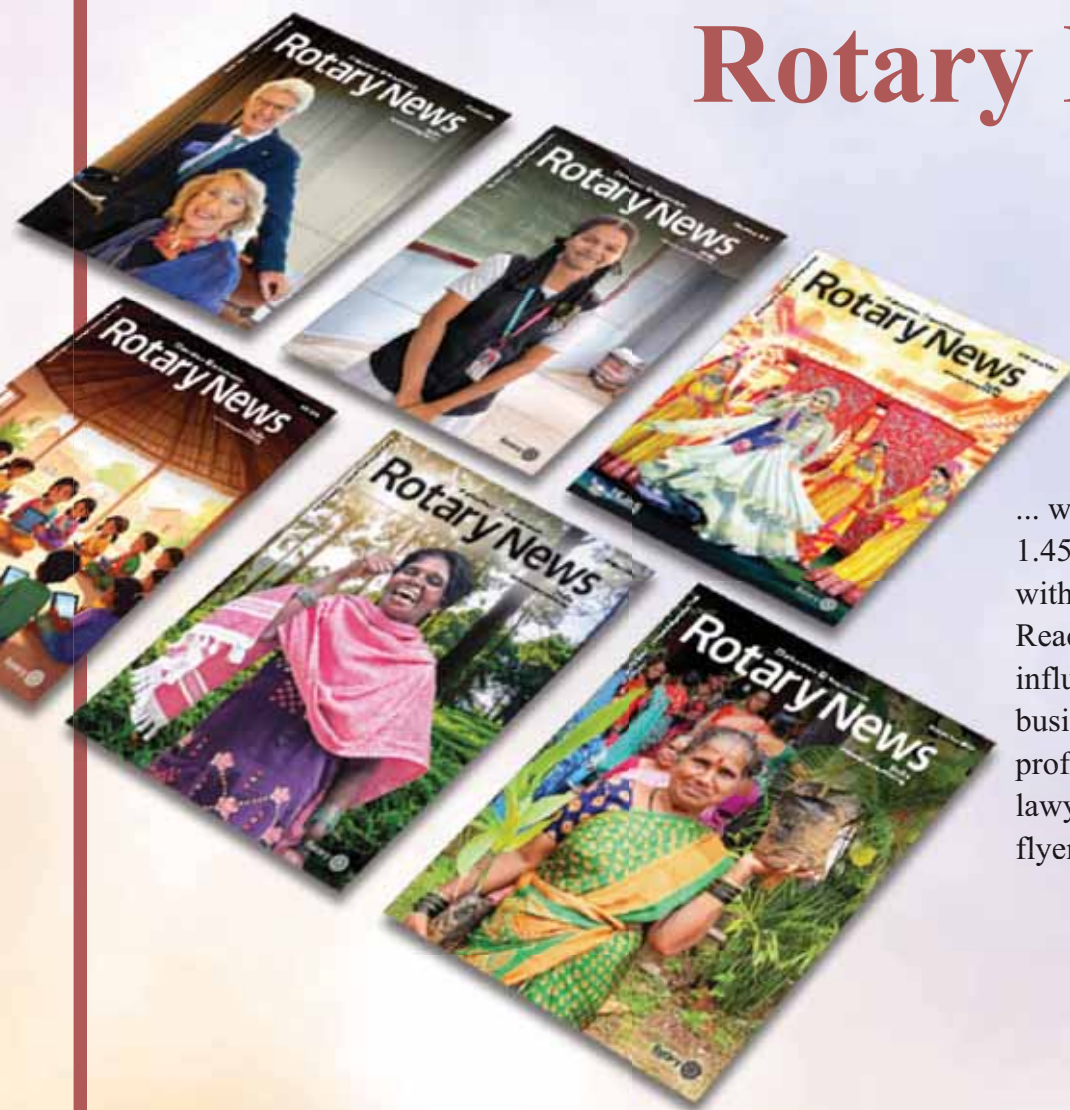




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RI Director **M Muruganandam**

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Peace matters... more today than ever

Even as hectic arrangements were on in the Rotary world, particularly in India, to welcome Rotary's eighth Peace Center at the Symbiosis International University in Pune, came the horrendous news on Dec 14, of a mass shooting at the famous Bondi beach of Sydney, Australia. As Hanukkah was being celebrated by some 1,000 people from the local Jewish community, two gunmen were captured on videos, randomly shooting at the crowd, killing 15 people, including a child.

As the social media erupted with news of this horrendous act of terrorism, we started getting clips of a tall and hefty man running out from behind a car, jumping on one of the two gunmen, overpowering him, snatching away his rifle and pointing the gun at him, as the man ran for his life.

An eye-for-an-eye being a primordial instinct embedded in most of us, the first invariable reaction was: 'Shoot him'. After all, the gunman was killing at random innocent, unarmed people. But, then as rational thinking kicked in, you realised that ordinary people not trained in using firearms, cannot instinctively use a weapon and take a life. Anyway, the brave saviour took five bullets in his body, and irony of ironies, turned out to be a Muslim, of Syrian origin, who had risked his life to save many more Jews who could have been killed. He turned out to be Ahmed, a fruit shop owner in Sydney, and has survived the injuries. The two terrorists were Muslim too, and this shooting was obviously a retaliation for the continuous and relentless killing of innocent Palestinians that goes on in Gaza on a daily basis.

But let's leave geopolitics aside, the kind of violence that is engulfing our world is terrifying to say the least. First of all, mass killings are taking place through wars/military action that is sponsored, obviously, by the state itself... such as what we've been seeing in Ukraine

and Palestine, to give only two examples. Add to this, random shootings that take place, including in schools, of all the places, simply because of liberal gun laws that make the legal owning of guns so easy in many parts of the world, led by the United States, and astonishingly, we have violence that fails to get any reaction from the government. That big chunks of civic society in these countries are in favour of liberal gun laws, as well as wars, is more saddening than infuriating. It says a lot about the kind of people that we are becoming. What is worse, our condemnation of violence or state-sponsored killings, is getting more and more selective depending on our political and ideological leanings in a world that is getting increasingly polarised.

It is in this context and background that Rotary's eternal, unflinching and passionate quest for peace becomes priceless. And it is not only platitudes and verbal sermons that senior Rotary leaders across the globe have to offer when it comes to peace... they are literally putting their money where their mouths are... to put it simplistically. RI is committed to promoting peace through concrete action, scholar by scholar, by establishing and funding peace centres where young scholars are trained on how to work for and negotiate peace in the trickiest of environments and places.

Indian Rotarians should be justifiably delighted and proud that the next Rotary Peace Center is being inaugurated in Pune this January. God knows we too need to revisit our revered Gandhiji's peace and non-violence mantra! Good luck, godspeed and three cheers for this Peace Center!

Wishing all of you a very happy 2026... and a more peaceful world!

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Rasheeda Bhagat'.

Rasheeda Bhagat

Towards cleaner and safer communities

Jaishree

The *Swachotsav* project, initiated by DRR Mahi Bhan, brought together all Rotaract clubs across RI District 3120 to implement impactful community-cleaning programmes across Uttar Pradesh and parts of Madhya Pradesh.

The clubs organised river and temple-ghat cleaning, Adopt-a-Spot drives, Swachhta rallies and plastic-free campaigns. From cleaning public spaces to promoting eco-friendly practices, Rotaractors engaged schools, communities and local authorities to create cleaner, healthier surroundings. Many of

these activities were carried out in collaboration with local municipal corporations.

One of the standout initiatives was the cleaning of ghats along the Gomti River in Lucknow. “The Gomti is Lucknow’s lifeline and its banks are dotted with ghats that are used for everything from rituals to recreation. While some ghats are alive with daily aartis and festive dips, others suffer from neglect and pollution,” says Mahi. Under *Swachotsav*, Rotaractors from the city’s clubs came together to clean several ghats, including the Visarjan Ghat, where they removed clay idols, flowers and other offerings from



DRR Mahi Bhan (centre) with Rotaractors after cleaning one of the ghats.





Rotaractors and volunteers after cleaning the Visarjan Ghat of the Gouti River.

the river. The collected waste was safely disposed of with assistance from the Lucknow Municipal Corporation.

Another flagship programme is *Project Shakti*, executed with support from the UP Police and the state government's Mission Shakti initiative. Launched in July 2025, the project focuses on training girls and women in self-defence and creating awareness about personal, digital and social safety. So far, around 1,000 women across

eight phases have been trained, and the goal is to reach 3,000 women by year-end, says Mahi. Clubs also organised essay competitions and street plays on women's safety and cybercrime, while experts in martial arts and cyber technology were roped in to conduct the sessions.

Under *Project Uthan aur Unnati*, Rotaract clubs organised Skill-to-Startup workshops, handmade product exhibitions, business competitions and networking events to help transform local talent into entrepreneurial ventures. Inspired by the *#VocalForLocal* movement, Mahi explains, "We wanted to



DRR Mahi Bhan with children at a special school.



Above: A self-defence class for girls.

Right: A dustbin being given to a roadside eatery as part of *Project Swachotsav*.

empower residents of slum communities financially by nurturing their creativity and vocational interests through structured training.”

Looking ahead, the district is planning a two-day cultural and business meet that will host over 160 delegates from across India. The event will showcase regional trade and cultural highlights, alongside business and skill development workshops and panel discussions featuring Rotarians from diverse professional fields. “We have also planned a visit to the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on the third day,” she adds. A ‘Unite for Good’ Rotaract marathon is also being planned alongside the meet to strengthen fellowship between Rotary and Rotaract.

Under *Project Umang*, the district honoured teachers serving in schools for children with special needs across Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Rotaract clubs visited day-care centres and children’s homes to distribute gifts to the children and felicitate the dedicated teachers who nurture and empower them. ■



Children display a poster on communicable diseases, a project of RAC Rae Bareli.

The steady beat of the dhol, flashes of colourful *chaniya-cholis* and kurtas, and a buzzing dance floor set the tone at Classic Gardens, Secunderabad, as over 600

Rotaractors and 300 Rotarians, along with their families and friends, gathered for *Dhoom Dham Dandiya*. Organised by RID 3150, the Navratri celebration blended cultural festivity with a message of social responsibility.

The event was graced by DRR Vamshi Vinod Kumar and DG SV Ramprasad. What set the evening apart was its purpose. Funds raised through the event were dedicated to Girl Child Development and Environmental Protection, turning a night of dance into a platform for service. Highlighting this, DG Ramprasad remarked, “When culture and service come together, the impact is far-reaching.

RID 3150 hosts Dandiya night

Team Rotary News



DRR Vamshi Vinod Kumar and DG SV Ramprasad at the *Dhoom Dham Dandiya* event.

This event reflects Rotary’s belief that joy and responsibility can go hand-in-hand.”

The evening featured a mix of group and individual dance performances, with Rotaractors and participants presenting well-coordinated Garba and Dandiya routines. Individual performers added energy and variety to the programme, while large group performances transformed the venue into a vibrant, unified dance floor.

Speaking on the occasion, Vamshi Kumar said, “*Dhoom Dham Dandiya* shows how Rotaract can channel youthful energy into meaningful causes. Celebrations like these allow us to connect with the community while supporting issues that truly matter.” ■



Rotaractors at the event.

Goa RYLA bonds Rotary-Rotaract

V Muthukumaran

For the last two decades, Rotarians and Rotaractors from different RI districts of India used to meet in Goa RYLA, a permanent annual fixture of RID 3141, to share notes, enjoy fellowship, networking, and win new business friends.

“In September 2025, we had a three-day RYLA at Neelams The

Grand, a three-star luxury hotel near the scenic Goan beach in which 80 Rotaractors and 20 Rotarians had fun even as they learnt new concepts that helped in building leadership qualities,” said Hrishikesh Solanki, chair, Avenues of Rotaract District 3141, and a dual member of RAC Mumbai Parleshwar and RC Mumbai Centennials.

As a project coordinator of his Rotary club, Solanki and his team ensured that both the plenary and outdoor fun sessions were organised “in an enjoyable manner without hassles.” RC Mumbai Island City was the lead club and they were partnered by four co-hosts and the district Rotaract in hosting Goa RYLA.



A section of Rotaractors from across RI districts at the Goa RYLA.





RID 3141 DGE Rajan Dua (right) along with other panel members adjudge a group competition among Rotaractors and Rotarians at the Goa RYLA.



During the inaugural, Devanand Mahadeva, youth exchange coordinator from Dubai, gave a motivational speech urging the young participants to aim for success in their lives. DGE Rajan Dua advised Rotaractors to have both fun and learning at the same time. He noted that discipline is a must for success in “whatever we do and aim for, but this critical quality is lacking among the younger generation. They may be full of energy, but without proper direction, which discipline enables, they don’t know how to channelise it.”

RC Mumbai Island City president Onkar Sarang called upon the participants to make full use of the RYLA as “we had curated the three-day event with least number

of indoor sessions as the focus is on having more of outdoor, field events and group activities.”

Eclectic games

Some of the outdoor events like *Change the Place* (settings have to be changed in creative manner); fun pool party and *Shark Tank Pitch* — a fixed time is given to come out with a viable business plan which will be vetted by a 10-member jury — have enabled Rotaractors and Rotarians to mingle with each other freely, “giving all the participants a great exposure to the Rotary world.”

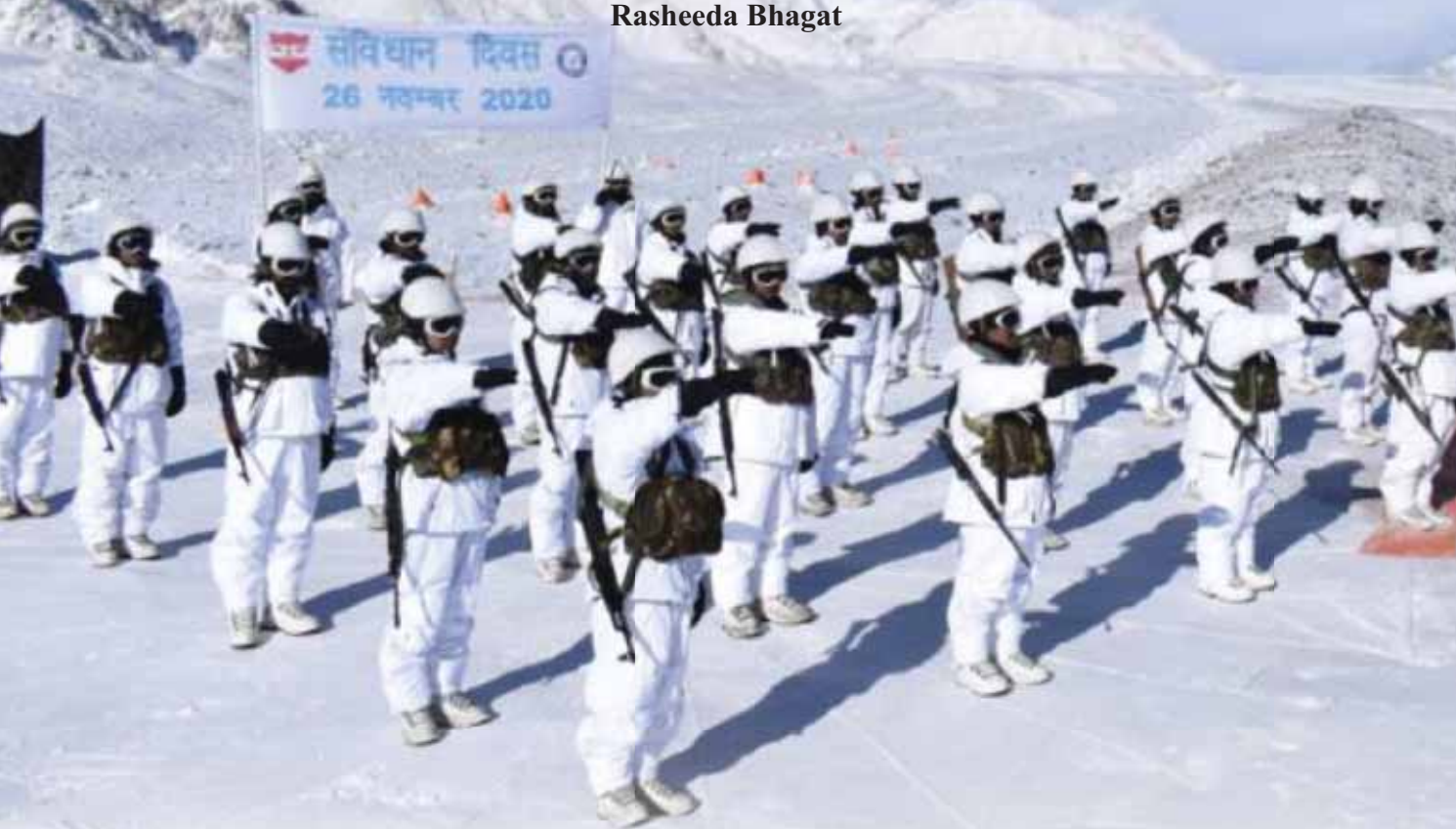
Bollywood music and party songs made the two DJ nights a memorable one for the participants. “Over the last 20 years, around 3,000 Rotarians and Rotaractors would

have attended our Goa RYLA. But next year (2026), we are looking for a new holiday-cum-leisure destination. Some of the takeaways of the latest edition were living a disciplined life, and networking to building leadership skills for a rewarding professional life,” explains Solanki.

Looking back at his seven-year Rotaract journey, “I joined as a college student and now working as a financial analyst in a private firm... it has been an enjoyable learning curve for me in the last few years as a Rotaractor. Now in my first year as a Rotarian, I want to improve my visibility in Rotary Means Business Group which will help me to expand client base in my official work,” adds Solanki. ■

A leadership journey like no other

Rasheeda Bhagat



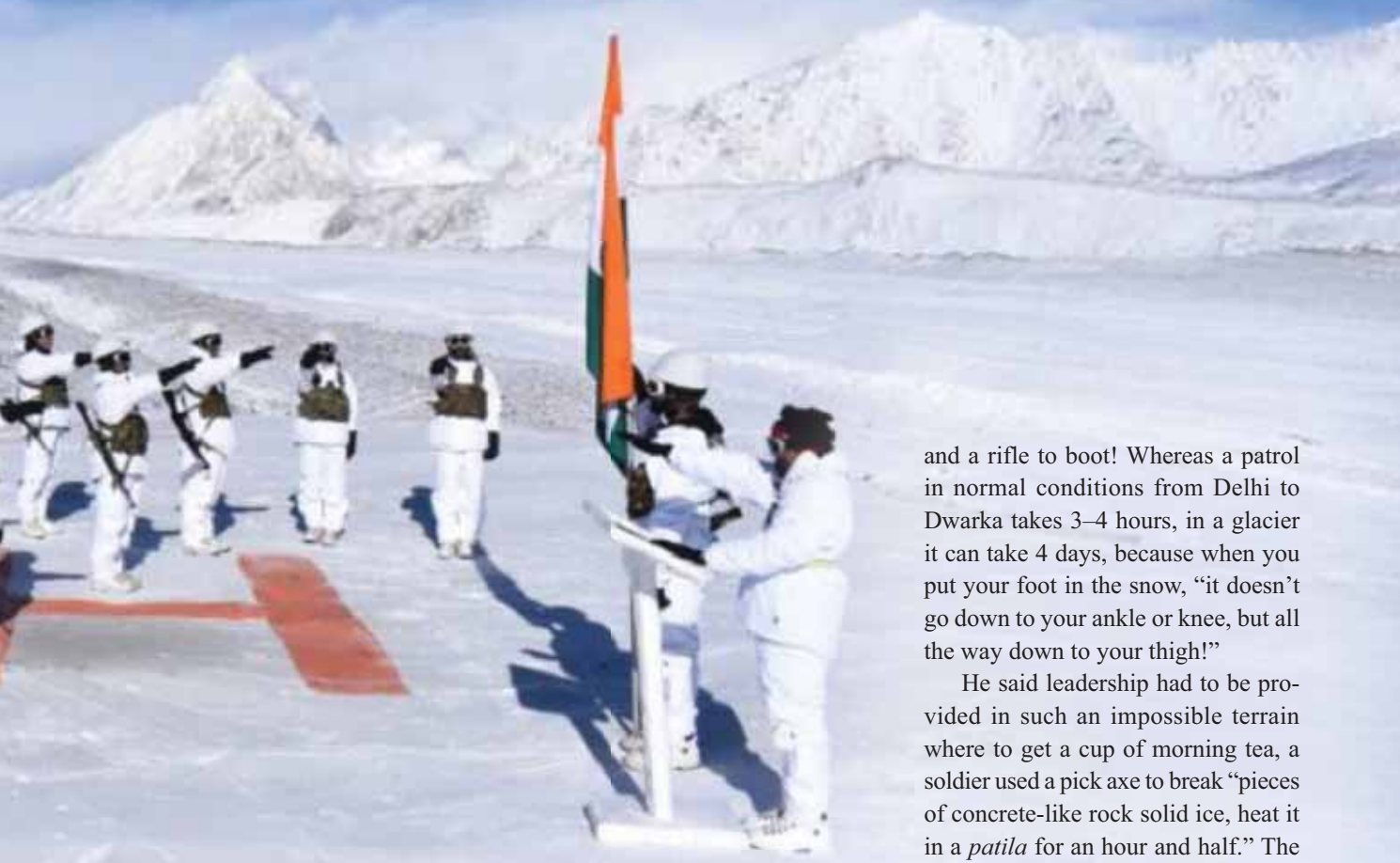
There was a stunned silence in the hall as Capt Raghu Raman from the Indian Army walked the delegates of the Tejas zone institute through the tough terrain of the Siachen Glacier in the Himalayas and described the nitty gritty of what it takes to exhibit leadership in one of the world's most difficult terrains. He was addressing a session titled *Leadership at 26000ft*.

While on a flat terrain the attacker to defence ratio is roughly 1:3, in a

place like Siachen it changes to 1:9; and if you have 100 people making the charge, "they know by the end of the attack, or the day, less than about 30-40 will be alive. The rest will be dead, or worse than dead, because they will be amputees for life."

While delivering such lectures, when he quizzed the audience why soldiers fight, he got answers such as 'patriotism, love for the country, discipline, uniform,' etc. The simple answer is that troops don't fight for a huge cause but for the leader who is leading them, he said.

Dissecting the group of soldiers who end up in Siachen, Capt Raman said, "More than geography, this is a lesson about reality. A boy who comes from Kerala does not know what the snow looks like. A boy from Kashmir doesn't have an idea what deserts look like. Our troops come from tiny villages, and have no vision of the strategy of the nation. Their visibility is limited to the comrades who are with them in the trench and that young leader... lieutenant or captain who is leading them. It is limited to the *izzat* of the *paltan*, the honour of the



battalion. There are no material tools with which military leaders can take their men into battle... no ESOPS, pay hikes, employee of the month award or bonus!"

Through a short and grainy video, he showed the audience what the Siachen Glacier was like. Where helicopters had to carry each and every piece of material under the most challenging conditions... such as the helipad

being "roughly the size of these two tables put together. For the soldiers posted there, there is no bathing, shaving, personal hygiene. You put a piece of cloth in cold water and wipe yourself with it. This is life at 18,000ft and higher."

Capt Raman painted a vivid scenario to the stunned audience on what life is beyond 21,000ft, where temperatures can go down to minus 20 or 25 deg C, with the wind chill factor taking it even further down. Another video clip showed patrolling soldiers carrying packs weighing 15–20kg,

and a rifle to boot! Whereas a patrol in normal conditions from Delhi to Dwarka takes 3–4 hours, in a glacier it can take 4 days, because when you put your foot in the snow, "it doesn't go down to your ankle or knee, but all the way down to your thigh!"

He said leadership had to be provided in such an impossible terrain where to get a cup of morning tea, a soldier used a pick axe to break "pieces of concrete-like rock solid ice, heat it in a *patila* for an hour and half." The soldier's clothes were black, thanks to the abundant use of liquid gold of the glacier — kerosene. "You can survive without food or water for weeks, but without kerosene, you will not survive a single night, because if the *bukhari* in your enclosure goes off in the night, in the morning, you'll wake up like an ice tray. Within days spent on the glacier, your eyes, nose and sputum that you cough out will have a black soot, because you're constantly inhaling kerosene fumes."

The size of the bunker was about the size of the stage he stood on, and 14–16 men lived in it! The entry is through a tunnel, which has been chiselled in, so God help you if you have claustrophobia. Inside, the walls are

lined with steel to prevent them from caving in. "So, if a novice by mistake takes off his glove and puts his hand on that steel girder at minus 40, you can imagine what'll happen."

Wryly, the army man said: "Now, through a five-minute clipping, I'm trying to show you what life is like for 12 months in Siachen. There is no way a video can show you what it really is like to live inside a bunker that stinks of unwashed human bodies mixed with the smell of kerosene, gunpowder, vomit and rotting food. You'll have to extrapolate and imagine what it feels to live in that environment."

Giving an example of combat leadership, Capt Raman next showed a picture of a winter cutout post, where once troops were inducted for six months, they couldn't be de-inducted.

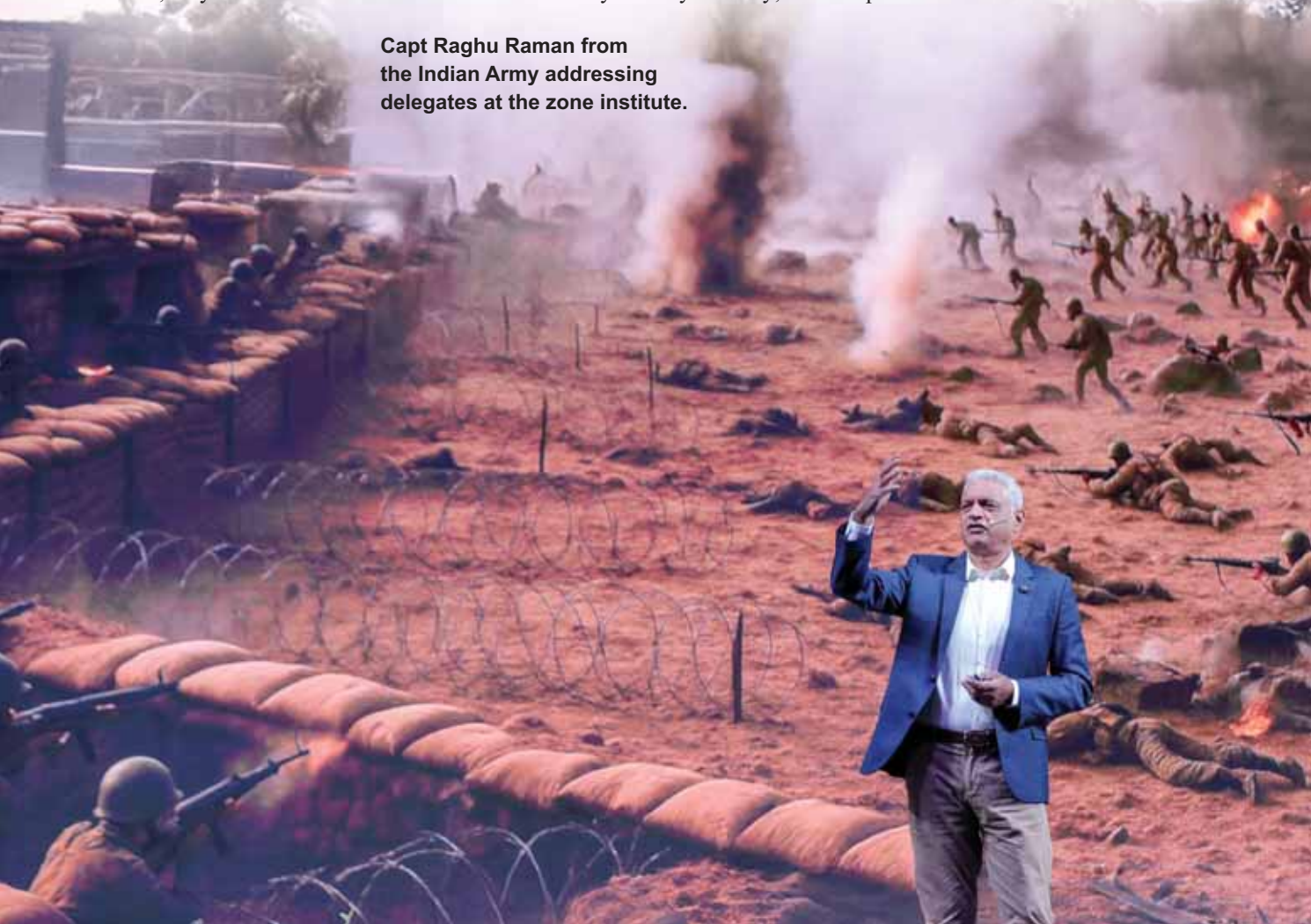
The reason was the steep gradient of the mountain face where tonnes of snow fell every hour, and the slightest of vibration could start an avalanche. He related the tale of a 20-year-old lieutenant, who had taken 20 men into that post. Within two days they had a casualty, with a soldier dying of cerebral oedema. "They wrapped the body of the soldier in parachute cloth, kept it next to the post. You couldn't throw away the body, it was one of your own soldiers, and nothing would happen to the body at minus 40 deg. Just visualise the grit required by that 20-year-old lad who had to then lead 18 men through the next 5 1/2 months. Compare that to the long face we get, or our morale breaks down when something goes wrong at work, or somebody steals our car parking, or when someone says 'no' to us."

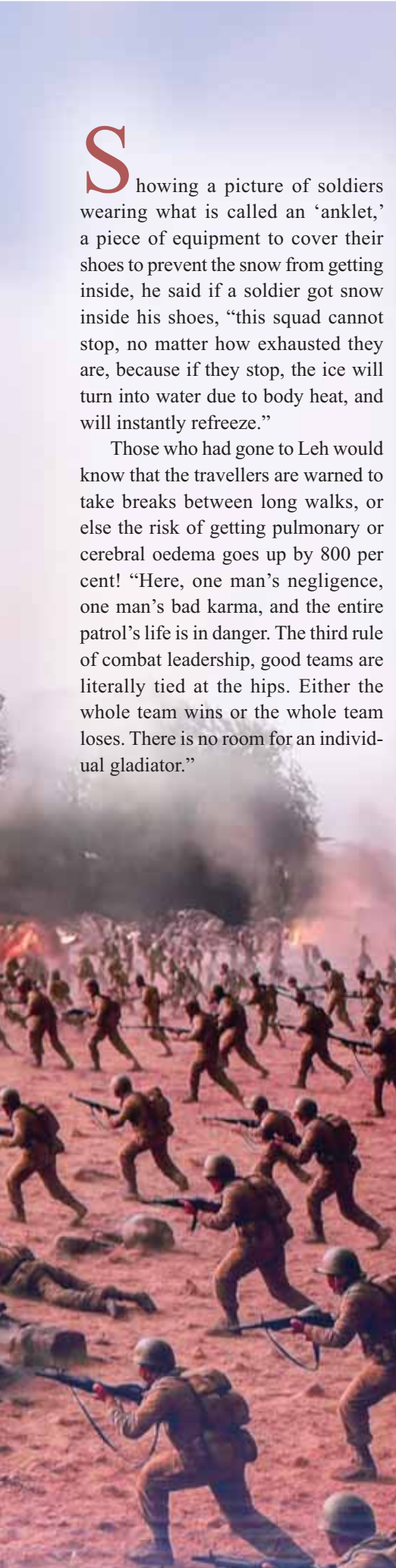
The Captain said that these men were not special forces or members of high-performance teams in various sectors. "They are very ordinary; what

There are no material tools
with which military leaders
can take their men into
battle... no ESOPS, pay hikes,
employee of the month award
or bonus.

they do together becomes extraordinary because they are led in extraordinary ways, they are organised in extraordinary ways. The second rule of combat leadership doesn't matter if you are a lieutenant who was minted just two weeks ago; now that you have command, you are accountable, period. There is no excuse."

**Capt Raghu Raman from
the Indian Army addressing
delegates at the zone institute.**





Showing a picture of soldiers wearing what is called an ‘anklet,’ a piece of equipment to cover their shoes to prevent the snow from getting inside, he said if a soldier got snow inside his shoes, “this squad cannot stop, no matter how exhausted they are, because if they stop, the ice will turn into water due to body heat, and will instantly refreeze.”

Those who had gone to Leh would know that the travellers are warned to take breaks between long walks, or else the risk of getting pulmonary or cerebral oedema goes up by 800 per cent! “Here, one man’s negligence, one man’s bad karma, and the entire patrol’s life is in danger. The third rule of combat leadership, good teams are literally tied at the hips. Either the whole team wins or the whole team loses. There is no room for an individual gladiator.”

Patrolling woes

About 80 to 90 per cent of the bulk activity on the glacier is patrolling. The patrolling soldiers were attached to one another by a rope and to safeguard against huge crevasses which could swallow up the whole group, but which were covered with ice and hence not visible, the first soldier poked the path before him with a stick to test the firmness of the terrain.

Every soldier in the patrol is tied to the next one with a stick in the front, and the scout or the vanguard soldier, pokes the ground in the front to look for crevasses or deep holes inside the glacier... “sometimes they are so deep that if you take a chunk of rock and chuck it inside, you will hear it going *kadak, kadak*, but you won’t hear it hitting the bottom!” Because of heavy snowfall, the crevasses are covered with an ice bridge, which can sometimes hold the weight of dozens of men, but give way at other times. “The drill, in case a soldier goes down, is that the remaining soldiers are immediately supposed to hit the crampons and use their ice axes to arrest his fall and pull him out. But this drill works like most drills do... in theory. In practice, every soldier is exhausted beyond belief and barely has any energy. In that exhausted state, if a heavy load goes

down, it jerks everyone off their feet and before they can get a grip in that powdery snow, the entire set of men starts getting dragged inside the crevasse.”

What do you do then, the captain asked the audience and got the response: ‘Cut the rope.’

What Capt Raman said next made many in the hall tear up. He said, “Yes, sitting inside this AC hall, it’s very easy to say cut the rope. But let me put this in context for you. The soldier who is dangling at the other end of the rope is the man who kept food hot and warm for you when you were out on a patrol. He is the man who nursed you back to health when you had 105 deg temperature in some god-forsaken post. He is the man who lent you money when you had to marry your sister. And he is the man who went and met your aging parents when you did not get leave that year. That’s the man dangling at the other end of the rope... it takes a lot of courage to give the order to cut that rope.”

But the first rule of combat leadership is that the mission comes first. “Even if it is your own brother dangling at the other end of the rope, you are accountable to the mission. The mission comes first, always and every time.”

It is in “that state of mind that leadership is being called for. Anybody can lead when the economy is doing great, business is good, environment is good and funding is coming in. Real leadership is actually called for in tough times.”

Next, displaying a bunch of letters, he said, “This is the only thing that brings a smile to the face of a soldier.... letters from home. But these are censored because you don’t want the soldiers getting any bad news. So, if a soldier’s daughter has died of dengue, he won’t be informed, but you,

There’s no way a video can show you what it really is like to live inside a bunker that stinks of unwashed human bodies mixed with the smell of kerosene, gunpowder, vomit and rotting food.

as his commanding officer, will know that. You will have to bear and carry that burden of knowing that your subordinate’s daughter is dead, but won’t be able to tell him.”

Saying that there were no good or bad soldiers, only good or bad leaders, Capt Raman related an anecdote about the time he was posted at the Siachen battle school as an instructor. By a coincidence, there were two battalions there from the same regiment who were manning two different sectors of the Siachen glacier. While in one the soldiers appeared to be



7ft tall... “the way they carried themselves, the snappiness of their salute, the vibrance in their eyes, I almost felt if I touch a soldier, I will get a static, that’s the kind of vibration, vibrance they had.”

“But in the other unit, the men were slouched, their cheeks hollow and eyes vacant. It was the same army, same training, same equipment, same codes, everything was exactly the same, but their leaders were different and that made all the difference! One was kicking ass and the other was crumbling like a pack of cards.”

The pressure cooker temple

In Andhra Pradesh, there is a temple called the Chilkur Balaji temple, better known as the Visa temple, called so because aspirants for a US visa, come here after the application, and do 10 rounds of the temple. And another 110 rounds once the visa comes. “I don’t know why it works, maybe it’s a branch office or something, but it works!”

Similarly, in the central sector of the Siachen glacier, there’s a temple called the Pressure Cooker Baba Mandir. “Do you know why,” asked Capt

Raghu Raman? Legend says that once from a Pakistani ridge when a heat-seeking missile was fired, it came to the hottest part of the post, which was a pressure cooker on top of a stove, and blew that up, saving the 28 men who were sleeping in the barracks close by. “Ever since that day, the fragments of that pressure cooker are kept in a shrine, and *pooja hoti uski din mein do baar...subah shaam aarti hoti hei uski.*” (Pooja of the pressure cooker remnants is done twice a day, complete with *aarti*).

Through another visual, Capt Raman showed a man, who was visiting the region when the temperature was around minus 23 deg C, wearing no special clothing. “This is not just excruciatingly painful, it’s downright

suicidal. So, why is he doing this? VIPs who come into the glacier, are covered from top to bottom as if they are going to meet some Eskimos! Of course, they need to wear those clothes, but they come mostly for photo ops... and they don’t listen to my briefing, they are only awaiting the sound of the chopper which will take them back! But when this man comes to my post, he is sending me a message... ‘Son, I am a brigade commander; I can’t be there with you for the whole 12 months. But for the 10 minutes I stay here, I’ll expose myself to the pain that you feel for twelve months so that you know that I know what your pain is. That is leadership, ladies and gentlemen! This is walking the talk.’”

With this anecdote, he reminded the audience that “troops don’t expect you to solve their problems, they expect you to understand their problems.”

It’s easy to say cut the rope.
But the soldier dangling there
kept food hot for you when
you were out on a patrol; who
nursed you back to health
when you had high fever in
some godforsaken post, or
who lent you money for your
sister’s marriage.

Designed by N Krishnamurthy

Interacting with kids with clubfoot

V Muthukumaran

It was a memorable and emotional visit to the Government Hospital, Dindigul, for all the 30 children from the Interact Club of SBC Academy on Diwali 2025 as “they not only mingled with the clubfoot toddlers and their parents, but also listened to a doctor’s briefing on the cause and effects of this muscular deformity. The twisted inward leg syndrome is a birth defect that can be detected in the foetal growth in pregnant women,” says Aarthi Mukesh, executive secretary, RC Dindigul Queencity, the all-women’s club in RID 3000 which sponsors this Interact club.

Since inception two years ago, the Interact club is being mentored by the school correspondent Aarthi

Senthilkumar and the faculty “so that they can reach out to the less privileged in the community, and feel the joy of giving. They get to know the challenges and hardships being faced by the marginalised during their community work,” explains Aarthi. She is also the editor of the club’s monthly bulletin *Queen’s Herald*s.

Dindigul Queens had prepared a list of 130 clubfoot toddlers being treated at the GH, categorising them based on age, gender and size, and this data was given to the Interactors well in advance. They took the toddlers’ list with them, and informed their parents about “their proposal of gifting them Diwali dresses to clubfoot children at the GH.” With monetary help from parents, Interactors bought new

clothes worth ₹75,000 based on the age-gender-size list “so that the dresses fit nicely on the toddlers whose age varies from just one month to 6–7 years.” The new dresses were sorted and nicely packed before they were handed over to 115 clubfoot children in person. “They had a surplus of 25 dresses which were distributed among the toddlers who were present.”

During the briefing by the doctor, the Interactors, all students from Class 8–10, were stunned to know that clubfoot sets in unborn babies in mother’s womb, and “if not detected at the right stage, this congenital defect will paralyse the legs arresting children’s growth.” All the students witnessed the treatment being given to toddlers fitted with special shoes, and “their parents were happy that their wards had a chance to learn something useful at very early age in their lives,” says Aarthi.

On their part, Dindigul Queens thanked parents for funding their children to buy dresses for toddlers and clubfoot kids. Rotarians sponsored sweets and food items like snacks, worth ₹7,000, that were distributed to all participants. On the way back



Dr Veeramani gives a talk on clubfoot disorder to Interactors, parents and teachers of SBC Academy at the Government Hospital, Dindigul. On the right is RC Dindigul Queencity president Rajathi Kamalakannan and left is project chair Malliga Chinnaswamy.



Clockwise from above: A teacher is presented a gift box by Rtn Revathi (centre) who is flanked on both sides by school correspondent Aarthi Senthilkumar (left) and club secretary Aarthi Mukesh • An Interactor presents dress material to a toddler's parent • Interactors join hands over clubfoot shoes with Rotary monogram for a photo shoot.

home, Interact club president P K Prahalya (Class 9) said, “it felt amazing to bring happiness to those in need, while the joy and gratitude on the faces of these clubfoot children filled us with immense satisfaction.”

Clubfoot project

Dindigul Queens have tied up with the GH and Delhi-based Cure India, a pharma firm that makes special shoes for clubfoot, to provide treatment for newborns and toddlers affected by this leg deformity. The project was initiated eight years ago by the then club president Malliga Chinnaswamy who is also the major sponsor of the annual events being done for the special children at the GH. “Every year, we spend ₹2 lakh for children’s treatment including the procurement of special shoes, apart from spending around ₹40,000 for gifts and foods distributed to the toddlers,” explains Aarthi. From 130 toddlers, the number of clubfoot patients has grown to 175

Our dedication and strong will to carry on with the project despite hurdles have brought smiles on the faces of clubfoot children which can’t be quantified or described in words.

Malliga Chinnaswamy
past president, RC Dindigul Queencity

including newborns, as the hospital is now getting more numbers of toddlers from Madurai and other areas, thanks to their effective treatment boosting its public image through word of mouth.

Cure India has appointed Geetha, a paramedic, at the GH, and she visits primary health centres and government hospitals across Dindigul to identify pregnant women carrying clubfoot babies through scanning. She counsels the expectant mothers, if they carry

a clubfoot baby, and their families, “and makes sure that the newborns are brought to the GH for regular treatment.” It takes a maximum of seven years for a complete treatment and cure of clubfoot deformity, and Dindigul Queens liaise between the ortho department of GH and Cure India to fill gaps in the treatment procedure.

Recalling the project’s journey so far, Malliga says, “our dedication and strong will to carry on with the project despite hurdles have brought smiles on the faces of clubfoot children which can’t be quantified or described in words.” But on a serious note, Aarthi says, “being an all-women’s club in a small town in southern Tamil Nadu we find it difficult to raise funds for our clubfoot project. Hence, we will be happy if some large-hearted Rotarians help us to sustain our project in the coming years.”

The 27-year-old all-women’s club has so far sponsored 12 Interact and three Rotaract clubs. ■



One family, One vision

Jaishree

Rotaract is not the future of Rotary. Rotaract is the present of Rotary,” said RI President Francesco Arezzo, addressing district Rotaract leaders at the Tejas zone institute in Delhi. He explained that Rotary functions in a rapidly changing, fluid society, “very different from the world of founder Paul Harris.”

While Rotarians often recognise change only after it has occurred, Rotaractors “live the change, feel the change and understand what is changing,” he said. Rotary therefore needs Rotaract to remain relevant, to understand new

forms of communication and evolving community needs. At the same time, Rotaract needs Rotary’s experience, because “the future comes from our past.” Calling it a win-win relationship, he urged Rotary and Rotaract to plan, study communities and execute projects together. “We are great together; we cannot survive alone,” he said.

RI director K P Nagesh highlighted the importance of nurturing the next generation early, while also strengthening Rotary’s own diversity. He noted that women’s membership in Rotary in India currently stands at around 17 per cent, with a focused push to reach



Below: Rotaract district leaders at the Institute.





Rotaract district leaders sign an MoU with the Rotary Environment Foundation (REF) for the Dakoju Dhanyavad programme at the Tejas Rotary Zone Institute in Delhi. RI Director K P Nagesh, REF founder DGE Ravishankar Dakoju, its trustee Neil Joseph, treasurer Vijay Tadimalla, PDG Suresh Hari are with PDRRs Sasikumar, Darryl D'Souza, Arun Teja and Karthik Kittu.



30 per cent. While gender balance is not a concern in Rotaract and Interact, he emphasised the need to introduce Rotary's values and vision to young people at an early age, ensuring continuity of leadership and service.

If the Rotary wheel is to rotate for decades to come, Rotaract and Interact must be central to Rotary's strategy, said RI director M Muruganandam. "When we dream together, think together and work together, growth is not an option, it is an outcome," he added. He called for innovative

club models, and proposed the 1:2:3 approach — each Rotarian to introduce two Rotaractors and three Interactors, and each Rotary club to sponsor two Rotaract and three Interact clubs.

A panel discussion titled *Unite to Grow*, moderated by both the directors, highlighted the advantages of the collective strength of Rotary, Inner Wheel, Rotaract and Interact.



Rotaractors with RI President Francesco Arezzo, RI Directors Muruganandam and Nagesh, RI President's aide John de Giorgio and Rotararact session chair PDRR Karthik Kittu.



From L: RI Director K P Nagesh, national president of Inner Wheel Jyoti Mahipal, past president Preeti Gugnani, (RID 3192) DRR Janice Philip, (RID 3011) DIR Aahana Roy and RI Director M Muruganandam.

District Rotaract Representative Janice Philip described Rotaract as the momentum behind Rotary's impact. "Rotaractors bring speed, agility and the ability to start anything from scratch," she said. As digital natives, Rotaractors can provide visibility and scale by harnessing technology to run synchronised initiatives across districts and countries. She proposed a shared annual service calendar focusing on key causes such as polio eradication, health, environment, cervical cancer prevention and women's

empowerment. Emphasising integration at the club level, she said, "It is no longer Rotary and Rotaract. It has to be Rotary *with* Rotaract."

Janice also highlighted Rotaract's growing commitment to TRF, including aspirations to collectively contribute to the Polio Fund and work towards a Rotaract-led Arch Klumpp Society-level contribution in India, with support from Rotarians and Inner Wheel members.

District Interact Representative Aahana Roy shared how joining Interact at age 12 instilled empathy and social awareness. "Interact taught me that even two minutes with someone can mean the world to them," she said, recalling visits to NGOs supporting the elderly and children. She described Interactors as bringing spark and creativity, Rotaractors bringing innovation, and Rotarians, vision. "Rotary is the soil, Rotaract is the sunlight and Interact is the seed that brings tomorrow's hope," she noted. Aahana advocated mentorship opportunities and greater involvement of Interactors in Rotary initiatives to build confidence and leadership early.

Jyoti Mahipal, national president of Inner Wheel, showcased how Inner Wheel complements Rotary's mission through impactful projects such as *Sparsh Ek Ehsaan*, which addresses child abuse awareness, along with human milk banks and cervical cancer vaccination initiatives. Sharing her

personal journey, she said Inner Wheel transformed her from a shy home-maker into a confident leader. "What I could not do professionally, I could do through Inner Wheel," she said, recalling how initiatives such as the Param Montessori House and Gyan Jyoti scholarship programme that she had initiated as president are now permanent projects of her Inner Wheel club. Inner Wheel is not just about service, but about lifelong friendships, confidence and purpose, she noted.

Three major collaborations were announced at the institute by session chair PDRR Karthik Kittu — a partnership between Rotaract South Asia Multi District Information Organisation and the Rotary Environment Foundation to promote *Project Dakoju Dhanyavad* focusing on large-scale tree planting and ecosystem creation across villages; a partnership with the Head Held High Foundation to create 10–20 model AI villages across India by empowering rural communities with AI literacy; and with Culkey Foundation and Gol's Ministry of Tourism to empower local artisans and self-help groups to strengthen livelihoods through art, culture and eco-tourism. ■



Rotaract comes alive in Kosamba, Gujarat

V Muthukumaran

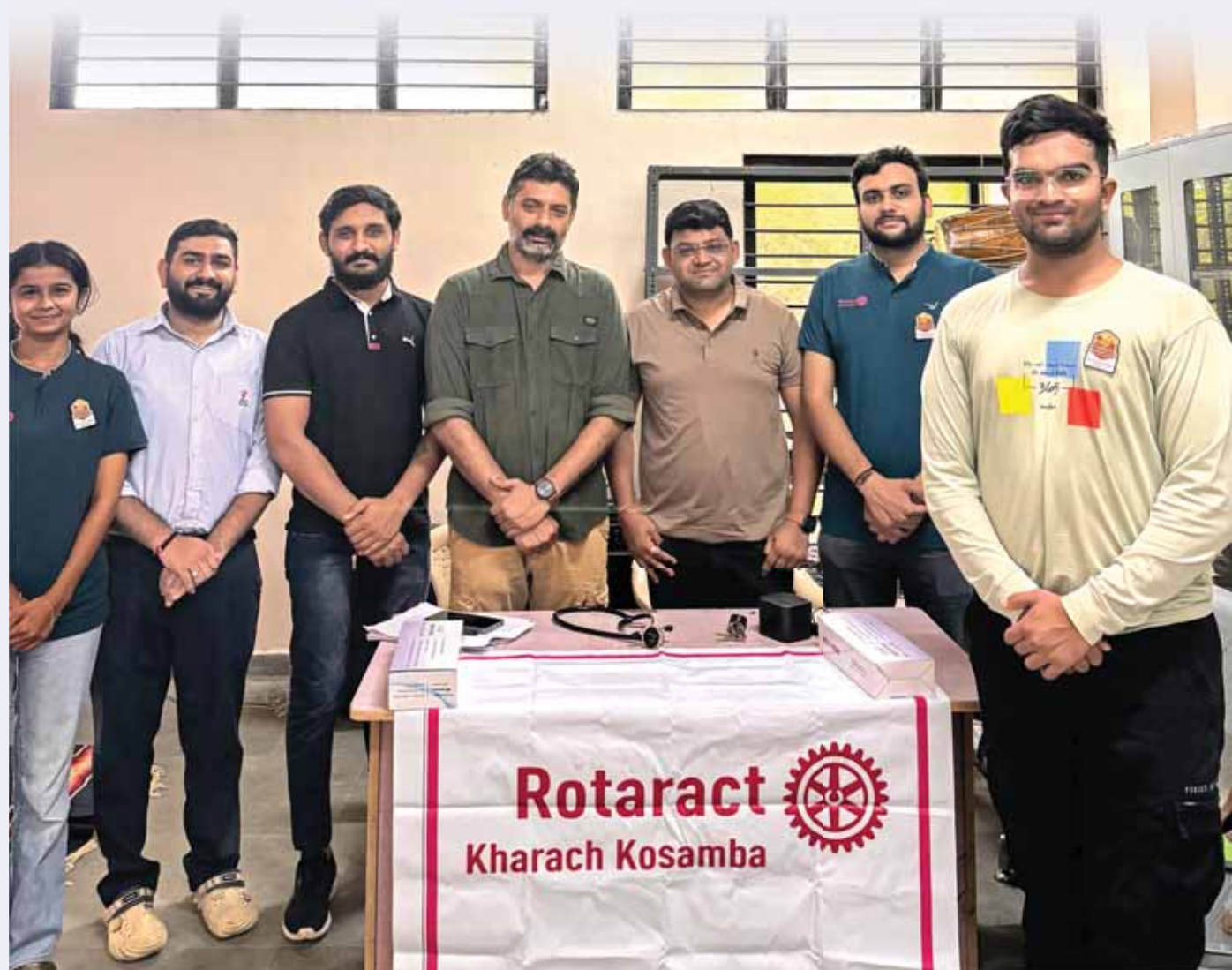
Kosamba, a small village in Mangrol taluk of Surat, Gujarat, has seen numerous Rotary-Rotaract activities after their clubs have got an image makeover with change of names.

Rotary Club of Kharach Kosamba, RID 3060, and its

Rotaract club of the same name are now called 'Tarsadi Kosamba' with effect from July 1, 2025. "After our parent Rotary changed its name, we also followed suit to reinvent

ourselves. Our eight-year-old club has 28 members consisting of a good mix of businessmen, working class professionals and college students," says Aditya Dubey, joint

RAC Tarsadi Kosamba president Virajsinh Atodariya (2nd from Left), secretary Indrarajsinh Desai, and Adarsh Kelvani Mandal principal M K Mahinda (centre). Also seen is club's service director Aditya Dubey on the right.



secretary and director of club services at RAC Tarsadi Kosamba.

Following a request from principal MK Mahida of Adarsh Kelvani Mandal, a government secondary and higher secondary school in Kosamba, who found that some 200 tribal students in his school “are in need of a proper health check-up, we decided to conduct a medical camp for the benefit of these rural children,” he explains. A Rotarian doctor Surjeet Singh Rana, a homeopathy practitioner, screened over 160 students, and non-allopathy medicines were given to needy patients. “Our team of seven Rotaractors also conducted a health awareness session at the camp in which dos and don’ts for a disease-free lifestyle were explained to the students.”

Over the past eight years, the Rotaract medical camp in Kosamba would have benefitted around 550–600 people including students, says Dubey. The locals and the Rotary fraternity look forward to the nine-day Navratri musical fest at the Rotary Garba Ground every year (Oct-Nov). “Around 1,000 people across age groups come together for a joyful music and dance, a celebration that epitomises the Gujarati culture, marking the grandeur of the festival season. This is a ticketed event, with each participant being charged an entry fee of ₹50 at the Garba Grounds that sports a festive ambience with colourful buntings, music and dance,” he explains.

The Garba music and dance at the Rotary Grounds have been the major fundraiser for Rotary and Rotaract clubs in Kosamba for the past many years now.

Mass wedding

Gujarat deputy chief minister Harsh Sanghvi will inaugurate *Project Samuh Lagan*, a community wedding in which over



A student is being examined at the health check-up camp.

70 couples will tie the nuptial knot simultaneously, at a mega Rotary-Rotaract event in January last week.

As they are doing this for the first time, “we are working out all the finer details of logistics and the venue alterations for the mass wedding in Kosamba facilitated by Rotary-Rotaract to ensure its success. On our part, we will donate all the essential household items including cooking vessels, cot-bed, table fan, cupboard etc. A few gold grams will be used for the *mangal sutra* for the matrimonial knot between couples.”

Having been in Rotaract for two-and-half years, Dubey has won four district awards in community service; as ‘outstanding

Rotaractor,’ ‘Rising Star’ of the club; and Rotaractor of the Year. A first-year student of BPT (physiotherapy) at the PP Savani University, Dhamdod, near Kosamba, he says, “I am learning about my community through my Rotaract activities.”

As a physiotherapist, “it is always better to know the community for which you are working, and being a Rotaractor, I have this advantage of having a good understanding of the people, their customs and practices.”

Dubey wants to join Rotary only after 32, “and as Rotarian my focus areas will be on health, wellness and reaching out to needy people in rural areas,” he smiles. ■



Let's strive to make cohesive and peaceful communities

Rasheeda Bhagat

Considering the state of the world in which we live today, Rotarians need to come together and “use Rotary as an instrument for peace... reaching out across divides and forming connections with people you might otherwise never meet. Let's strive, through the service we give, to make our communities more cohesive, healthy and peaceful. Peace is of special importance today as peace is all about making people free from poverty, harm, disease, environmental pollution, unclean water and poor sanitation,” said RI President Francesco Arezzo at the inaugural session of the Zones 4,5,6 and 7 Institute titled *Tejas Wings of Change* held in Delhi.

From *anna daan* or giving food to those in need to the great community kitchens of the gurudwaras, to everyday kindnesses that stitch neighbourhoods together, giving is woven into the daily Indian experience.

Peace also comes when you provide educational opportunities, access to medical care and freedom from poverty, he said. Elaborating on the presidential message for this year — *Unite for Good* — he said this was much more than a slogan. Over the last decade “we have welcomed tens of thousands of new members around the world each year, but nearly the same number departs, year after year. This dynamic between growth and departure is not a Rotary problem... it's a mirror of the world itself. People are longing for meaning but they don't always find it.”

Arezzo said people join Rotary because they admire what Rotary stands for but they leave when Rotary becomes “only a structure or just a way to spend time, rather than meeting their expectations, hopes or desires. If we unite for good to give every member a sense of belonging, to make them feel an essential part of our organisation, and ensure that clubs are



committed to giving members the best of experiences as people of action and changemakers, perhaps they won't leave Rotary."

Rotarians can unite for good by being contributors to the communities they live in, learning from each other how to create lasting change and by demonstrating how to build a foundation for peace by earning trust... helping to meet essential human needs, reaching across divides and forming friendships despite differences.

The RI President urged Rotary leaders to

check with their members what they expect from their membership. "Have open discussions about what they hope to gain from Rotary and connect personally as best as you can to improve your members' experiences. Reach out to people in your communities to see what your club can do to make a positive change. In many cases, that will mean new opportunities for service projects. Having meaningful dialogues can be just as important."

Reiterating the core ethos of Rotary to make the world a better place for all, Arezzo said, "Sending a young person as a peace scholar or another young person to another country for a youth exchange programme is working for peace. Preventing and curing disease, providing clean drinking water and sanitation where there is none, is working for peace." Ensuring that women can give birth safely, improving the environment, supporting girls' education and sustaining families' livelihoods, would also enhance peace.

"Rotary service makes the world a little more free everyday, and in doing so we create conditions for peace. Gandhi once said non-violence is the weapon of the strong. That is why we unite for good, for a world built on compassion, love and not greed."

The RI President then turned upon all the positives that Indian traditions, history and scriptures offer. "Here in India generosity is not an event, it's a way of life; from the concept of *anna daan* or giving food to anyone in need to the great community kitchens of the gurudwaras, to everyday kindnesses that stitch neighbourhoods together, giving is woven into your daily experience."

Whether it was Krishna talking in the *Bhagwad Gita* about *daan*, the

We win only as a team,
never alone or as individuals.
So we must do more than
move quickly, we must move
gracefully and mindfully
and prepare to help the next
leader succeed.

act of giving, becoming sacred when it was done without expectation of returns, or the *Chaitanya Upanishad* advising people to give with humility, joy and not measure the size of the giving but the openness of the heart, all of them found a connection with Rotary's ideals. "Rotary's 4-Way Test finds resonance in India with the spirit of dharma and seva... above all it reflects *Vasudeva Kutambakkam*, the world being one family."

But a big challenge comes from modernity... "whether in Rome or Milan or Delhi we feel the same wave; digitalisation, acceleration and disconnection. The world spins faster... it's a time when values dissolve before they can take shape, institutions feel lifeless, choices multiply yet matter less, power outpaces responsibility." In such a world, Rotary could be a place where people were not measured by achievements but welcomed into a dialogue, not manipulated, not entertained but entrusted. "But to do this we must reflect on the work we do and the schedules we follow. Too often projects end with the term of the

**RI President
Francesco Arezzo**



governor or the club president. But the work that truly matters, such as education and peace, requires time and continuity. I like to think of Rotary as a great relay race. We have many batons, club presidents, district governor, the RI president; we each take our laps, do our best, achieve all we can and then pass the baton. But if we miss the handoff or make the next runner trip, it doesn't matter how fast we go. We win only as a team, never alone or as individuals. So we must do more than move quickly, we must move gracefully and mindfully and prepare to help the next leader succeed. We must also know which way to run."

Here Arezzo quoted from *Alice in Wonderland*; when Alice seeks directions from the Cheshire cat, she is asked where she wants to go. 'I don't much care where', says Alice, and the cat replies: 'Then it doesn't matter which way you go!'

"This is a warning, if we don't know where we want to go, not just this year, but beyond, then any direction will do and no direction will matter. Strategic thinking helps us prepare the ground for those who come after us. Let us commit to projects that go across leaders and egos, let us build for the long run and not short applause," said Arezzo.

And India was showing the Rotary world what this looked like in practice. Consider the Rotary Program of *Scale Partners for Water Access and Better Harvests in India*. This five-year initiative led by Indian Rotarians "is transforming rural life, building check dams, ponds, teaching sustainable farming and restoring aquifers. The numbers are really impressive: ground water levels rising 10 to 50 per cent each year, but beyond numbers lies something really remarkable. A mother no longer walks long distances to fetch water, a farmer who does two harvests



RI President Arezzo and Institute convener RI Director K P Nagesh present a memento to Vice President of India CP Radhakrishnan. From L: Institute chairman PDG Sharat Jain, RID 3160 DGN Trivikram Joshi, TRF Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol from Sweden, RI Director M Muruganandam, Institute secretary Manjoo Phadke and Kiran Kumar from RC Bangalore Orchards, are also present.

a year, a child who now goes to school instead of fetching water. This is generosity; the same that comes from the Indian tradition of *daan*, the same spirit that fuelled Gandhi's mantra of non-violence and the one that works in the gurudwara kitchens, and moves Rotary's service."

Just as Prophet Baruch, riding in exile in a time of despair and darkness, had given the call 'look to the east' today Rotary too has two reasons to look east, not only in a metaphorical but real sense. The east, particularly India, is seeing "the most strong and vibrant growth in membership. And in India we are witnessing something

extraordinary; not just an increase in membership but also in meaning and clarity. Rotary is made of not just clubs or projects but of people and "people stay when they feel something deeper than obligation. They stay when they feel connected not just to a cause but to one another."

He was happy to see that "here Rotary is rising not only symbolically but concretely, joyfully, spiritually. If we can transfer our clubs not just in size but also spirit, if we can practise the 4-Way test, not just as a recitation but a resolution, if we can invite others into Rotary not only to serve but to belong, then we will not only retain

members, we will become a beacon, a gathering place not of slogans but meaning, not of charity but shared transformation. And by doing so we can change the world," said Arezzo.

Addressing the inaugural session, convenor and RI director K P Nagesh said after a lot of questions and deliberations, Delhi had been chosen as the conference venue. The region had two very dynamic governors Ravinder Gugnani (RID 3011) and Amita Mohindru (RID 3012) "who

took ownership and delivered, and “a very disciplined and determined PDG Sharat Jain, who did elaborate planning and put everything together. The result was that we saw a record number of 1,456 registrations.”

Apart from giving a car to everyone for the three days of the institute, it was decided to launch many new schemes such as the lifetime achievement awards to those who had put in mega efforts to eliminate polio from India. “We thought we can’t wait for polio to be totally eliminated before recognising these people, so we decided to reward those who had really worked hard for this cause with lifetime achievement awards.”

The other new idea introduced was creating the million-dollar club among the Arch Klumph ranks. While the US already had over 700 AKS members, India had reached 258, and “we want to make this number 500 as soon as possible. We found that many AKS members reach the Levels 1 and 2 and there ends the story. So we decided to launch the million-dollar club, and there are



RI President Arezzo



RI Directors Nagesh and Muruganandam.

already 7 in that club with pledges of \$1 million. Of course Rajashree Birla and DGE Ravishankar Dakoju have already given several million dollars to TRF.”

Nagesh added that when several AKS members were approached, even more came forward to join the \$1 million club, taking the total number to 14. Many other initiatives would unfold during the institute through which Rotary would extend a larger helping hand to local communities, particularly the children of defence personnel, he added.

Institute chair Sharat Jain assured the delegates that even though this was a serious training programme, care had been taken to “blend learning and leadership skills with fun and laughter. We have put together for you a programme that will remind you why Rotary fellowship is unique.” ■

Helping pilgrims

Team Rotary News

The Rotaract Club of Vindhyachal, RID 3120, organised the *Kanwariya Sewa* (service to devotees) initiative under *Project Shraddha* during the Hindu month of Sawan in July, widely observed across north India. As part of the initiative, Rotaractors distributed medical kits, biscuits and drinking water to over 250 Kanwariyas near the Panchmukhi Mahadev temple in Bariyaghat, Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh. The medical kits contained basic medicines for fever, cold and vomiting, along with bandages, cotton and ointments.

The initiative supported Kanwariyas who travel long distances on foot as part of their religious devotion during the Sawan month. A team of 20 Rotaractors actively participated, providing essential medical aid, snacks and water throughout the day. Members of RC Vindhyachal also joined and supported the service activity. ■



Rotaractors give travel essentials to a pilgrim.



Members of RAC and RC Vindhyachal, along with dignitaries, at the Panchmukhi Mahadev temple.

A rural eye camp in Coimbatore

V Muthukumaran

For the first time, a five-year-old Rotaract club in Coimbatore, RAC Nehru Institute of Engineering and Technology, RID 3206, has done a large-scale outreach project in Kovaipudur, a neighbourhood, by holding an eye check-up camp for rural patients, mostly elderly and infirm patients.

The club tied up with the Rotaract Club of Delhi Pegasus, RID 3012, which runs a flagship *Project Smile* with seven areas of focus that aims to provide “basic amenities like medical care and clean water to the rural people. We decided to take up eye check-up camp and a blood donation drive under the *Project Smile* banner,” says Yamini Janardhanan, event coordinator. A six-member team from the Sankara Eye Hospitals, Coimbatore, led by a doctor and consisting of two optometrists and three paramedics screened 56 patients, gave consultations and prescribed medicines. “Around 10 spectacles were given at discounted price.”

Giving a peek into the eye check-up camp, RC Kovaipur youth service chair Lokanatha Guptha says, “we gave only outside support by funding (₹40,000) the project and guided them as their parent club. And everything else, including planning, logistics and creating pre-event awareness among the rural people were all done by the Rotaractors.” Also, Guptha has arranged the tie-up with the Sankara Hospitals whose

founder-trustee Dr RV Ramani is an active Rotarian from RC Coimbatore Central and a Padma Bhushan awardee. “Following a request, he sent a medical team who arrived with diagnostic tools, vision charts, and testing kits to set-up a full-fledged screening zone at the Kumittipathi Panchayat Office,” he explains.

During his inaugural address, Guptha recalled the global role of Rotary in the near-eradication of polio, and appreciated the Rotaractors for taking up healthcare initiatives like eye camp in the rural areas which lack access to medical facilities. RC Kovaipudur’s



Above: Rural patients at the registration counter.

Below: (From left) RC Kovaipudur’s Rotaract chair AP Sriraam, youth service chair Lokanatha Guptha, RAC NIET president Rahul K and secretary Sathick Ali, along with a patient and paramedic, at the eye check-up camp.





Eye check-up under progress as Rotarians Guptha and Sriraam look on.

Rotaract chair AP Sriraam guided the Rotaractors in planning the eye camp, and preparing the venue (panchayat office) by making arrangements for the registration desk, seating order, and the screening zone with adequate space for medical equipment.



In the second leg of *Project Smile*, a blood donation camp was held at the Health and Science College located on the NIET campus at Thirumalayampalayam, a town panchayat near Coimbatore. “Around 150 students and faculty members donated blood which was delivered to the VGM Hospital,” says Yamini. While commending Rotary for moulding the Rotaractors with the right service attitude, P Krishna Kumar, CEO-secretary, NIET College, who is also a Rotarian, called for holding such medical camps and activities regularly that would benefit the society as a whole.

Project Pegasus

An exclusive one-day event for district Rotaractors is under planning stage with inputs from Guptha who is mentoring the club. “We will have plenary sessions, seminars and workshops, and hope to attract over 500 Rotaractors from all over Coimbatore,” says Yamini. The second edition of *Project Pegasus* will be held after Pongal 2026, and “we are looking forward to host it

as this medley of events will help Rotaractors to climb up their career graph and achieve success in their lives.”

Doing her third year in BE (Aeronautical Engineering) at the NIET, Yamini says, “I will become a Rotarian after completing my studies next year. And I am confident of making a fine balance between my work responsibility and Rotary activities as both are dear to me.”

Club president Rahul K sums it neatly by stating, “our club’s motto is fellowship forever and leadership together.” With this objective, programmes are held reaching out to both the Rotaractors and the communities, he smiles. Congratulating the Rotaract club for holding *Project Smile*, DG Chella Raghavendra noted that both the “eye camp and blood donation drive are examples of meaningful community service led entirely by the Rotaractors.” He also complimented RC Kovaipudur for guiding the Rotaractors in both these projects that “reflected the true spirit of Rotary-Rotaract coming together for common good.” ■



The mystery behind the title **Dakoju Dhanyavad**

Rasheeda Bhagat

A t a “green” session of the Tejas zone institute in Delhi titled *Dhanyavad—Gratitdde to Mother Earth – protect, preserve, prosper*, Rotary’s favourite philanthropist and RI District 3192 DGE Ravishankar Dakoju explained why he had given his mega tree planting and environmental initiative across India the intriguing title *Dakoju Dhanyavad*.

He said that like most Rotarians he was “a sensitive and emotional person”. During the Covid pandemic, for no particular reason, “I started feeling low, guilty, suffering from anxiety and anguish.” Not able to figure out why he



was feeling so, he tried several remedies such as dabbling in alcohol, and praying at various religious institutions like temples, churches and mosques. But none of it helped him. Professional help from an expert at Bengaluru's NIMHANS and the medicines the specialist prescribed didn't help either. "I didn't know what to do. Because of Covid, we were not going anywhere. I started going for a walk in Lal Bagh. I wanted to find why I was feeling anguish, anxiety and depression. Then

my two daughters Ekta and Samta got married, and I thought I'll be alright."

But nothing changed. He couldn't even share his state of mind with his wife Paola, not wanting to worry her. During his walks in the huge 250-acre garden, he'd gaze at the tall trees and the hillocks close by. Slowly he turned to nature for an answer to his suffering. "Instead of spiritual leaders or medical consultants, I turned to the trees and the mountain for an answer."

From L: RI Director K P Nagesh; DGE Ravishankar Dakoju; PRIP K R Ravindran; CEO of the Ryan Group Ryan Pinto; Neil Michael Joseph, co-trustee of the Rotary Environment Foundation, treasurer Vijay Tadimalla and PDG Suresh Hari.



Months of gazing at these finally brought a sign... an answer... both the trees and mountains had a triangular or conical shape... "just like a namaste, which is actually gratitude, or *dhanyavad*." The message he gleaned from his long walks in the midst of nature was that instead of blaming anybody, he should enjoy or celebrate life and express his gratitude.

After some reflection, said Dakoju, "I decided that let me plant something which will continue to say *dhanyavad* for decades to come, and even after I go. But I thought I should not plant these trees only in my city or my neighbourhood where I, my family would benefit, but far away in places which have nothing to do with me."

He went to the Western Ghats, the Sahyadri range in a remote place of Maharashtra and wanted to plant trees there, but realised he couldn't do this alone. After consulting his friend in Rotary and fellow environmentalist Neil Joseph, they decided on putting together a team, into which RC Kudal past president Gajanan Khandalgaonkar was also roped in. "We began planting trees inside forests, graveyards, cremation grounds, schools, backyards of homes, lake and river beds and so on."

In two years, his team had planted 48,000 saplings, but it was still less than half of his target of 100,000. During this time, he was elected to a leadership position in his district, and from DGN became DGE, and while undergoing training with his batch-mate DGEs, discussed with them doing something which was transformational and would outlive them.

Rotary's mega project on polio was almost ending; but during the discussion the topic came up that while Rotary was ending polio from

the world, “our planet itself has got polio... in terms of climate change and global warming, so why don’t we do something about that? For polio we have drops. Now let’s plant trees.”

As the project became more ambitious with the goals constantly growing.... now to one crore trees... more partners were roped in. While several of his batchmates have come on board, the project, titled *Dakoju Dhanyavad*, found a major partner in the Ryan International Group of Institutions.

At the institute, an MoU was signed between Dakoju (Rotary Environment Trust) and Ryan Pinto, CEO of the Ryan Group. The key terms of this MoU include planting of 50,000 saplings in one day at the Ryan schools across India on the day Dakoju gets sworn in as governor in July 2026. This will be an attempt to create a Guinness World Record. Other terms include an undertaking by the Ryan Group to start 165 Interact clubs in one year in its schools. And, along with Rotary, it will strive to plant one million saplings across the country. With

I decided that let me plant something which will continue to say *dhanyavad* for decades to come, and even after I go. But I thought I shouldn’t plant these trees only in my city or my neighbourhood, but far away in places which have nothing to do with me.

Ravishankar Dakoju
DGE - RID 3192

RID Nagesh and TRF Trustee Ann-Britt Asebol induct Ryan Pinto as a Rotarian, as DGE Dakoju and PRID C Basker look on.



165 schools in over 20 states of India, this was achievable.

Addressing the meet, Ryan group CEO Ryan Pinto said for his group this was a “momentous occasion; it is with great pride and honour that we associate with Dakoju and the entire Rotary family in this project, the core of which is to protect our planet, our environment. This is something that is embedded in our institutional DNA, and the vision of our founder Dr EF Pinto and our CMD Grace Pinto. We would be very happy to imbibe the spirit of protecting our planet in our students.”

Pinto said that their schools educate a quarter million children every day. It was important to let them know that “it is not just for marks and degrees that we want to educate them. We want to

empower them with good values so they can become good custodians of this planet, good citizens of this nation and ambassadors to protect Mother Earth.”

He announced that while these were the terms of the MoU they had signed at the event, he assured Dakoju that the entire Ryan group would work along with him in his other admirable initiatives such as improving the tribal schools, and giving water to animals and birds. “We are very excited to partner in these projects as well.”

An overwhelmed and grateful Dakoju said: “We didn’t expect this! We had asked him for one, he has given ten. We had asked him to open Interact clubs in all his schools and partner with us in planting trees. But he has now volunteered also for tribal education and the water for animals initiatives. We are very grateful.”

To the Rotary leaders in the audience, he asked a simple question... Pinto was not even a Rotarian but he



admires Rotary's work so much that he wanted to partner with them. He sought a show of hands on how many in the hall were running schools, colleges or entire universities, and urged them to join the greening initiative.

RI director K P Nagesh said: "When I hear that somebody associated with Rotary is not a Rotarian, I can't digest that." He removed his own pin, and requested TRF trustee Ann-Britt Asebol to use it to induct Pinto into Rotary, and thanked him for his partnership with Rotary, particularly the promise to start Interact clubs in all his 165 schools. "Saving Planet Earth is our collective responsibility," he added.

Earlier, addressing the session, PRID C Basker said the session's title — to protect, preserve, prosper — was

most appropriate "as it reminds us that we are not owners of this planet, but only caretakers. For generations, nature has nourished us with air, water, food, energy and beauty. But our impact on earth has reached a point where gratitude must run into responsibility.... to value, protect and safeguard the fragile ecosystem. We have to redefine growth and take urgent action to preserve what we have... our forests, rivers, oceans, biodiversity and ensure they remain for future generations."

That is why what Dakoju was doing was important and had made "not only his club or district, but the entire Rotary world proud."

Spelling out the objectives of the Rotary Environment Foundation, its treasurer Vijay Tadimalla said the long-term goals were to create 1,500-acre Rotary forests, plantations in the north, south, east and west of India, particularly Assam, Goa, the Sundarbans of West Bengal, in educational

For generations, nature has nourished us with air, water, food, energy and beauty. But our impact on earth has reached a point where gratitude must run into responsibility... to value, protect and safeguard the fragile ecosystem.

C Basker
Past RI Director

institutions, temple lands, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Nepal. The objective was to involve Rotaractors in this initiative in a big way.

The ultimate goal was millions of trees through Rotary, youth and partner networks, support for tribal education through the Ekal Vidyalaya support, compassion-led Rotary campaign for animals by putting up water feeders in schools, communities and homes in partnership with the NGO Water for Voiceless. The idea was to "instil empathy towards all living beings, not just humans. In essence, *Dhanyavad* is gratitude in action. It's more than a promise that is planted, nurtured and sustained. A thank you turned into a tree, a child's education, a forest, a fund, a legacy. And the person who turned that idea into action is a Rotarian who has pledged his time, leadership and wealth to the planet — DGE Dakoju."

Rotarians from all the four zones who had pledged money for TRF's Endowment Fund and those who had come forward to partner with the environmental initiatives were recognised at the session. ■

Promoting menstrual health during Navratri

Kiran Zehra

Project Sanskriti, a nine-day Navratri-themed initiative, was organised by Rotaract clubs from RID 3011 over two months. The Rotaract Clubs of Resilience and Young Visionaries led the project.

Aimed at addressing personal hygiene and promoting menstrual health awareness, the initiative witnessed the active participation of 12 Rotaract and Interact clubs. More than 35,000 sanitary pads were distributed across 15 locations, reaching many beneficiaries.

Navratri, traditionally associated with purity, renewal and feminine power, provided a symbolic backdrop for the initiative. By addressing menstrual health during



Members of RAC Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur Khalsa College distributing sanitary napkins in a slum area.



Members of the Interact Club of Prudence Connect along with beneficiaries of the sanitary napkin drive at Maika, a home for destitute women and children in Delhi.





Rotaractors at a sanitary pad distribution drive.



A member of RAC Sushant University interacts with a beneficiary.

this period, the project sought to break long-held social myths and taboos around menstruation and highlight dignity, hygiene and awareness as integral to women's wellbeing," says Harnoor Kaur, member, Rotaract Club of Ingenious Minds, one of the participating clubs.

Highlighting the groundwork that led to *Project Sanskriti*, Harnoor says her club had earlier launched *Project Aarohi*

at Mahipalpur, Delhi, in collaboration with Rahi and the Rajiv Gandhi Cancer Institute. The initiative provided free health check-up, including thyroid tests, cancer screenings, gynaecologist consultations, and the distribution of essential medicines, benefitting over 100 individuals.

"*Project Aarohi* helped us understand the severe lack of menstrual hygiene in the area and analyse how the club could intervene meaningfully. That learning became the blueprint for *Project Sanskriti*," she adds.

Emphasising the larger impact of such initiatives, Harnoor says, "Projects like *Sanskriti* are important as the lack of menstrual health awareness continues to affect the dignity, health and education of countless girls and women. By normalising conversations around menstruation and ensuring access to basic hygiene products, we are addressing a critical social gap and empowering communities to make informed, healthier choices."

The involvement of Interactors added a meaningful dimension to the project by encouraging early conversations around menstruation, helping break stigma, and fostering sensitivity and leadership among school-going students, she adds. ■



A member of RAC Resilience distributing sanitary pads to girls living in a slum.

Pune's Rotaract-Interact join hands for child welfare

Jaishree

In a novel move, Rotaract clubs in Pune (RID 3131) have joined hands with the city's Interact clubs to roll out three impactful service initiatives for underprivileged and differently-abled children. "This could probably be the first district-level Rotaract-Interact collaboration. Earlier, we only had a few instances of joint projects at the club level," says Vageesh Baheti, chair of the district's Rotaract-Interact Relations Committee.

The committee, which functions under the district Rotaract office, plays a key role in nurturing young Interactors. "I keep track of the functioning of both school-based and community-based Interact clubs, and our team regularly visits them to motivate members to join Rotaract once they complete school," he explains.

To mark Children's Day (Nov 14), the committee launched *Project Bachpan*, carried out in three phases with the participation of the Interact

Clubs of Salisbury Park and Poona Downtown, and the Rotaract Clubs of Pune Mideast (of which Baheti is a member) and Sinhgad College of Pharmacy.

The first phase reached out to 125 children at the Ayodhya Charitable Trust. Rotaract and Interact volunteers spent time with children with hearing and speech impairments, engaging them in fun activities and games, and distributing stationery and books. A doctor also conducted a posture-correction





Volunteers enjoy an impromptu dance at the Ayodhya Charitable Trust.

Below: Rotaractors and Interactors of RID 3131 support children with autism at a sports meet.





A Rotaractor cuts a cake with street children.

session, adding a health-awareness component to the visit.

In the second phase, the team fanned out across eight city localities to distribute cooked food, new clothes, and stationery to 120 street children. “We even cut a cake to make the day special; the children were thrilled,” smiles Baheti.

The final phase was dedicated to 25 children with autism, who participated in games and sports activities at the Vaishnavi Sports Club, with support from the Unmesh Foundation. The emphasis here was on inclusion, confidence-building, and joyful participation.

Beyond the immediate impact on beneficiaries, *Project Bachpan* strengthened collaboration between Rotaract and Interact, giving Interactors hands-on exposure to planning and executing meaningful service projects. Inspired by the success of this initiative, the district Rotaract-Interact Committee is now planning a larger collaborative programme, including a science exhibition and a ‘waste-to-best’ creativity event involving 30–35 Interact clubs, says Baheti. ■

A unique mother-daughter saga

Rasheeda Bhagat



Mother Mary Comes To Me

Arundhati Roy



If you are not into reading and can read only one book every few months, or a whole year, it has got to be Arundhati Roy's memoir titled *Mother Mary comes to me*. It reads like a thriller... packed with anecdotes, dramatic moments... searingly honest narration of feelings, emotions, relationships, the rabid, hate-filled exchanges between mother and daughter. Mother Mary is of course her mother Mary Roy, who famously waged, and won, a long legal battle for equal inheritance rights for Christian women in Kerala, because she was thrown out of her ancestral home by her brother and mother.

All of us are familiar with her powerful, hard-hitting writing... her beautiful prose, the international fame she got when her book *The God of Small Things* won the Booker Prize, and her essays against India's nuclear blasts during the Vajpayee regime, in favour of the Narmada Bachao Andolan and her famous foray into a Naxal infested region.

Though this book is about her life's journey, relationships, writing, etc, essentially the central theme is her love-hate relationship with her mother, who she and her brother were allowed to address only as Mrs Roy, as did generations of students who passed through her mother's famous school in Kottayam, Kerala. She sums it up in the line, "In these pages, my mother, my gangster, shall live. She was my shelter and my storm."

A feminist to the core, Arundhati writes about how in a small town like Kottayam, where there was little entertainment, as a young girl she frequently watched Malayalam and

Tamil movies and grew up on a diet of women-centred narratives, “mortal or divine, who only valorized absolute submission to the python-coils of tradition and convention.” Those who transgressed faced terrible punishment and lifelong disgrace. Many Malayalam films featured a gruesome depiction of women getting raped, so and so that “as a young girl growing up on a diet of these films, I used to believe that all women were raped, it was just a matter of when and where. That accounted for the knife in my bag when I arrived at the Nizamuddin Station in Delhi at the age of 16.”

In this background, as the school set up by Mary Roy in Kottayam grew popular, for her girl students, “Mrs Roy was the hope for escape. She was the burning flame of courage and defiance. She lit their path, showed the way. Not so for me. My escape route always circled back to what I was trying to escape from. When it came to me, Mrs Roy taught me how to think, then raged against my thoughts. She taught me to be free and raged against my freedom. She taught me to write and resented the author I became.”

And yet, when she won the Booker Prize, the only person she called was her mother, who was awake at 2am and watching the news. Her response: “Well done, baby girl.” This, says Arundhati, was “an incredible expression of love. I’d caught her on a good day.”

Mary Roy comes alive as a larger-than-life figure and a fiery champion of women’s rights in the pages. With the help of a Christian missionary, she started a school in Kottayam in 1967 in two rented halls—which, believe it or not, belonged to the Rotary Club of Kottayam. It began with seven students including Arundhati and her brother; each

morning, they would have to “sweep up the cigarette butts and clear away dirty cups and glasses left by the club members. All men, of course. To whom it would never occur to clean or clear away anything.” (Those of you female readers, who are chuckling away, can expect many such delightful home truths about the other sex!)

This school, where Mary Roy became the “owner, headmistress and wild spirit of a unique school in a unique town” would go on to become an institution to reckon with in Kottayam. Arundhati tells us that Mrs Roy was a unique woman; “she loved herself. Everything about her-

*In these pages, my
mother, my gangster, shall
live. She was my shelter
and my storm.*

self. I loved that about her.” She did much more than win equal inheritance rights for Christian women. When she passed away in 2022, and her funeral had to be planned, the daughter knew that “the church didn’t want her and she didn’t want the church. (There was a savage history here, nothing to do with God!)”

The media covered her death widely and “the Internet lit up with an outpouring of love from generations of students who had studied in the school she found, whose lives she had transformed, and from others who knew of the legendary legal battle she had waged and won for equal inheritance rights for Christian women in Kerala.”

One interesting passage relates to how this remarkable woman had “disabused boys of their seemingly

God-given sense of entitlement,” and describes a hilarious instance of how she dealt with boys who teased the girl students about bras!

The boys who went through her school were “turned into considerate, respectful men, the kind the town had rarely seen. In a way, she liberated them, too... she raised generations of sweet men and sent them out into the world. For the girl students, the spirit she instilled in them, was nothing short of revolutionary. She gave them spines, she gave them wings, she set them free. She bequeathed her unwavering attention and her stern love on them, and they shone back at her.”

But that revolution came at a cost, she directed all her fury against men — father, husband, brother and her own son. Once she beat him up mercilessly for getting a report card from his boarding school, saying she wouldn’t accept a son whose report card said “average student”. The daughter was “hugged for being a brilliant student”. Since that day, writes Arundhati, all personal achievements have come to her “with a sense of foreboding. On the occasions when I am toasted or applauded, I always feel that someone else, someone quiet, is being beaten in the other room.”

When the writer was devastated by her mother’s passing away at 89, “wrecked and heart-smashed,” she herself was puzzled and more than a little ashamed by the intensity of her response, leading her brother to wonder why, “because she treated nobody as badly as she treated you.” Perhaps this was true, but she had put that behind her a long time ago because “I have seen and written about such sorrow, such systemic deprivations, such unmitigated wickedness, such diverse iterations of hell, that I can only count myself among the most fortunate.”

Arundhati says that thanks to the acrimony between mother and daughter and the hateful insults hurled at her, she left home, and stopped visiting home, and returned home only at 18 when she entered her third year in the School of Architecture in Delhi.

It is the irreverence in her writing, and little pretence, apart from of course the sheer brilliant writing style, that makes this book so gripping. She calls her father, who was called a “nothing man” by her mother, who walked out on him with her two young kids, a “beloved rogue,” but indulges him by giving him money to hit the bottle. The liquor with huge amounts of varnish he consumed had “burnt his intestines and turned them to lace.”

She calls her mother all kinds of names, including Madam Houdini, but is devastated when she is put on a ventilator for three days in a Kochi hospital. Mary Roy always had lung/breathing problems, but “to watch her, this powerful woman, our crazy, unpredictable, magical, free, fierce Mrs Roy reduced to abject helplessness, was its own form of suffering.” But she fought back and lived for another 15 years, and “until the day she died, she never stopped learning, never stagnated, never feared change, never lost her curiosity.”

Arundhati doesn’t spare herself either in this book, and her searingly honest descriptions of her thoughts, feelings, emotions and relationships make this one of the most honest books. Along with words such as ‘bitch’ her mother constantly conveyed to her that her relatives often called her ‘mistress’ or ‘keep’, leading the protagonist to give herself the endearing title: *The Hooker that won the Booker*.

There is an interesting account of the stupendous success of her book *The God of Small Things* that went on to win the Booker. Once she had completed the manuscript and wanted to publish it, there was a virtual storm. Forty publishers lined up and the advance against royalties was a “ludicrous” \$1 million. She felt as though she “had ambushed the pipeline that circulates the world’s wealth between the world’s wealthy and it was spewing money at me. There were all kinds of reviews. People hated it, loved it, mocked it, wept, laughed. The book flew off the shelves.”



Arundhati Roy with her mother Mary Roy.

But the book, and the buzz around it increased the complications between her and Mrs Roy a “thousandfold”. When a local fruit seller had the “temerity to ask her if she was Arundhati Roy’s mother, I felt as though she had slapped me,” fumed the mother!

The launch of the book in Kottayam met with a lot of drama, as it had offended the Communists, moral police and some conservative Syrian Christians too. She was accused of “obscenity and corrupting public morality,” and the case went on and on before finally being dismissed after 10 long years.

The oddities of Mary Roy are brilliantly brought out in this memoir. She would give her son and daughter shopping lists for the most unlikely things, mostly shoes and clothes and when she got them, she would put them on and flaunt them all at once. On one occasion, “I found her perched on the edge of her bed, looking thrilled, swinging her legs like a schoolgirl, wearing her oxygen nasal cannula, her diamond earrings, a size-44DD lilac lace bra, adult diapers and a pair of high-top Nike basketball shoes — ‘for stability,’” she explained.

An entertaining passage is about the daughter shopping for her mother’s bra in a shop in Italy, accompanied by her favourite writer-friend John Berger. “Every time we entered a shop, I hung back to experience the sheer delight of watching this extremely handsome 80-something man say in his British-accented Italian, ‘Excuse me, could you show us what you have in size 44DD?’ I loved that he was helping me to buy my mother’s lingerie. I occasionally allowed myself these weird, secret games.”

One of her students wrote a book on her titled *Brick by Brick*, which “she edited herself, slashing through whole pages mercilessly, excising paragraphs that even briefly praised other people, rewriting sentences, as if it were a holiday assignment that her student (in his mid-50s) was turning in. Her one-page intro to her own biography, which she had signed below, as though she was signing a cheque, was entirely in capital letters,” says the writer!

Read this book for its engaging and gripping style, elegant and yet forceful prose, searing honesty, wit and humour... you will want to keep it on your bookshelves as a proud trophy. ■



Lessons in CPR administration for police personnel and school children.

Lessons in first aid

Jaishree

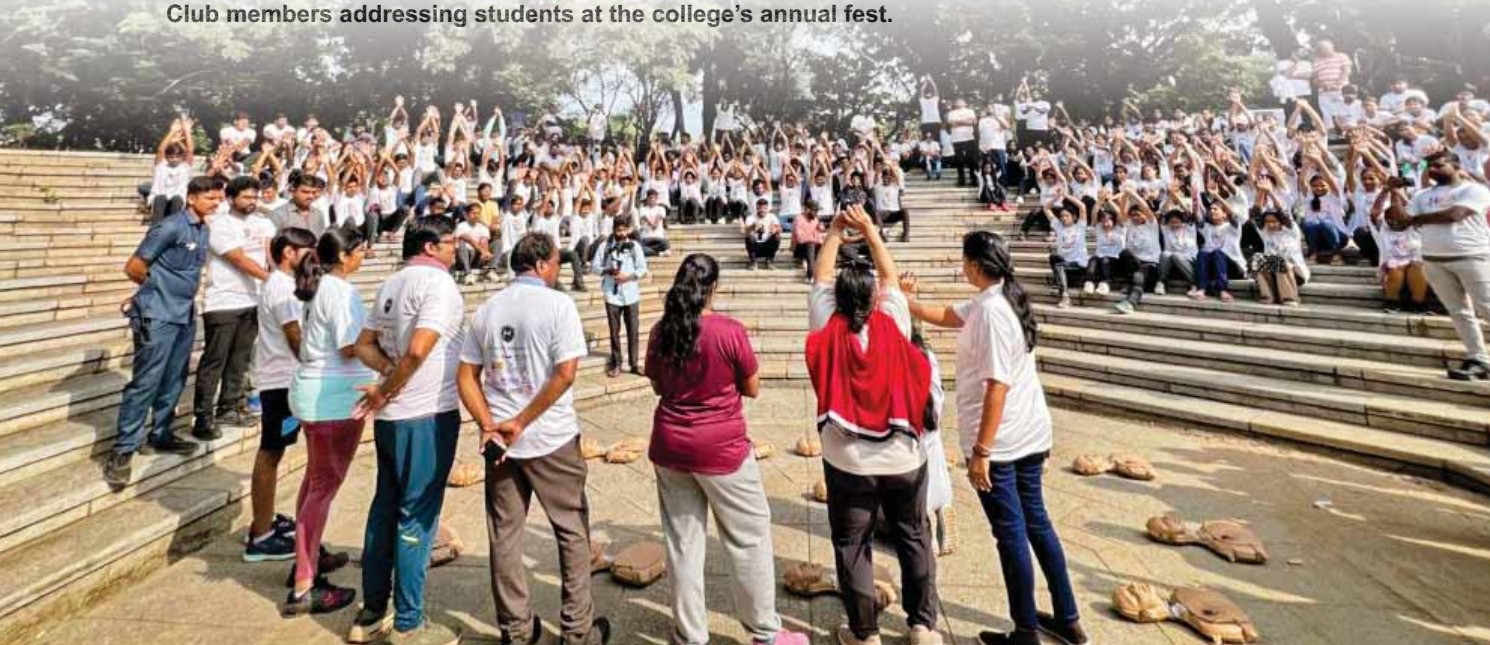
Since Rotary year 2024–25, the Rotaract Club of Osmania Medical College, RID 3150, has been steadily building a culture of emergency preparedness through its signature initiative — RRR (Respond, Rescue, Revive).

With guidance from the college faculty, Rotaractors, all medical students, conduct emergency survival skills workshops across Hyderabad to equip ordinary citizens with the confidence and ability to respond during a medical crisis. “Our aim is to empower

the public with essential first-aid knowledge so they are prepared to act during emergencies anywhere,” says DRR Vamshi Vinodkumar.

So far, the programme has reached nearly 10,000 people, including corporate employees, school and college

Club members addressing students at the college’s annual fest.





A CPR demo for school students.

students, police personnel and ASHA workers. “More recently, we trained the staff at the Rashtrapati Nilayam in Secunderabad,” he adds. The club has also organised exclusive workshops for 500 NCC students and 150 railway employees, training them in CPR and essential life-saving response skills.

The workshop is structured into three interactive sessions. The first

covers emergency situations such as hypothermia, heat stroke, electric shock, burns and poisoning, helping participants recognise symptoms and respond appropriately. The second session focuses on wound care and fracture management, including how to improvise a splint or sling, and the correct response to snake or dog bites. The third session trains partici-

pants to respond to seizures, choking, vertigo and epistaxis (nosebleeds), and concludes with a comprehensive demonstration of CPR, a vital intervention during cardiac arrest.

What sets the programme apart is its hands-on approach. Each session includes live demonstrations where participants practise techniques under supervision, allowing them to internalise the steps rather than simply memorising theory. The workshops are conducted in phases to ensure continuity and stronger retention of skills. “The initiative not only empowers individuals with life-saving abilities, it also builds a sense of safety, awareness and community preparedness,” says the DRR.

Distribution of cooked food to street and slum dwellers, ORS sachets to street vendors and cleanup drives are some of the other socially relevant projects of the club. “But the RRR initiative remains especially meaningful, because in moments of crisis, a calm, trained bystander can be the difference between life and loss.” Through these workshops, the Rotaractors are ensuring that more people are ready to respond, rescue and revive when it matters most. ■



Rotaractors give a demo on making a sling for a suspected fracture in the arm.

Pune Rotaract sends flood relief to Punjab

V Muthukumaran

A flood relief initiative of the Rotaract Club of Pune Katraj is earning praise from its Rotaract District 3131 leadership, as they reached out to rain-hit families in Punjab and Maharashtra with a neatly packaged relief kit consisting of food items and daily essentials.

Looking back at the project which was completed within a month (September), club president Umer Karim says, "Our RID 3131 clubs (Pune) joined the efforts of mobilising relief material and donations after seeing us striving hard to collect donations from individual houses and philanthropists. A team of 20 Rotaractors

went across Pune to mobilise both funds and material like food items and dresses before they were neatly sorted and packed for delivery." Rotaractors from RID 3170 also donated for the purchase of relief material. Each relief kit consisted of 5kg rice, 2kg dal, 1-litre oil or 1kg salt (as per availability), a soap packet, two sanitary pads

Rotaractors pack books and stationery for orphaned children at the St Mary's Society.





Flood relief bundles at the Pune Railway Station ready to be loaded into Chandigarh-bound train.



packets, ORS powder, two blankets, medicines and a set of warm clothes.

While a small part of 350 relief kits worth ₹50,000 were distributed to rain affected families at Solapur and Beed districts of Maharashtra through a mini truck, the major portion was sent by train to Chandigarh. From there, Rotaractors of RID 3080 unloaded the goods and delivered to the beneficiary families across Punjab. “We started and completed the entire mobilisation, packing and distribution within 20 days or so, thanks to good coordination among Rotaractors.”

Karim says Rotaract leaders, namely DRR Dwijesh Nashikkar, district general secretary Niharika Chaturvedi, and PDRR Akshay More “helped our clubs in finishing the task of relief distribution to flood-hit families in Punjab in a time-bound manner.” From RID 3170, members from RACs Venugram-Belgaum, Krishna Valley and Mapusa collected relief material worth ₹20,000.

In another outreach, the club donated stationery items and books to 80 orphaned children at the St Mary’s Society, Guruwarpath, a Pune neighbourhood, with contributions from large-hearted people. “Two women

Rotaractors visited Jammu and Kashmir and Nagaland, and tied *rakhi* (sibling thread of love) on the wrist of soldiers at the army camps. Over 100 army men got our *rakhi* gift ahead of Raksha Bandhan,” says Karim.

At least 3–4 times a month, all the 25 club members come together for community events such as food distribution, cloth donation etc, and “we hold a couple of personality grooming sessions for our members that help them with valuable tips for a successful life,” says Karim. Every first weekend of the month, the club’s BoD meets to take stock of the project work done so far, and “chart our future programmes by drafting the schedule to be followed.” The 17-year-old community-based club has a good balance of businessmen, entrepreneurs and college students in membership. “We levy an annual fee of ₹2,500 per head to part-fund our service projects.”

Leading the marketing unit of a private advertising firm, Umer Karim has pleasant memories of his five-year stint in Rotaract, and “I will join my parent Rotary club (RC Pune Katraj) in the next two years to expand my service activity,” he smiles. ■

Warming hearts, lighting lives

Jaishree



A Rotaractor interacting with children as part of the Each One Teach One project.



Club members with senior citizens at an old age home.

Each year for the past three years, over 200 people benefit from *Project Winterease* of the Rotaract Club of Navsari Young Turks, RID 3060.

The club identifies underprivileged families across Navasari city in Gujarat and distributes warm clothes

to protect them from the harsh winter chill. “We conduct a special drive just before the winter season to collect blankets, sweaters, shawls, caps etc. Rotarians, Rotaractors and the public pitch in; some people prefer to donate funds, and we use that to buy new woollens,” says the club’s president-elect Tirth Bhatt. The project is executed across two days.

The *Each One Teach One* is a signature project of the club being run since the club’s charter in 2016. Every year the club adopts a school, preferably in a rural or slum neighbourhood, and every member educates at least one student. “We teach them basic English, Math and good personal habits such as oral hygiene. We also teach them music and dance, and relate stories from our epics. Students from nursery classes to Class 8 are covered under this programme,” he says. For many of these children, the Rotaractors become not just tutors, but role models and cheerleaders.

Another project that has won the hearts of the community is *Punarutthan*, now over seven years old. During Ganesh Chaturthi, just before the *visarjan*, club members set up stalls along the procession routes and near the Purna River to collect the flowers and coconut offerings placed before the deity. “We request people to drop off the offerings with us so the river doesn’t get polluted,” says Bhatt. The flowers are later converted into organic fertiliser for local farmers, while the coconuts and edible *prasad* are distributed among the needy.

The club’s compassion also extends to the elderly. Every Diwali, members spend a day at an old age home, sharing sweets, gifting new clothes and playing games with the residents. As evening falls, they step out together to burst simple crackers — “a festival of lights and laughter, but more importantly, of companionship.”

The club hosted *Safarnama*, a district trek programme involving Rotaract clubs of RID 3060. Over 280 participants from Gujarat and Maharashtra went on a one-day trek through lush forests and streams in Dang. “The best part was that the area was a complete no-network zone. Without mobile phones, we really connected with each other,” smiles Bhatt, whose father Dhruv Bhatt had chartered the club during his presidential term. ■



A Rotaractor collects floral offerings as part of Project Punarutthan.



Warm clothes being distributed as part of Project Winterease.

Cricket & fellowship at RID 3020

V Muthukumaran

Rajahmundry, a small town on the banks of the Godavari River in Andhra Pradesh, was buzzing with the energy and excitement of 200 Rotaractors who came from different parts of India, either as participating teams or just as spectators to cheer their Rotaract district in the third edition of RIDDLE, a three-day T20 format cricket tournament.

The third season was hosted by RID 3020 under the RSAMDIO banner with six cricket teams from RIDs 3000 (Madurai), 3020 (Andhra), 3141 (Mumbai), 3191 (Bengaluru), 3203

(Erode), and 3206 (Coimbatore) slugging it out in a fierce contest to win the prize money (over ₹1.50 lakh). “The sports meet was a blend of camaraderie, fellowship, and we hosted multiple events on the sidelines that showcased Andhra culture and its unique cuisine,” said Achuta Srinivas Reddy, district Rotaract secretary, and past president, RAC Rajahmundry River City, the lead club that organised the RIDDLE 3020 — Rotaract Inter-District Dexterous League — on the Police Grounds.

Addressing the participating teams and audience, DG Kalyan Chakravarthy

encouraged the “youth to come out and take active interest in field sports.” Himself a sports buff, the district governor wanted Rotaractors to give importance to games, sports and athletics as part of their community outreach.

DG-elect G Sriramulu called upon the contesting teams to enjoy their matches in a sportive spirit, “irrespective of who emerged winners, as participation is more important here for bonding.” RSAMDIO president Darryl D’Souza was all praise for the organisers for hosting the cricket tournament among district Rotaracts.



RID 3020 DG Kalyan Chakravarthy (centre) and to his left, DRR Krishna Kedarisetty, along with the organising team at the RIDDLE - Season 3.



Above: Rotaract volunteers at the cricket tournament.



An amazing experience

Recalling the cricket carnival, Reddy says, “we were proud to host such a prestigious, multidistrict event backed by RSAMDIO, after a gap of over 10 years or so. We are thankful to 70-plus volunteers from Vijayawada, Tuni, Visakhapatnam and our home clubs, who had to work hard and coordinate on all three days for a hassle-free tournament without any hiccups or gaps in between matches during the league stages.”

RIDDLE saw 13 T20 matches including the semifinals and the final with every game cheered by Rotaractors. After three days of spirited competition, RID 3000 team emerged winners taking home a cash prize of ₹1 lakh, RID 3203 finished runners-up bagging a purse of ₹30,000, and RID 3141 came the second runners-up getting a prize of ₹20,000.

Apart from the T20 matches, Sky Lantern festival was organised in which creative diyas were released as kites, soaring up the night sky forming colourful patterns. “which added to the amazement of delegates from all over the country,” recalls Reddy. DJ Party enabled the Rotaractors to mix and mingle with each other while soulful

music fostered a spirit of camaraderie all over the venue.

Every match was livestreamed on social media with drone coverage “giving Rotaractors across South Asia a ringside view of the preliminary games.” While Rotaract fellowship was at its best on the grounds, “we exchanged letterheads, and shared ideas for future joint projects,” says PV Vikas, president, RAC Rajahmundry River City. He said Andhra cuisine with its diverse menu “treated the palates with some gastronomic delights and the guests were touched by our hospitality.” Each day, AC buses picked the sporting teams from the hotel to the playing venue, and dropped them back at their cosy accommodation.

The next venue for RIDDLE (season-4) will be decided through a bidding process at a RSAMDIO event, mostly held just before the start of new Rotary year, says Reddy, an IT professional and a Rotaractor for five years. “It was a great experience in networking, and exploring avenues of leadership development,” he says on his Rotaract journey.

Reddy will be joining Rotary in the next two years to expand his service and outreach activity. ■

Rotaractors clean Karnataka's waterbodies

Team Rotary News

Around 500 participants from 17 Rotaract clubs in RI District 3182, along with volunteers from Rotary, Inner Wheel and nearby colleges, rolled up their sleeves for a massive waterbody rejuvenation drive across Udupi, Shivamogga, Hassan and Chikkamagaluru in Karnataka.

Right: Rotaractors and Rotarians with their little fingers inked to show their support for polio eradication.

Below: Rotaractors with garbage piled-up post a cleanup of a beach.



“We removed tonnes of plastic waste, discarded clothes and other rubbish, and even cleared weeds from the backwaters,” shared project coordinator Arjun Rao, talking about *Project Coast to Coast*, now in its fourth year. But it wasn’t just about cleaning up. The Rotaractors also spent time creating awareness among local

communities about water conservation, sanitation and environmental sustainability. Volunteers visited schools and colleges, using engaging AV presentations to show how water pollution happens, and why protecting our waterbodies is urgent.

This year, the project went truly global. Twenty Rotary districts

across nine countries joined the movement, with Rotaractors organising mega cleanliness drives to restore waterbodies in their own regions, proving that environmental care has no borders.

Another inspiring effort from RID 3182 was the *Purple Pinky to End Polio* initiative on World Polio Day

(October 24). Rotaractors from six clubs came together to spread the word about the importance of administering polio drops to children under five and Rotary’s mission to eradicate polio worldwide. “We organised rallies and visited schools to share the message,” said project contact Bharat Poojary. ■

From the RI South Asia Office

Congratulations! You’re more than halfway through your Rotary year. As we move through the second half of your term, we encourage you to take note of the following.

Rotaract Club Excellence Award

Rotaract clubs can find their goals in Rotary Club Central. Clubs that set, achieve, and report goal achievement of at least half of the goals by the end of the Rotary year will earn a Club Excellence Award. Be sure to report all achievements in Rotary Club Central by June 30, 2025.

Club dues

It’s time to pay for the January 2026 invoice:

- Please note that your club invoice is based on the number of members appearing in our database as on January 1, 2026.
- Please try to pay your club dues within two months from the date of issuance of invoice to be eligible for Club Excellence Award (<https://my.rotary.org/en/who-we-are/office-of-the-president/club-excellence-award>)
- Ensure that at least your president and secretary have an active *My Rotary* account. If your club doesn’t have any current club leaders reported, please

contact your District Rotaract Representative with the details and request DRR to email the details to data@rotary.org.

- If your club requires any help on invoice matters, club leaders should promptly reach out to their finance representative. Find your district finance rep here: <https://my.rotary.org/en/contact/representatives>. For helpful resources visit <https://my.rotary.org/en/club-invoice-faq>

Did you know?

We make it easy for you and your other club leaders to learn how to manage your club on *My Rotary*. Check out our *My Rotary reference guides* on topics such as “How to Manage Club Members,” “How to Manage Club Officers,” and many others.

Attention community-based Rotaract club presidents

To be eligible for membership in a community-based Rotaract club, individuals must be at least 18 years old. Please ensure that individuals under the age of 18 are not added as members through your *My Rotary* account

- Rotaract Membership Growth and Experience Team, RISAO.

Making a difference

A virtual peace conclave at RID 3240

PRIP Barry Rassin shared his insight and experiences on the topic ‘Building harmony and service beyond borders’ at a virtual event hosted by RID 3240 to mark International Day of Peace (Sep 21). During the online session titled *Quest Learn*, attended by Rotarians and Rotaractors from India zones, Rassin focused his speech on the role of young leaders in fostering global peace through empathy, collaboration and “purposeful action”.

RID 3240 DG Kameshwar Singh Elangbam, DGE Asim Kanti Adhikary, DGN Danny Dutta, DRCC Saurav Bajoria, DRR Kumar Shivam Das, IPDRR Aloka Dey, DRRE Pintu Sharma, and other Rotary-Rotaract leaders from the district had virtual interaction with the participants.



PRIP Barry Rassin addressing the delegates online.



Rotaractors engage students in fun games.



Joyful learning at a rural school

It was a day of joyful learning and fun activities at the Zilla Parishad School, Vaghaon, as members from RAC Karad City, RID 3132, curated a series of special programmes for students of Class 1–4 under their flagship project *Masti Ki Pathshala*. Rotaractors hosted interactive games, plays and challenging riddles and fun activities through the day. The day-long fun-filled events focused on teamwork that ensured the students enjoyed themselves to the fullest.

At the end, with the cooperation of teachers and school administration, the programmes brought smiles on the young faces. It reminded the Rotaractors that the joy of giving through these small gestures can make a difference in a child’s life.

A new library at high school

Under *Project Padho Bharat*, RID 3192 Rotaractors have set up a library at the Farooqiya English High School, Bengaluru, on Children's Day. It was a collaborative effort with 10 Rotaractors from RACs Bangalore, Raj Mahal Vilas, BMS Yelahanka and SVIT gathering at the school to set up the library. Books were arranged neatly on the shelves according to the specific needs of the curriculums. All the catalogues and racks were adequately stocked with books, study material and textbooks, thanks to generous sponsors. After the library inauguration, an interactive session between the Rotaractors and students motivated the latter to make full use of the entire range of books available here which will help them to prepare for the competitive exams. The library will benefit over 560 students.



Rotaractors arrange books on the shelves.

TEDNext session at Bharuch

Around 200 students and educators took part in a *TEDNext 2025* show hosted jointly by RC Bharuch and the Rotaract Club of Bharuch, RID 3060, at the Chanderbala Modi Academy, Ankleshwar. The platform hosted a globally curated ideas and trending topics under the official TEDx Live franchise.

The screening included Bollywood icon Shah Rukh Khan's talk on humanity, fame and love, which resonated with students with its emphasis on empathy and human bonding.

Sonja Lyubomirsky, Harini Bhat and other eminent speakers gave a panoramic view of global issues affecting the humanity. The TEDx sessions encouraged students to think critically, ask questions, and relate global ideas to their own lives. The programme was led by Harsh Takkar, licensee and organiser, TEDx Golden Bridge, and a member of RAC Bharuch.

CM Academy principal Ramjee Nagarajan pointed out events like TEDNext expose students to global thinking and "inspire them to look beyond textbooks."



An entertainment session at the TEDNext conclave.

ROTARY CLUB CENTRAL

TRUE OR FALSE

ROTARY'S MOST SUCCESSFUL CLUBS SET GOALS — AND NOT JUST FOR THE UPCOMING YEAR.

TRUE.

When club leaders think about the future and plan beyond their year, they set their club up for long-term success.

CLUB GOALS ARE ONLY THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CLUB LEADERS.

FALSE.

Every club member is responsible for their club's success. And as a Rotary member, you too can use Rotary Club Central to view your club's short- and long-term goals.

NEED HELP?

Head to the Rotary Learning Center and take the Rotary Club Central Resources course!

ROTARACTORS CAN'T USE ROTARY CLUB CENTRAL.

FALSE.

Rotaractors can access it and track goals, too! All you need is a My Rotary account to start planning your future.

MORE THAN HALF OF ROTARY CLUBS USE ROTARY CLUB CENTRAL TO TRACK THEIR GOALS.

TRUE.

Club leaders use this free tool to set goals and record accomplishments, while tracking goals like membership growth, service activities, and Foundation giving.

Start setting and tracking your club's goals now:

