



Francesco Arezzo  
RI President 2025-26



Dr. Kameswar S. Elangbam  
District Governor RID 3240



Chandana Das  
President, Rotary Club of Shillong



Rtn Manisha from RC Thane along with her friend visited Rotary Club of Shillong on 24th April 2026.



## Welcome: Rotary Club of Shillong welcomes Rtn. S.K.Lato on his official visit to our club

### Looking for competent Women

We have to make our environment more inclusive for women.

An important focus area of RIPE Yinka Babalola at RI during his year will be increasing women's membership and enhancing their leadership positions. RI has around 27 per cent women as members, though some countries like Egypt have close to 50 per cent. "The Egyptians tell me that they are looking for men," he chuckles.

On a serious note, he adds, "To get more women into Rotary we have to make our environment more inclusive. A male-only environment and a mixed environment are two different things. First, we need to support women and give them opportunities to thrive. I was on the RI Board, when for the first time in 2018 it took the decision that about 30 per cent of our leadership has to be female. And every director is supposed to make that happen; as President-elect, I'm also trying to make that happen. For appointments I have to make, I'm looking for competent women. And when I see them, I give them the opportunity so that they can demonstrate what they are capable of doing."

We are seeking more women in leadership positions where only past district governors are eligible. "Governors are elected by the districts, and if districts don't select women as governors, they are shooting themselves in the foot, because when that opportunity comes, we will leave their men and choose women from other places."

Muruganandam intervenes to say that this is already happening where Babalola has to make the appointments. "For your information, he has appointed a woman — RI director Harriette Verwey from the Netherlands as the chair of RI's executive committee for 2026–27, and his admin chair is another woman... RI director Wyn Spiller from the US."

Babalola reiterates that "this is a very conscious choice. Not only for committee chairs, but also committee members, I always say: I want to see the gender balance. Not only I, but Rotary as an organisation, has been making a special effort to put women in leadership positions at different levels since we took that decision on the Board."

But, he warns, "that's not going to be enough. This same thing needs to be done at the district, and more so, at the club levels. Because the Rotary club is where everything happens."

If our clubs are not supportive of women, particularly women of child-bearing age, nothing much can change."

To my puzzled look, he says, "Yes, young women, women of child-bearing age because at that point they are dealing with many things. I love telling stories and please allow me to tell this one."

He then relates a gripping story about a club meeting that he had attended. "I just went to a random club meeting and a lady walked  
(Contd on back page)



Inauguration of Clean Drinking Water Facility at Laban Assamese Girls H S School, Laban, Shillong by the President Rtn. Chandana Das, Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) AK Das and Rtn. Kailash Verma on 29th April 2026.



Inauguration of Clean Drinking Water Facility at Shillong Vidyalaya HS School, Bishnupur, Shillong by the President Rtn. Chandana Das, Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) AK Das and Rtn. Kailash Verma on 29th April 2026.

Memento expressing gratitude to RC Shillong by Shillong Vidhyalaya Higher Secondary School

## Looking for competent Women

*(Contd from page 1)*

in with two children. One of them was about 5, and the other was 18-month-old. The younger one was sleeping in the stroller... sleeping beautifully. The 5-year-old was simply running about the meeting room.”

He was quietly observing the Rotarians’ response to this; “they did not react badly. But I’ve seen situations where Rotarians have said in such cases: ‘Can you take this child out? This is not a play place. This is serious business. Can’t you keep this child somewhere else when you come to a meeting?’”

With such an attitude, Babalola continues, women would certainly keep far away from Rotary. “Even if they join Rotary, and then get pregnant, they leave Rotary. And if the club is unlucky, they may not come back, unless they are really passionate about Rotary.”

The questions which this experience raised in his mind included what if there was a speaker that day. That particular day, the club didn’t have a speaker. What if the 18-month-old had got up from his sleep and started crying? How would the members have responded? The most interesting part of the story is that “after that day’s meeting, the members took a good decision. They asked the hotel to give them access to the small room adjacent to the meeting hall, requested the men to bring some toys for the children, and the women decided that during every meeting, one of them will serve as a nanny to all the children. And they told the women to bring their children to the club meetings. Thus, more women started coming to the meetings.”

The happy ending to this particular story is that “after a while, the men started enrolling for the nanny service, as they wanted to play with children, not just provide their toys. Because some of the older men who no longer have children at home, love the opportunity to play. That is the kind of club women would like to join... where you know that your family will not suffer and you will not be overstressed. In fact, such clubs might be a motivation for women to come to Rotary, thinking: ‘At least today I will have somebody looking after my children and I can have some peace!’”

Muruganandam endorses the push for more leadership roles for women, and says, “I’ve found that whenever we give opportunities to our women members, they outshine... they do an amazing job. They are committed, focused, hardworking.” *(Source : Rotary News)*

## GREETINGS

Rtn. Sarad Bawri celebrates his birthday on 6th May. Rtn. Ramesh Agarwalla and Anne Sarita celebrate their anniversary on 7th May. Rtn. Kailash Verma and Anne Kamla celebrate their anniversary on 8th May.

Members of RC Shillong wish you all many happy returns of the day.