.



-Rtn Suman Voora
Youth Services Director



Our visit to Kalaingar Super Speciality Hospital Guindy where RCM installed 2 dialysis machines with CSR support of Technicas Reunidas. Thank you to Rtn Anthony Lobo for making the connect with the company and to Rtn Ganesh Ananthakrishnan for the supporting work to get them on board. A wonderfully built hospital doing great work for the community.



Rtn Narasimhan V S

FOUNDING FORCE



1. Think about one seemingly small, unconventional, or even rebellious act you undertook in your younger days – something that might not have seemed important at the time, but unexpectedly created a lasting, positive ripple effect in your life or in the lives of others. What was that act, and what did it teach you about the unpredictable nature of impact?

Sailing Against the Current

From my younger days, I've always had a streak of "going against the current."

One defining moment came when I was 38. I was comfortably settled in Bombay in a senior position with a multinational company, happily married, with two young children. Life was stable and predictable. That was when I received a lucrative job offer from Dubai.

My wife, ever supportive, agreed that I could take it up. The rest of my family, however, was firmly against the move—and they had their reasons. Still, true to my nature, I went ahead and accepted the offer.

That single decision changed the course of my life. It led to a rewarding international career

over 15 years in Dubai, London, and Singapore, followed by another 10 years with a multinational joint venture in Chennai. Along the way, I built strong corporate connections in India and abroad—relationships I never imagined would later become tools for service.

"If opportunity knocks on your door, be wise enough not to let it go away."

On my return to Chennai, I joined the Rotary Club of Madras—thanks to Rtn. Dr. D.C. Kothari, who gently but firmly "pulled" me out of another Rotary club and brought me into RCM. Since then, I've tried to make myself useful in

various capacities, including serving as a Trustee of RCMCT.

In keeping with my nature of doing something different, I one day asked myself a simple question:

"Why not use my corporate contacts to bring in CSR donations for Rotary's work for the needy?"

Once the question was asked, there was no looking back. I began reaching out to former colleagues and corporate leaders. It took persistent effort, countless follow-ups, and—most importantly—a willingness to bury my ego at the door.

The results have been deeply satisfying. Over the last two Rotary years, RCM has received CSR donations of over Rs. 3.5 crores, with the

2. If you were writing a candid, no-holds-barred letter to the RCM of 2050, what's the one indispensable piece of wisdom, the most critical warning, or the most audacious vision you'd impart to ensure our club's enduring relevance and impact?

There was a time in RCM when it was difficult to find Rotarians willing to accept leadership roles – whether as President or even as Directors of Avenues of Service. Happily, that phase is behind us. Thanks to the guidance and mentoring of our senior Rotarians, we now have many members ready and willing to shoulder responsibility.

However, if RCM is to continue to enjoy pride of place among Rotary clubs, we must consciously nurture the next line of leaders – our green Rotarians.

I have observed that participation in various club projects, especially by green Rotarians, is not yet satisfactory. A quick look at the photographs in our Lighthouse weekly bulletin shows that very few green Rotarians are present at project activities. While it is true that

3. Rotary prides itself on service, but sustained impact often requires navigating difficult currents. Reflect on a time when RCM faced a significant internal or external hurdle – a crisis of confidence, a dissenting opinion, or a major setback. What was the real story behind that challenge, what uncomfortable truths did you have to confront, and what leadership lesson did you personally carry forward from that experience?

RCM is, at its heart, a community of people – and where there are people, there will naturally be different opinions, ideas, and ways of doing things. The strength of RCM lies in the way it handles these differences. Under the guidance of our senior Rotarians, the club has nurtured a truly democratic, consultative culture, where matters requiring the approval of the General Body are placed before members, rather than being decided unilaterally by the Board. This healthy and transparent way of conducting Rotary business is what will sustain our growth. With 99% perspiration from our members and 1% of God's grace, RCM is well on course to thrive far beyond its second centennial.

prospect of substantial additional support in the current Rotary year as well.

I have immensely enjoyed this phase of my association with RCM. It has allowed me to blend my instinct to "go against the current" with Rotary's ideals of service—and to do something a little different, for a cause far bigger than myself.

some do take active interest despite demanding careers and business commitments, I would be delighted to see many more of them on the ground, where the real magic of Rotary happens.

My wish is to see at least 25 to 30 green Rotarians actively participating in our club projects on a regular basis. Such involvement will not only give them a deeper understanding of our service initiatives but also help them develop a genuine passion for Rotary.

I firmly believe that this engagement will lay a strong foundation for future leaders of our club. In turn, it will build a more vibrant RCM and ensure its continued growth, relevance, and impact for several decades to come.



HPV Vaccination Awareness Event at Rajshree Sugars Ramakrishna Vidyalaya School, Mundiambakkam
A full day, 2-part program on Human Papilloma

Virus Vaccination awareness was carried out on the 1st of December 2025 at Rajshree Sugars Ramakrishna Vidyalaya School, Mundiambakkam.



The morning session was aimed at the teachers and students of the school and was attended by around 250 to 300 members. The students were smart, engaged and the session was professionally conducted by the students who gave the welcome address, introduced

the speakers and delivered the vote of thanks flawlessly. It was a proud privilege for me to see these young women of tomorrow and to help empower them further by safeguarding their future through HPV vaccination.



The second session aimed at the parents was scheduled post a sumptuous lunch, and during the session the importance of vaccinating all eligible young girls to prevent cervical cancer and the need for regular screening for cervical cancer in women aged 30 to 60 years was highlighted. Following the session there was a vigorous Q&A session and all the audience's questions were addressed.

This session was attended by around 150 to 200 parents. Both events were meticulously organized by the school authorities under the guidance of PDG Rtn Krishnaswami and I would like to extend special thanks personally and on behalf of the club for this opportunity to partner and protect young girls from cervical cancer.



-Rtn Dr Sangeetha Viswanathan

THE ENTREPRENEURSHIP'S ORGANIZATION (EO) EVENT, EASILY THE MOST HAPPENING BLOCKBUSTER OF THIS ROTARY YEAR!











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