

# The Lighthouse

WEEKLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF MADRAS

ISSUE 27  
JANUARY 04  
2026

Rotary  
Club of Madras



## BIRTHDAYS

Rtn Avali Srinivasan	29 <sup>th</sup> December
Rtn Archana Parikh	30 <sup>th</sup> December
PP Rtn Dr Arulmozi Varman N.V.	1 <sup>st</sup> January
Rtn Linesh Sanatkumar	3 <sup>rd</sup> January
Rtn Dr Fharzana Siraj	4 <sup>th</sup> January
Dr. Saswati, Spouse of Rtn. Bhaswar Mukerjee	29 <sup>th</sup> December
Karina, Spouse of PP Rtn George B. Cherian	29 <sup>th</sup> December
Subha, Spouse of PP Rtn Srikanth S.N.	4 <sup>th</sup> January
Achu Kurian, Spouse of Rtn. Jacob Kurian	4 <sup>th</sup> January
Jeyasri Raghunandan, Spouse of Rtn. Akur Raman	5 <sup>th</sup> January
Raghunandan	

## ANNIVERSARY

Rtn Tareen A.K. & Sanober	29 <sup>th</sup> December
Rtn Ravi Prakash Singhee & Manisha Singhee	29 <sup>th</sup> December
Rtn Nimish C. Tolia & Sushma	29 <sup>th</sup> December
Rtn Fazal Mohamed M. & Shameem	4 <sup>th</sup> January
Rtn Sriya Chari & Vivek Chandrasekharan	5 <sup>th</sup> January



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Rtn Akur Raman Raghunandan

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Bulletin Design:

**YATRATECHS**

## Rotary Club of Madras

26<sup>th</sup> Weekly Meeting

### TOPIC:

### YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH

THE NEW RISK FACTORS:  
Screens, Stress, Loss of Social  
Connection and the Silent  
Erosion of Resilience.



### SPEAKER:

### Uttara Bharath Kumar

Global Public Health Leader | Social and  
Behavioral Educator | Creative Communicator

Tuesday, 6th January 2026 | 1.30 pm

Lunch : 12:30 - 1:30 pm at Hyatt Regency, Chennai.

Spouses are invited for this meeting

Rtn. Nikhil Raj

President

Rtn. Prasanna Rajagopalan

Honorary Secretary

Rtn. Rajesh Mani

Director - Club Service

Rtn. Mohit Bajaj

Chairperson - Programs Committee

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

## The Holy Sapaad Hunters – A Margazhi Treat to Remember



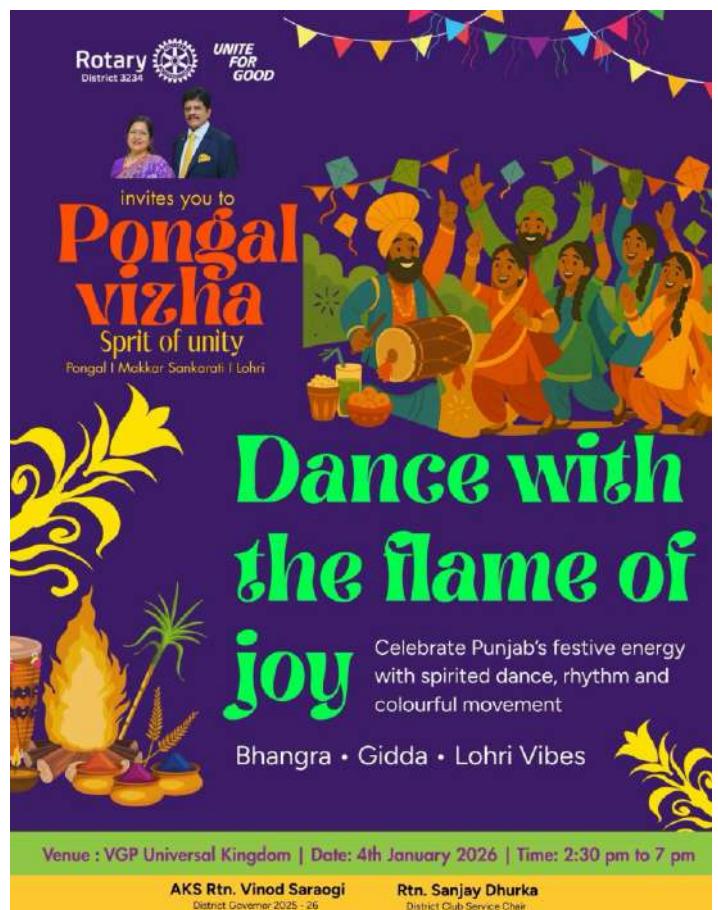
Margazhi in Chennai is synonymous with soulful music, spiritual awakening, and vibrant cultural gatherings. Alongside the melodies of the season come another cherished tradition—Sabha Sappadu, lovingly served in iconic Sabha canteens that are as legendary as the concerts themselves, where devotion, discipline, and deliciousness come together on a banana leaf.

This Margazhi, members of the Rotary Club of Madras were treated to an equally enriching gastronomic experience by The Holy Sappadu Hunters. This initiative beautifully blended culture, camaraderie, and cuisine.

Led by the ever-enthusiastic Club Services Director Rajesh Mani and ably supported by Rtn Abhay Mehta, Rtn Nimish Tolia, and Sushma, the team curated a memorable Sabha Sappadu experience for fellow RCMers. The occasion was made even more special as it coincided with Rtn Nimish and Sushma's anniversary celebrations, adding warmth and meaning to the gathering.

The thoughtfully prepared traditional meals rich in taste, tradition, and timing brought back memories of Margazhi mornings spent hopping between sabhas, concerts, and canteens. For many RCMers, it was not merely a meal, but a celebration of Chennai's living heritage and shared joy.

Amidst the divine music of Margazhi, The Holy Sappadu Hunters reminded us that food when served with love and purpose, becomes a form of seva nourishing the body, uplifting the spirit, and strengthening fellowship.





## ROTARY RADAR

The United States officially began its withdrawal from the World Health Organization (WHO) earlier this year through a presidential executive order. Under the mandatory one-year notice period, the U.S. exit from the WHO and the cessation of funding would take effect around January 22, 2026.

At the same time, many governments are retreating from the globalism that defined the post-Cold War era and are reducing financial support for UN agencies, which now face deep funding shortfalls.

As the United Nations confronts an existential crisis, community groups that played an important role in the UN's founding and have long enjoyed close partnerships with the institution, must once again step up to help the world body navigate its current challenges.

The term "United Nations" first appeared in the 1942 Declaration by United Nations, a document signed by 26 Allied nations during World War II as an attempt to prevent future global conflicts. Two years later, delegations from the United States, Great Britain, the Soviet Union, and China met in Washington, D.C., to develop a proposal for the structure of this global peace-making body.

In the period leading up to the 1945 UN Charter Conference, many Americans embraced "America First" isolationism and were skeptical of global governance. In response, Rotary and many large international civic organizations were tasked by the U.S. government with a critical mission: using their global reach to broaden public support for an intergovernmental organization dedicated to fostering cooperation, maintaining peace, and addressing global challenges. Through

conferences and membership publications, Rotary promoted this visionary concept of a world body that promised to "save succeeding generations from the scourge of war."

Their efforts paid off. When delegates from 50 nations gathered in San Francisco in 1945 to negotiate and finalize what became the UN Charter, the U.S. State Department invited Rotary and 41 other nongovernmental organizations to serve as consultants and technical advisers during the negotiations.

These NGOs were not mere observers. They brought persuasive advocacy and specialized expertise that helped shape the treaty. Their future role was ultimately enshrined in Article 71 of the UN Charter, which authorizes the Economic and Social Council to establish formal channels for consultation with NGOs. This provision ensured that civil society would have an institutional voice within the UN system.

Although the UN initially functioned primarily as a forum for sovereign states, the global landscape has changed dramatically over the past eight decades. Civic organizations have expanded rapidly at the local and national levels—particularly in developing countries—and today they represent a powerful "third force" in international affairs.

In recent years, I have attended numerous major UN conferences. Nearly all of them, whether focused on women, food security, or climate change, have been accompanied by robust NGO forums designed to broaden participation and help shape global agendas. As former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali once observed, "NGOs are an essential part of the legitimacy without which no international activity can be meaningful."

Civic organizations amplify citizen concerns, monitor compliance with international agreements, and help implement them. They bridge the gap between global policy and everyday life through public campaigns, community programs, and initiatives such as Model UN.

Perhaps most importantly, they bring scale. Rotary operates in more than 200 countries and geographic areas, mobilizing millions of volunteers. Rotary became a founding partner of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative in 1988, alongside the WHO, UNICEF, and others. As a result of this collaboration, global polio cases have fallen by 99.9 percent.

Many civic organizations also align their work with the UN Sustainable Development Goals, advancing progress on inequality, climate change, hunger, public health, and education. They promote peace by addressing root causes of conflict, such as poverty, lack of opportunity, and injustice, through joint development projects with UN agencies and people-to-people exchanges, including youth programs and international scholarships. Their efforts also include mediating dialogue as neutral parties and

delivering humanitarian aid.,

At this critical moment for the UN and its agencies, civic organizations must continue to do what they do best: educate the public, mobilize grassroots networks to support the UN's work, use storytelling to shape public opinion, and advocate with governments and legislatures to sustain financial commitments.

We will also continue partnering with the UN by leveraging our on-the-ground networks to provide access, sharing specialized expertise in areas such as health, food, and shelter, and using our agility and community trust to deliver aid during disasters and conflicts. Just as importantly, NGOs can help raise funds to fill the gaps left by governments. Between 2024 and 2025, Rotary was among the largest contributors to the World Health Organization.

In a world marked by conflict and political polarization, the United Nations remains a beacon of hope for millions. The WHO embodies that hope through science and global cooperation against health threats. Our longstanding partnership with the UN demonstrates how much stronger the world can be when citizens and governments work together.

**-John Hewko is a lawyer, public policy scholar, and serves as CEO of Rotary International.**  
— December 2025

John Hewko is the General Secretary and CEO of Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, serving since 2011. He is the chief operating officer of Rotary, overseeing global programs, strategy, and administration.

A former international lawyer, John Hewko worked with the World Bank for over 20 years, including leadership roles in Europe, Africa, Asia, and Latin America. His professional background brings strong governance, transparency, and global-development expertise to Rotary.

Under his leadership, Rotary has:

- Strengthened polio eradication efforts worldwide
- Expanded Rotary's global reach and partnerships
- Modernized organizational governance and operations
- Enhanced focus on impact, accountability, and sustainability

John Hewko is widely respected for his calm leadership, global perspective, and deep commitment to Rotary's mission of Service Above Self.





**FRESH FUEL**



**Q1. Fast forward 10 years: you're the one mentoring a brand-new Rotarian. What's one thing you'd urge them to do differently from how you started, and why?**

A1 : If I were mentoring a new Rotarian ten years from now, I would encourage them to balance learning with participation from the start. When I joined Rotary, I spent time understanding what the organisation stands for - reading the newsletters, going through the bylaws, learning the history of the club, and listening carefully in meetings. Being part of the Zoo Action Committee, largely as an observer, has already taught me a great deal about how

ideas take shape and how collaboration works within Rotary.

That phase of observation has been valuable. But I've also learnt that Rotary truly comes alive through action. Even small steps like offering a thought, asking a question, or volunteering can deepen understanding far more than observation alone. Impact doesn't demand readiness or expertise at the outset; it grows when curiosity is paired with involvement.

**Q2. If you could take RCM on a "field trip" to any place in the world—physical or symbolic—where would you go, and what do you hope the group would learn from that experience?**

A2: I would take RCM to a local animal rescue or adoption programme working at the community level.

Rotary does meaningful work in human healthcare by focusing on prevention, community service, and improving access to care. I see strong parallels in animal welfare, where timely medical attention, rehabilitation, and responsible adoption can create long-

term impact for both animals and people.

I would hope the group sees how animal welfare and biodiversity conservation are not separate causes, but part of the same public health and environmental ecosystem. A visit like this could spark ideas on how Rotary's experience in healthcare-driven service can be extended to include animals and the spaces we share with them.

**Q3. Rotary is about service—but service can take many forms. What's one cause or issue that keeps you up at night, and how do you hope your journey with RCM helps you address it in the long run?**

A3: The issue that stays with me is the growing human-animal conflict around stray dogs in India. It's a complex problem, and I genuinely believe both sides are right - communities deserve safety, and animals deserve humane treatment.

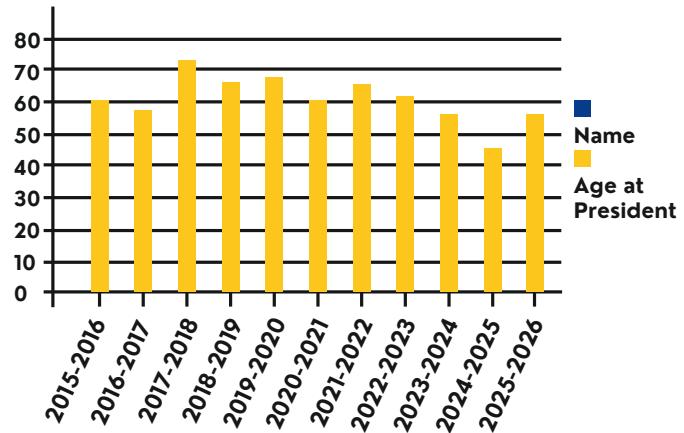
From my perspective as a veterinarian, the challenge isn't a lack of compassion, but a lack of sustained, structured solutions. Sporadic efforts don't work for either people or animals. What gives me hope is the possibility

of approaching this as a public health and community issue, rather than a polarising one.

Over time, I hope my journey with RCM allows me to explore how Rotary's strengths can contribute meaningfully here. Whether through awareness, partnerships, or long-term projects, I believe Rotary can help bridge the gap between concern and constructive action, creating safer communities while upholding humane values.

# The Age of Presidents: A Symphony Through Time

Years	Name	Age At President
2015-2016	Venkhat Ramani A S	60
2016-2017	Arulmozhi Varman Dr N.V	58
2017-2018	Mohan P.N	72
2018-2019	Ranjit Pratap	65
2019-2020	Vijaya Bharathi Rangarajan Dr.	66
2020-2021	Kapil Chitale S	60
2021-2022	Mohan Raman P V	65
2022-2023	Jayshree Sridhar	61
2023-2024	Ravi S	56
2024-2025	Chella Krishna G	45
2025-2026	Nikhil Raj	56



Each year a name, each name an age—  
 A story told from page to page.  
 From silver strands and seasoned grace,  
 To youthful spark that dared to chase.  
 It all began with sixty's poise,  
 Venkhat stood with quiet voice.  
 Then Arulmozhi, firm yet kind,  
 A scholar's heart, a thoughtful mind.  
 The years rolled on, and with them came  
 Mohan P.N.—a legacy name.  
 At seventy-two, his wisdom shone,  
 Like dusk's soft light on marble stone.  
 The sixties reigned a stately while,  
 With Ranjit, Vijaya—grace and style.  
 They brought the calm, the tried, the true,  
 With steady hands and seasoned view.  
 But time, it whispers change aloud,  
 And youth emerged beneath the shroud.  
 A subtle dip, then bold and clear—  
 Ravi stepped in, the shift was near.

And then in twenty twenty-four,  
 A wave came crashing to the shore:  
 Chella Krishna, just forty-five,  
 Lit the room, alive, alive!  
 A younger pulse, a fresher beat—  
 New footsteps echoed through the seat.  
 Though Nikhil followed, age fifty-six,  
 A blend of old and new did mix.  
 The line of time, no longer straight,  
 Now curves with vision, bends with fate.  
 For what is age but just a flame?  
 A glow that burns beneath a name.  
 Some bright with youth, some rich with years—  
 All woven threads of hopes and fears.  
 So here we stand, and here we look,  
 At more than dates in some old book.  
 We see a journey, proud and wide—  
 Of presidents with hearts as guide.  
 From eldest hands to youngest voice,  
 Each one a chapter, each a choice.



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