



R. I. President: Gordon R. McNally

District Governor: Jeetender Gupta

ROTARY CLUB OF DELHI SOUTH NEWSLETTER "ASHOKA" July, 2023

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE TO THE CLUB



Dear Fellow Rotarians,

Thanks again for your trust in installing me as your 55th President. It is an honor to lead the club that is built and nurtured by many giants over the past 54 years.

The Governor's Official Visit together with the installation was great. DG Jeetender ji walked away impressed with our action plan and offered full support in making it happen. DG expects us to build the Rotary brand - be it naming the structures we dedicate for community service or starting the next gen club or very simply encouraging us to donate towards Rotary Foundation. As a Club we are committed to bring the brand Rotary come alive. As a starter, we will be building a home for the old age with our branding. We will build a Skill development centre which again will carry Rotary branding. Over the course of the year, we will initiate a few more projects dedicated for community service while promoting the brand ROTARY.

We were fortunate to have the presence of DGN Mahesh Trikha and DGE Ravi Gugani. Both DGN

and DGE offered full support for the success of our long term projects. IPDG Ashok Kantoor offered a helping hand as well. We have full blessings and support to make a difference in the community we live in and we surely will do our best to make it happen.

Floods in several parts of India caused fair damage. City of Delhi was not spared either as Yamuna flowed well above danger mark inundating several low lying areas displacing thousands of residents. Hon Secretary Sarvpreet arranged for the food packets and personally distributed them to the needy ones.. Mr Sumit Makhija took the initiative with another NGO to collect funds to distribute essential item kits to the needies. Funds were collected for over 100 kits in record time and the same are being distributed via partner NGO. Funds were also collected for distributing mosquito repellent to avoid spread of various water borne diseases. Kudos to the donors and the project team for moving with full speed to help in disaster relief.

We were fortunate to have Mr. Amitabh Kant, the G20 Sherpa as our first guest speaker on the subject of G20 Presidency and its impact on India. Mr Kant's speech kept the audience spellbound for the 30 minutes that he spoke. His command over the subject was second to none and his articulation was simply outstanding. After the talk, it was evident that India's growth story is here to stay and here to stay for the next 2-3 decades if not more. We are so proud of the leadership Mr Kant has provided in the development and growth of India under the leadership of our

Honorable Prime Minister. We were delighted to have Mrs Ranjita Kant present on the occasion. First lady Mini Agarwal facilitated Mrs Kant with flowers.

Mr Sumit Makhija, in partnership with PWC organized the blood donation camp at their office. We had a steady stream of donors both men and women, young and old, which was inspiring to see. God bless the donors for saving unknown lives.

Finally Nari Shakti and Atmanirbhar program commenced at Arya Samaj East of Kailash. Donors generously committed for 90 young adults to be trained over the course of next 12 months. MOUs were signed with Arya Samaj and Etasha Society, together with Mr Rajeev Seoni, our Vocational Services Director.

I want to thank each one of you for your time, your financial support and for enjoying the fellowship programs. I am sure there are areas we can do better and I will be happy to receive feedback from you via whatsapp message or just ping me. I have to admit I am not perfect nor is my team. We will make mistakes but we promise to get better each time, with your help.

Look forward to the month of August where we have another set of exciting events planned. On the personal side, my daughter is all set to move to Los Angeles for further studies. Me and my family will be away from Sept 11 th to Oct 1 to help her settle down in a new country. But no worries, we have a strong team and they will keep things going.

Enjoy life and stay healthy.

Pramoed Agarwal
President, 2023-24

From the desk of the **E D I T O R**



Wow!! What a bountiful year we bade goodbye to. It picked up crescendo as the days and the months sped fast, and then- Bingo it was bonanza time, a ceaseless flow of recognitions for services across multiple avenues. IPP Lalit has left a legacy of exceptional and outstanding work by him and his team. Quietly and seamlessly he had stepped into the role of leadership, and as quietly and furtively he slipped out of it, on a glowing note. I have repeatedly maintained that service under the auspices of the Rotary banner is not competitive. It affords to us a glow of satisfaction and gratification, for having served humanity in a meaningful manner.

Our gaze is now focused on the incoming President, who for months past, has been toiling on creating his team, on assessing the stream of projects both past and current. He has to assiduously invest his energies on a wide scale, including commitments to the district. Last month a synopsis of the plans for the year, were shared in the newsletter. I am sure members have had a chance to run through them and acquaint themselves with his vision. The President is hoping for a larger involvement of members, and hopefully one amongst the many initiatives, will strike a chord which satisfies and arouses their quest for service.

President Pramod Agarwal was formally collared, and his team introduced to the DG at the official GOV on July 14, at the Hotel Claridges. The ceremony repeats itself year after year, and yet never ceases to impress. To carry it through the evening without eliciting a yawn, the credit rests completely with Master of Ceremonies. The MC's Bhuvna Shashinath a veteran of many an installation, and the equally talented Priyanka Agarwal, swept through the evening with short crispy intones, from one part of the agenda to the other, with a svelte grace rendering the evening lissome, lithe and graceful!! It was a perfect prelude to an excellent fellowship to follow. There was the understated bonhomie redolent of the past times which are resplendent with memories of colourful settings, great cuisine and Bacchus presiding over an assemblage of satiating beverages!! An evening to remember which is what it should be, was a perfect fillip to what is poised to be an excellent and exciting year ahead!! The photographs of the evening with a short post by Bhuvna are printed elsewhere in this issue of the newsletter.

The installation evening is an opportunity for the President's clarion call to the members to raise the bar across all formats of service, this year being no exception. In fact if the DG is the chief guest, as by an advance plan and invitation

DG Jeetender Gupta was, he articulated his own inspiring vision adding weight to President Pramod's plans, who is blessed with an evocative style of speech, reflecting geniality, modesty and a well nuanced delivery.

I am sure most of you have received your copy of the Rotary News, whose cover is adorned by RI President McInally. This issue makes for an interesting reading, and as is usual, a peek into the first family's life. RIP McInally still carries the scars of a personal tragedy, losing his younger brother to the scourge of a suicidal death due to depression. Depression and mental health are stigmatised and patients suffer endlessly, unable to articulate their fears. This perhaps, and to the best of my recall, is for the first time, that mental health is being focused on for raising awareness and prioritising mental health in Rotary. It's indeed a laudable and a timely step, to alleviate the stigma associated with mental health, and am certain Rotary will respond to it in full measure.

Keep turning the pages and read the interviews of both the RI Directors from India, RID Anirudha Roychowdhury and RID Raju Subramanian which stand out for their glowing references to the work being done in India, but in the same breath they come down heavily, and in particular on aspects of Rotary leadership, on integrity and financial malfeasance at the club level. They are particularly outspoken about interference in the election processes in India of which we are well aware, having witnessed three of our outstanding PDG's felled by compatriot machinations, but dignity of silence defined their response!! New members who have recently joined RCDS are advised to read the Rotary News, as it will acquaint them with Rotary across various districts, and serve their leadership ambitions well.

There's no end to human misery caused by defiance of nature and its laws. The entire world

is in the throes of nature's angst. Europe is afire with never experienced heatwaves, Canada is denuded of large swaths of forests which have been burning for weeks with smoke affecting large parts of Eastern USA. Back home memories are afresh of the agony, despair, mayhem and destruction caused by unprecedented rains in northern India. The hills are crumbling unable to withstand the mass of concrete, which passes off as habitat. It's a thoughtless and unplanned destruction of the mountains, their pristine beauty ravaged by man's greed. The Yamuna riverbed in Delhi has been allowed to flourish as a human settlement, where there should have been none, thereby denying the river in spite to flow to its full potential. It is said that the rivers cannot be held to ransom and when in spite, they will reclaim their territory. We are witnessing the full fury and predicament of that prediction!! The capital city is a nightmare, as the slightest ingress on its infrastructure exposes its soft belly. The babudom is shameless, and regardless of witnessing the crumbling of infrastructure in cities, towns and the hills, the planned development will continue to suffer.

The worst is yet to come. Vector borne diseases are waiting to strike. The threat is serious and it's essential to take necessary precautions, to protect against the scourge. The usual menu of malaria, typhoid, chikungunya, dengue are all rearing to strike. The toll is on the rise, be careful and stay safe.

Adding misery to the natural catastrophe is greed, which is man created, and reflects the depths to which human nature has descended. Food prices have skyrocketed with tomatoes leading the surge and will become the cynosure of economic and statistical studies. And laid to rest promptly till greed raises its ugly head again. Unfortunately such studies and commissions do not come to the relief of the large underprivileged population, which continues to struggle under the weight of survival. The acrid atmosphere and mayhem which has come to descend on the universe, is prescient of the fearful revenge of nature, unwittingly aided by the greed of the human race.

We survive on hope, and it's our fervent prayer that our less privileged brethren who are striving to survive, will be in a state of reprieve in the new month, and the clouds of doom that have pervaded over them have lifted. May God be kind to restore to them their lost homes and their livelihood. We witnessed some days ago an initiative by Sumit Makhija-can Kriti by far

away- to support survival of those rendered homeless by supplying a kit of basic necessities. It's a laudable initiative, which helps recall in the first place, the very reason of our joining Rotary. It's been an excellent collective effort of serving the community in the best traditions of Rotary. I must however, insert a caveat that such initiatives must be discussed in the general forum for consensus, to achieve a larger participation. I am sure we could have done more. However, the spontaneous response from the members augurs well for projects in future which provide urgent relief.

July 27, speaker's meeting brought to the fore members restlessness to meet and listen to Mr Amitabh Kant one of the most celebrated bureaucrats who had been assigned to lead some of the most important assignments of which, the Sherpa of G20 is the most challenging. It was a working midweek, despite which there was a reasonable attendance. Mr Kant was invited by Ambassador Anil Wadhwa who were compatriots at the prestigious St Stephen's college. A report by Dr Neeraj Bhalla on this very interesting meeting is published elsewhere in this newsletter.

We have an interesting contribution by Brig Biren Chibber - A Hill called Melrose, a true story penned by Dr YSP Thorat, son of one of the legendary army officers of the Indian Army, Lt General S P Thorat. Lt General Thorat and Biren belonged to the same Regiment, the 1Guards(2/2 Punjab) a battalion raised in 1762, which not only enjoys the honour of being the oldest Battalion of the Indian Army but is also highly decorated having won 32,battle honours between World Wars 1&2 and as well as in J&K, post independence. Biren enjoys the distinction of being commissioned in the regiment, and has fought two high intensity battles against Pakistan in 1965 and 1971, and served with the battalion in all theatres of action from Ladakh to Nagaland. It makes for a riveting read. Biren despite the invasive surgery sometime ago has been active, albeit in a limited forum, on exchanging interesting bits of information. Early next week, he is scheduled to go under the surgeon's knife again, for removing another growth on his neck. Good luck Biren as you wage this personal battle on health. I am sure you will have the last laugh!!

Till we meet again next month.

Cheers.

Inderjeet Singh
Editor

ROTARY INSTALLATION AND GOVERNOR'S VISIT

14TH JULY, 2023



The Rotary year for every Club begins with the Installation of the new President and his team i.e. his Board. The change of guards is inevitable as Aristotle said, "Change in all things is sweet". This year the official Installation of the 55th President of the Rotary Club of Delhi South Rtn. Pramod Aggarwal was held on Friday, the 14th of July at the Claridges Hotel. As is the norm these days, the Installation Ceremony was combined with the official District Governor's visit, the GOV. The District Governor, Distt.3011 for the year 23-24, Rtn. Jeetender Gupta and his gracious wife, Dr. Deepti Singh Gupta were the Chief Guests for the ceremony.

The official visit of the District Governor began at 5.45 pm at the Board Room, wherein the District Governor met and interacted with the President 23-24, Rtn Pramod Aggarwal, his Board members and various Committee heads. The President outlined his vision and direction for the Club in various avenues like community service projects, vocational service, fund raising, membership growth etc. The District Governor appreciated the plan outlay and assured the Club his full support and co-operation. From 6.45 to 7.10pm, the District Governor held discussions with the Presidents and Board members of the Rotaract Club and the Interact Club of Birla Vidya Niketan. Overall, the sessions were fruitful and interactive.

In the meantime, the Viceroy Hall and its entrance was tastefully and aesthetically decorated with candles, lanterns, flowers, led lights and standees. Our ever-dependable Rnne Rita Bhasin was monitoring all the arrangements meticulously through Facetime and video calls with our very able Club Services Director, Rnne Jayshree Sawhney, all the way from Goa! The Reception desk was manned by Rnne Rajni Dua and Rnne Archana Katariya. Three cheers for women power! After a fellowship of tea, coffee and cookies from 7pm to 7.30pm, the official Installation Ceremony began.

The Masters of Ceremonies to initiate the proceedings and guide them through the numerous protocols to their finale, were the veteran warhorse Rnne Bhuvana Shashinath and a young filly, Rnne Priyanka Aggarwal, a first timer. The meeting was called to order by the outgoing President, Rtn. Lalit Sawhney. The rendering of the National Anthem was followed by the ceremonial lighting of the lamp by the dignitaries on the dais and their spouses. This solemn moment was sanctified by the melodious invocation rendered by Rnne Rita Kumar. Thereafter, the Rotary International President, Rtn. Gordon R. McNally's message explaining the Rotary theme for this year - Create hope in the world was shared with the audience.

This was followed by a warm welcome being extended to the District Governor, Rtn Jeetender Gupta and his wife, Dr. Deepti Gupta, the Immediate Past District Governor Rtn Ashok Kantoor and his wife Alka, the DGE Rtn. Mahesh Trikha, DGN Rtn. Dr Ravi Gugnani, Distt. Secretary, Rtn. Suresh Chander and Rtn. Ashok Kanaujia, Distt. Chair Admin and their spouses, Rtn Harinder Singh of Distt IT, the Assistant Governor of our Zone, Rtn. Vandana Bhalla, Rtn Vivek Jain and Rtn Rajiv Ranjan. The other guests included President Suhani Baffna, three Directors and a Reporter from the Interact Club of Birla Vidya Niketan, President Niharika Phogat and IPP Jyotsna Rijwani of the Rotaract Club and Mr Shariq Khan of ACRE who spearheads our CSR.

The President for 22-23, Rtn. Lalit Sawhney addressed the Club and touched upon the activities of the past Rotary year, highlighting upon the major and minor projects; and all that won the Club the District Governor's Pinnacle Award. The Club applauded the stupendous efforts of Rtn. Lalit Sawhney and Jayshree.

To evaluate and elaborate upon the Club's performance and achievements, the next Speaker was the Immediate Past District

Governor, Rtn. Ashok Kantoor. He heaped praises on the efforts of the President, his team and the entire Club. He singled out for mention all the Rotarians, who had held District posts and had won accolades at the District Thanksgiving. It was indeed a rich haul of awards and honours this year and these were proudly displayed on a Wall (or rather table) of fame!

Then came the unveiling of the Coffee Table Book, conceptualised and brought out by our dynamic Newsletter Editor, Rtn. Inderjeet Singh. It contains all the twelve editions of the "Ashoka", the Club's Newsletter, which had been diligently and punctually published on the first of every month.

The Secretary's Report for the year was presented by our young Rtn. Sarvpreet Singh. Since he had already shared all the details of activities, projects, fellowships, meetings etc., he gave a brief synopsis of all that had happened the previous Rotary Year. Of course, he (an avid golfer) proudly announced that for the first time in the history of the Club, the golfers had won a District Tournament! Three cheers to them!

The moment everyone had been waiting for arrived – the passing of the baton to the new leadership. The 55th President of Rotary Club of Delhi South, Rtn Pramod Aggarwal was collared by Immediate Past President, Rtn. Lalit Sawhney, accompanied by a loud applause from the gathering. The MC Priyanka Aggarwal shared some secrets about her fellow Kanpuriya: his love for Benarasi Ladoo, Ramswaroop ki Chaat of Kanpur; his nickname "Baby of the class" at the IIM Ahmedabad because he joined in his teens; his reserving a seat in the Mumbai locals diligently for his beloved Mini and his proposing to her on 14th February, not for romantic reasons of it being Valentines Day, but it was Balaji ka vaar -Mangalvaar.

President Pramod Aggarwal welcomed all the District officials and Club guests. He began by acknowledging the work of IPP Rtn. Lalit Sawhney and his team, and thanked IPDG for recognizing the great work done. He shared the District Governor, Rtn. Jeetender Gupta's taking note of the Club's mission for the year and giving suggestions during the GOV discussions; all indicative of the Governor's vision and commitment to support our Club. He also spoke of the able guidance and leadership of the two Past District Governors of our Club, Rtn. Hemant Ahuja and Rtn. Deepak Kapur, and the support of many Past Presidents and members.

He touched upon a few of the Club's long- term projects, led successfully by veterans and acknowledged by the recipient, Rotary International, RISAO, the District 3011 and the public at large. To name a few:

1. The Gift of Life started by PP Rtn. Pradeep Kumar and now joined by AKS Rtn. Vivek Gaur, the promoter of Satya Sai hospitals specializing in the heart surgeries. The District Governor has assured the Supply-chain management of blood for these surgeries.
2. Polio Plus – spearheaded by PDG Deepak Kapur and participation of many members like Rtn. Amarnath Goel.
3. Water – PP Rajiv Gujral had sponsored a District Trophy for optimizing the use of water. The Club is also planning to adopt a river in Rajasthan.
4. Environment – Planting of trees with a personal touch.
5. Club Foot – Run ably and brilliantly by Rtn Amarnath Goel.
6. Leprosy Project – PP Rtn. Pradeep Bahri is an example of exemplary service in this area. This important project will be continued with the help of global grants and CSR funds provided by our partner, ACRE.
7. Cancer – The Club will continue to spread awareness and provide medical help under the guidance of Dr. Vaneeta Kapur. With the support of our Asst.Governor, Rtn. Vandana Bhalla, cervical vaccination programmes have been started.
8. Skill Development – Under the active participation and

guidance of our PP Rtn. Som Dua, the Club has been empowering the youth through Skill Development programs like the GDA Course in partnership with IGNOU, the Nari Shakti and Atmanirbhar projects and the proposed RCDS Skill Centre with CSR grant.

9. Literacy Project: Beti ko Shiksha Aur Samman – PP Rtn. Anil Aggarwal conceived this project to provide scholarships to needy girls. The Club is also supporting the Sankalp Literacy Centre.
10. CSR Projects through RISAO – Proposed Building at the Old Age Home (Earth Saviours Foundation), Eye Centre for Cataract operations, Skill Centre at Dukh Niwaran Samiti etc.

The President declared that he was counting on the active help of the District Governor this year and that of the DGE and the DGN in years to come, to accelerate the CSR route to make a significant impact on the community. He also mentioned the dynamism of Rtn. Kriti Makhija, who took care of publicity and Rtn. Inderjeet Singh, who took care of the finances and published the newsletters.

He concluded his speech by assuring that he would do 100% justice to the confidence reposed in him and in keeping with the International Rotary slogan would, together with the members, create hope in the Club, District and the world.

On a lighter vein, he touched upon the rivalry between Hindustan Lever (where the IPP had worked for years) and Procter&Gamble(where he was on the Board) and extended that rivalry in jest to his predecessor and himself in Rotary matters too.

The Chief Guest, the District Governor was introduced through an Audio-visual created by him. It was a short video which traced his childhood, education, career and Rotary times. It also highlighted the achievements of his wife, First Lady Dr.Deepti, an avid photographer, traveller and a writer; and the family.

The District Governor was extremely eloquent and clear in his vision for the District and specially his expectations from such a leading Club like ours. He assured the Club of his support in whatever venture we undertake. He also stressed the need for the Club to increase the member's contribution to the Rotary Foundation. He suggested increasing membership by 25% and including members from different spheres. He expressed his concern about the absence of a President Elect and the lack of women members' inclusion in the Club Board. He urged that more women should be involved in the matters of the Club. The District Governor also expressed a desire for more of the Rotaractors and young generation being made Rotarians. He even suggested creating another new Club with youngsters, specially Rotaractors, who should be encouraged to become Rotarians.

In keeping with the DG's advice, we moved a step towards the 25% membership growth by inducting that evening a new member, Dr Neeraj Bhalla, a leading cardiologist. Of course, his charming spouse, Vandana is already a Rotarian and the Assistant Governor of our Zone.

This was followed by the Secretary (serving as Secretary for the second consecutive Rotary Year) Sarvpreet Singh's announcements of the Club Projects, meetings lined up for July and the Birthdays and Anniversaries of members. He also announced a record Sunshine collection that evening of more than Rs.20,000/-. This would be used to fund over 500 food packets to be distributed among the East Delhi flood victims. The large amount collected was all due to the efforts of the charming Rtn Dolly Brara.

Rtn. Pomela Prasad proposed a crisp, formal vote of thanks and the meeting was adjourned for drinks and dinner.

Bhuvana Shashinath









G 20 RELEVANCE AND NEED



Contradictions and conflicts amongst member countries that make up the UN General body as well as UN SC has led to it being largely ineffective in meeting challenges faced by the world, and prompted Pres Bush to set up G 20 which was responsible for 80% of the world's GDP as a more effective agency.

Global challenges facing the world today include:

1. Economic recession, especially post pandemic, 1/3rd of the world has slipped into recession, latest country to do so being Germany.
2. Climate challenge to meet the target of stopping 1.5 degree rise in global warming which will render Earth uninhabitable by 2050. Already this year has seen record high temperatures around the world including in Europe. Although our carbon footprint is only 1.3% as yet and most of the carbon space is occupied by the developed countries we are poised to become the 3rd highest polluters in the world accounting for about 17%.
3. Conflict across the world has been a setback to economic revival post Covid, disrupted supply chains across the world and has the potential for even greater harm.

As we assumed the Presidency of G 20 we are able to set a global agenda for the first time. An important aspect of this is that the leader matters and, credibility, and global standing is very high of our PM being a popular leader one of the reasons being democratically elected twice.

Executing G 20 in India:

Unlike a one off event like the Olympics, G 20 being a year long exercise this gave an opportunity to hold events in all parts of the country. Different events are being held in 60 cities, in all the states... leading to urban revival such as cleaning up and beautifying the cities, improving civic infrastructure. As of now 180 Meetings completed.

Ambition and Content of India's Presidency of G 20:

1. Sustainable inclusive growth to address Covid induced and accelerated crises of loss on education, health, nutrition deficiency, especially women and children
2. Acceleration of pace of UN goals such as Climate challenges to reduce carbon emission: To reiterate India occupies 1.3 percent of carbon space but one of the biggest polluters, so we have to take lead in reducing emissions, green fuels. Net zero emissions necessary.
3. Resources: need for restructuring and reforming of Multilateral institutions such as World Bank etc.. Resources are available but need to be raised for emerging markets interest rates very high for developing countries unless derisking for these is done.
4. Technology transformation and digital infrastructure eg bank accounts, Aadhar, digital payments: India accounts for 46% of fast payments in the world.. India is leading most of the world in adoption of these. The result has been a profusion of Fintech young startups reaching Tier 2 and 3 cities.. leading to instant finance, insurance, examples include Zerodha, Mobiquik. Such initiatives can be taken across to many countries who are looking to us for assistance.

Women led Development.. nutrition, health etc is a particular priority of our PM.

As a country we have really accelerated, and we have built in the last 8 years:

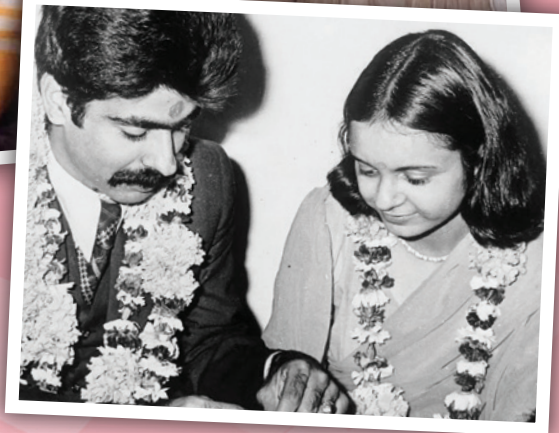
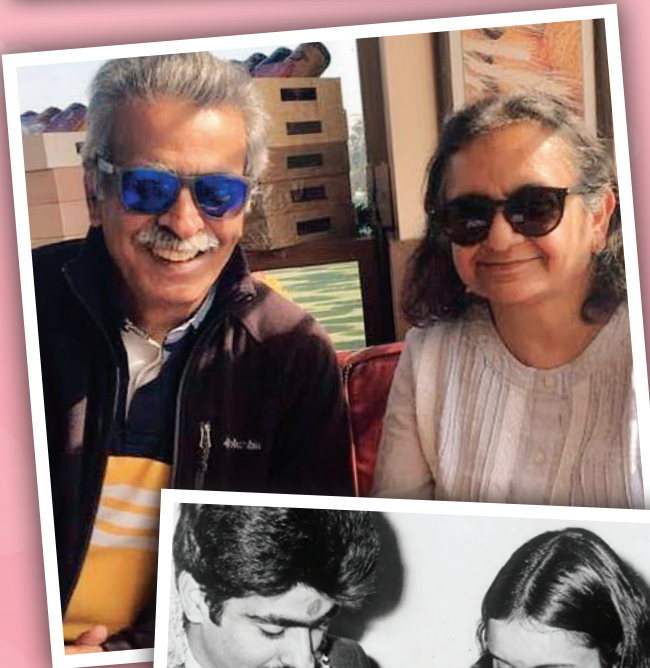
Homes 44 million, more than the population of Australia; Toilets 110 million, more than the population of Germany, Roads 55000 km; Vaccines 2.2 billion administered, more than the population of Brazil.

Finally LIFE initiative taken up by the PM emphasizing behavioural change in each and every citizen of India to protect the environment and effect climate change, government can't do it on their own.

Dr. Neeraj Bhalla

...and they lived happily thereafter!!

by popular request we are creating a theatre of the newlyweds then, and happily ensconced now with each other



In July three of our members. Neena - Biren Chibber, Deepa - Anil Wadhwa and Sonya - Pradeep Bahri exchanged marital vows!! Whilst, the wedding photos of two couples are printed but Neena and Biren's was never snapped for posterity!! The bridegroom soon after solemnisation of wedding vows, returned to Khadakwasla to carry on with his official duties!! Well sometimes such are the travails of a military career!! Biren has shared a photograph of Neena and his and as late as January 2023. God bless you all, keep smiling and stay safe.

GIFT OF LIFE



Dear RCDS members and families

Our Gift of Life (GOL) project completed 3 years in June 2023.

We gifted 53 lives to children with congenital heart defects in RY 22-23.

Previous year we did 39 gifts of lives, and year before that in RY20-21, 11 children received the gift of life. Thanks for your active support to the project and also inspiring donations from your respective networks of friends and families.

This month we have received funds from HuaQiao Foundation of Shanghai for three surgeries. The first gift is planned in August 2023 by Child Heart Foundation on our behalf. Also we initiated discussions with ACRE for CSR support at SSSS Palwal.

This process should conclude in August and Gifts of lives should start from SSSS (Sri Satya Sai Sanjeevani Hospital) Palwal soon thereafter.

We look forward to continued support from you and your networks for donation towards gift of life fund. Please let any one of the following GOL Project team members know whenever you decide to participate.

GOL Project TEAM for RY 23-24 – Rtns.: Kriti Makhija, Anil K Agarwal, Vivek N Gour, Deepak Kapoor, Arjun Mehta, Vinod Poddar, Rajinder Sehgal, Tridibes Basu, Lalit Sawhney, Amarnath Goyal, Alok Bhargava & Pradeep Kumar.

Warm Regards and best wishes for RY 23-24.

Pradeep Kumar

SNIPPETS HISTORICAL AND INTERESTING...

A HILL CALLED MELROSE

CONTRIBUTED BY BRIG BK CHIBBER



Lt Col SPP Thorat, CO of 2nd Punjab Battalion, comes down from hill captured by his men after bitter fight.

"May I have a light?" I looked up to see a Japanese - more or less my age - with an unlit cigarette in his hand. I reached for my lighter. He lit up. We were on a train travelling from Berne to Geneva in the autumn of 1980. "Indian?" he asked. "Yes" I replied. We got talking. He was an official in the UN and was returning to home and headquarters at Geneva. I was scheduled to lecture at the university. We chit-chatted for a while; he gave me some useful tips on what to see and where to eat in the city. Then, having exhausted the store of 'safely tradable information', we fell silent. I retrieved my book - 'Defeat into Victory', an account of the Second World War in Burma by Field Marshal William Slim. He opened the newspaper. We traveled in silence. After a while he asked "Are you a professor of Military History?" "No" I replied- "just interested. My father was in Burma during the war". "Mine too" he said.

In December 1941, Japan invaded Burma and opened the longest land campaign of the entire war for Britain. There were two reasons for the Japanese invasion. First, cutting the overland supply route to China via the Burma Road would deprive Chiang Kaishek's Nationalist Chinese armies of military equipment and pave the way for the conquest of China. Second, possession of Burma would position them at the doorway to India, where they believed a general insurrection would be triggered against the British once their troops established themselves within reach of Calcutta. Entering Burma from Thailand, the Japanese quickly captured Rangoon in 1942, cut off the Burma Road at source and deprived the Chinese of their only convenient supply base and port of entry. Winning battle after battle, they forced the allied forces to retreat into India. The situation was bleak. The British were heavily committed to the war in Europe and lacked the resources and organisation to recapture Burma. However, by 1943 they got their act together. The High Command was overhauled; Wavell was replaced by Mountbatten and operational control was given to General William Slim, a brilliant officer. Slim imbued his men with a new spirit, rebuilt morale and forged the famous 14th Army, an efficient combat force made up of British, Indians and Africans. The Japanese, aware that the defenders were gathering strength, resolved to end the campaign with a bold thrust into India and a simultaneous attack in the Arakan in Burma.

In the ebb and flow of these large events chronicled in Military History, my father, a soldier, played a part - first in Kohima in clearing the Japanese from the Naga Hills, then in Imphal and finally in the deeply forested mountains of Arakan. Destiny took him

there. In the blinding rain of the monsoons in 1943, the Supreme Allied Commander's plane landed at Mawdow where the All-India Brigade of which his regiment was a part was headquartered. Mountbatten was accompanied by his Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Browning, who had been my father's Adjutant at the Royal Military College in Sandhurst. He and the two other Indian commanders—Thimayya and Sen— were introduced to Mountbatten who made casual but searching enquiries regarding their war experience. IN DECEMBER 1941, JAPAN INVADED BURMA AND OPENED THE LONGEST LAND CAMPAIGN OF THE ENTIRE WAR FOR BRITAIN. THERE WERE TWO REASONS FOR THE JAPANESE INVASION. FIRST, CUTTING THE OVERLAND SUPPLY ROUTE TO CHINA VIA THE BURMA ROAD WOULD DEPRIVE CHIANG KAI-SHEK'S NATIONALIST CHINESE ARMIES OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT AND PAVE THE WAY FOR THE CONQUEST OF CHINA.

Thereafter he was closeted in the 'conference tent' with the senior commanders for a long time. As they came out he turned to Reggie Hutton, the Brigade commander and said, "All right Reggie let your All-Indian Brigade do it. But, by God, it is going to be tough". Then, turning to the three of them he said, "Gentlemen, the Japanese are pulling out of upper Burma. You have been selected to intercept their withdrawal from there into the South. You will concentrate at Akyab, proceed to Myebon by sea, capture Kangaw, penetrate Japanese-held territory and convert the Japanese retreat into a rout. Is that clear?" It was.

My Japanese friend who had been listening intently leaned forward and asked "Did you say your father was in the All India Brigade?" "Yes", I replied. Our conversation paused for a while as the waiter served coffee and croissants. Later, picking up the threads he persisted "Was he a junior officer at the time?" "Not really" I replied. "He was a battalion commander". He digested the information and said "Which regiment?" "The Punjab Regiment" I replied. His face turned colour. Maybe it was a play of light and shade or maybe it was just my imagination but I thought he was going to be ill. "Are you okay?" I queried? He nodded. "Please carry on".

After marching through hostile territory, the brigade finally landed at Myebon. Their dis-embarkation was not opposed. They proceeded to Kangaw, little knowing that forty-eight hours later they would be locked in a battle which was to last for a fortnight and claim the lives of three thousand men.

sure2

Mountbatten had been right. The withdrawal route of the Japanese was dominated by 'Hill Feature 170; Melrose. It was firmly held by the Japanese and gave them the enormous advantage of having the 'commanding heights'. Worse, intelligence reported that they had two brigades. The Indians had one. Brigadier Hutton realised that if the withdrawal had to be cut, the hills would have to be captured irrespective of the numerical disadvantage. He took the call. The first attack by the Hyderabadis under Thimayya mauled the enemy but did not achieve the objective. The second by the Baluchis under Sen met a similar fate. It was then that 'Reggie' asked the Punjabis to make a final effort. Artillery and air support was coordinated. The zero hour for the attack was set at 0700 hours on 29 January 1945. At dawn, as the leading companies moved forward, the Japanese opened machine gun fire. The artillery provided cover and laid out a smoke screen. The Punjabis began to climb the hill. Safe from amongst well dug bunkers the Japanese rained fire on them. The Indian casualties mounted as men began to drop. The air cover which was a key part of the plan failed to materialise - bad weather and bad luck. Taking a calculated risk, the commander pushed on. They were hardly a hundred yards from the top when the Japanese threw everything they had at them. In the face of such unrestrained fierceness, the advance faltered hovering uncertainly on the edge of stopping. For the commander, it was the moment of truth — to fight or flee? As he saw his men being mowed down by machine gun fire a rage erupted within him. Throwing caution to the winds he ran forward to be with them. The scales 'tipped'. The troops rallied, 'fixed bayonets' and charged into the Japanese with obscenities and primeval war cries. A fierce hand to hand combat ensued. Neither side took or gave a quarter. The Japanese fought like tigers at bay. The conflict went on unabated through the night. The Japanese counter-attacked in wave after wave but the Indian line held firm. Then the last bullet was fired and there was silence.

Many years later Mountbatten would describe what took place as "The bloodiest battle of the Arakan" and correctly so. The price of victory was two thousand Japanese and eight hundred Indians dead in the course of a single encounter. Fifty officers and men would win awards for gallantry. The battalion commander would be decorated with the DSO for 'unflinching devotion to duty and personal bravery'. But all that was to happen in the future.

At that particular moment, on the field of battle, the commander was looking at the Japanese soldiers who had been taken prisoners of war. They had assembled as soldiers do, neatly and in order. On seeing the Indian Colonel, their commander called his men to attention, stepped forward, saluted, unbuckled his sword, held it in both hands and bowed. The Indian was surprised to see that his face was streaked with tears. He understood the pain of defeat but why the tears? After all, this was war. One or the other side had to lose. How could the Japanese explain to the Indian that the tears were not of grief but of shame? How could he make him understand what it meant to be a Samurai? Given a choice he himself would have preferred the nobler course of Hara Keri than surrender. But fate had willed otherwise. The ancestral sword in his hands had been carried with pride by his forefathers. Now he was shaming them by handing it over. All this was unknown — unknowable — to the Indian commander. He came from a different culture and had no knowledge of what was going on in the mind of his adversary. Yet there was something in the manner and bearing of the officer in front of him which touched him deeply. He found himself moved. Without being told he somehow intuited that the moment on hand was not merely solemn but personal and deeply sacred. He accepted the sword and then inexplicably, impelled by an emotion which perhaps only a soldier can feel for a worthy opponent, bent forward and said clearly and loudly in the hearing of all "Colonel I accept the surrender but I receive your sword not as a token of defeat but as a gift from one soldier to another". The Japanese least expecting this response looked up startled. The light bouncing from the tears on his cheeks, reflected an unspoken gratitude for the Indian's remark. Coming as it did from the heart, it had touched his men and redeemed their—and his—honour. The Punjabis— Hindus and Muslims—who had gathered around also nodded in appreciation. Battle was battle. When it was on, they had fought each other with all their strength. And now that

it was over there was no personal or national animosity. Maybe, the Gods who look after soldiers are different from those who look after other mortals for they bind them in strange webs of understanding and common codes of honour no matter which flags they fly.

sure

The moment passed. He looked at the Signal Officer and nodded. The success signal was fired. Far away in the jungles below, Brigadier Reggie Hutton looked at the three red lights in the sky and smiled. His faith in his commanders had been vindicated. He would later explain that at stake that night was not only the battle objective but the larger issue as to whether Indians 'had it in them' to lead men in war. There had been sceptics who felt that his faith was misplaced. He looked at Melrose and smiled. Its capture had vindicated his faith. I looked out of the window lost in my thoughts. Suddenly I heard a sob to find that my Japanese friend had broken down. He swayed from side to side. His eyes were closed and it was clear that he was in the grip of an emotion more powerful than himself. He kept saying 'karma, karma' and talking to himself in his own language. After a while he looked up with eyes full of tears and holding both my hands said in a voice choked with emotion, "It was my father who gave battle to yours on Melrose. It was he who surrendered. Had your father not understood the depth of his feelings, he would have come back and died of shame. But in accepting our ancestral sword in the manner that he did, he restored honour to our family and my father to me. That makes us brothers — you and I.

The train pulled into Geneva station. We got down. What had to be said had already been spoken. He bowed. Goodbye I said. Keep in touch. Incidentally, would you like me to restore the sword back to your family. He smiled, looked at me and said "Certainly not. The sword already rests in the house of a Samurai".

That was the last I saw of him. Usha tells me that the probability of our meeting defies statistics. She should know. She studied economics and statistics. There was a World war going on. Good. My father was in the Indian army; his father was in the Japanese army; perfectly okay. They fought in the same theatre of war—Burma; understandable. They fought in the same battle; difficult but believable. The war finished, they went back to their families; plausible. But that their sons grew up in two different lands, happened to go to Berne at the same time, board the same train, get into the same compartment, share coffee and cigarettes, have a conversation on something that had happened four decades ago, discover their fathers had fought on opposite sides in the same battle — that undoubtedly is insane.

Personally, I do not believe that there are outcomes in life which are necessarily bound to happen? Yet, sometimes I am not so sure. You can never connect events by looking into the future; you can only connect them by looking at the past. Maybe, it is comforting to believe that because the dots connect backward, they will connect forward also. I don't know. Perhaps in the end, you have to trust in something. The sword has a pride of place in our home. Whenever I see it, my mind goes back to the jungles of Arakan where in the midst of the madness of war, two soldiers were able to touch each other and their compatriots with lasting humanity.

Dr YSP Thorat was Fellow, Lincoln College, Oxford; Executive Director, RBI; Chairman NABARD; Chairman, Agriculture Mission, Government of Maharashtra. Presently, Director, Tata Chemicals, Britannia etc. He is son of Late General SPP Thorat.



SNIPPETS HISTORICAL AND INTERESTING...

LETTER FROM THE FRENCH EMPEROR LOUIS-PHILIPPE TO MAHARAJA RANJIT SINGH IN 1835

Ranjit Singh is addressed as “Rendjit Sing Bahador - Padichah du Pendjab”

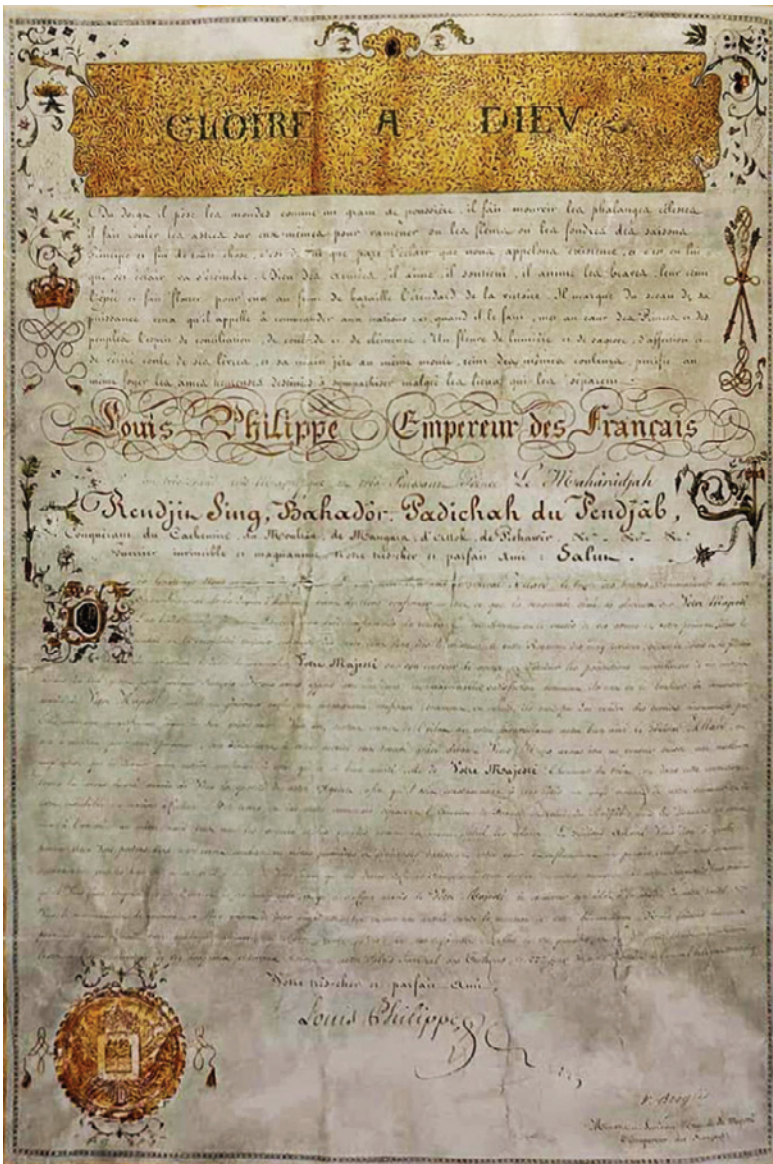
Dated 27 October, 1835.

As small excerpt of the letter which shows how Ranjit Singh was held in high esteem by the #French #King “To The Very Great, Very Splendid and Very Powerful Maharadjah Rendjit Sing Bahador, King (padichah) of the Pendjab, Conqueror of Cachmire (Kashmir), of Moultan, of Mangara, of Attok, of Pichawer (Peshawar) -Warlike, Invincible and Our Very Special and Perfect Friend, Greetings!”

“As the Sun confers light on the distant parts of the world, the true love unites hearts, physically separated, in a common rhythm of friendship and harmony”.

This letter was brought by one of Maharaja Ranjit Singh's generals Jean-François Allard who went back to France for a short leave and then after request from the King served as an #ambassador for France in relation to the Sikh #Empire.

(British Museum, Mss.Eur.G 59, dated 27 October 1835 - with a seal in Gold, “Charte de 1830”)



Kolkata Aerodrome in 1952. You can see the BOAC aircraft. There was nothing called an airport those days. Hence called Aerodrome. Get down from the aircraft and take a cycle rickshaw to go to the office or hotel or home.



एक समय में इंडिया गेट के पास ऐसी खाली ज़मीन भी थी.

RCDS - SANKALP CENTRES

JULY 2023



The aim of Sankalp society is to develop in children age and grade appropriate competencies by giving them a wide exposure to diverse activities, both curricular and co curricular. Some of the key features of the literacy centres are learning support program, comprehensive assessment, computer literacy, English speaking program, training and capacity building, regular monitoring and strengthening community linkages. Sankalp believes in equality in education to ensure that no child is left behind. Slums are visited on a regular basis and interaction is done with community people to make them aware of their child's rights, etc.

A total of 425 children are enrolled in Sankalp Literacy centers. Every month in the Centres special days are celebrated to expose children to specific themes. Children take part in regular major events and festival which bring changes not only in the level of knowledge they gain but also in the abilities to think and acquire habits, skills and attitude. Students are encouraged to embrace other traditions culture just like the way they do their own.

Progress documentation and monitoring is done regularly to set standards for the child's grade level and to develop goal that can be measured and tracked.

- Class tests of all subjects are conducted every month.
- Database of each and every student is maintained which is updated on a regular basis.
- Master list is developed and upgraded every 6 months for each Centre.

Every effort is made to give support to the weak children for their studies. This is an area of concern. Improvement is needed in this area. Some children have shown improvement in their writing and reading levels. Sometimes relevant material which is not in the curriculum is also taught to the children.

The following important days were celebrated in July 2023:

- **International Plastic Free Day on 3rd July** - This was observed to increase awareness about the detrimental effects of disposable plastic bags on the environment
- **International Day of Justice on 17th July** - This



creates awareness on the need to protect people from genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes and the crime of aggression.

- **Nelson Mandela Day on 18th July** - This Day is celebrated to shine light on the legacy of a man who changed the 20th century and helped shape the 21st. This is a moment for all to renew with the values that inspired Nelson Mandela.
- **Kargil Diwas on 26th July** - Kargil Vijay Diwas is celebrated every year to commemorate India's victory over Pakistan in the Kargil War in 1999. The day honours the bravery and sacrifice made by Indian soldiers during the intense war. The successful operation against Pakistan was named Operation Vijay.
- **World Hepatitis Day and World Nature Conservation Day on 28th July** - Children were told about the significance of both these very important days, especially on the need of conserving the nature and it's assets.

Besides, women of the skill training Unit of Sankalp were trained on making lovely colourful Rakhis in collaboration with Fevicryl. This was a very unique experience and the women learnt a new skill.

AUGUST

Kochchar, Reenu	06-Aug
Chadha, Pankaj	10-Aug
Garodia, BK	13-Aug
Divya Vij	13-Aug
Bhasin, Rita	20-Aug
Singh, Sarvpreet	26-Aug
Singh, Sakshi Khanna	26-Aug
Baluja, Neeti	27-Aug



HAPPY Anniversary

Singh, Amarjit	Dimple	26-Aug
Madhavan S	Kausy Madhavan	28-Aug
Katariya, Ganesh	Archana	30-Aug