

LEADERSHIP Connect

forging links to Rotary's future



September 2009



Ravindran K R
RI Director

Greetings of the festive season, Dear Rotary Leaders, and in addressing you so, I am not merely addressing the District Governors as I consider every one of you a leader.

Kalyan Bannerjee – RI President Nominee designate

The selection of Kalyan Bannerjee as RI President Nominee designate has left South Asia ecstatic. Since the whole process is still underway it would be inappropriate for me to make a comment now. Having waited nearly two decades for one of us to be selected lets wait a few more weeks to speak about it!



Kalyan Bannerjee

My district visits

My journey to different districts is taking me to the nooks and corners of our zone. I am continuing my effort to visit every district in our zone. By the time this issue comes out I would be in the midst of my 15th or 16th district visit. Each visit has been of high intensity and the schedules I keep are punishing but I think it is worth it.

In each district I have had the opportunity of meeting and spending time with the District Leadership and with the College of Past Governors and indeed with a variety of members from the district, both individually and collectively.

I have been inspired by the presentations they make and I am truly overwhelmed by the number of the incredible projects Rotarians carry out with so little publicity. I am convinced that what they do makes a real difference to people's lives and I have learned so much more of the work of Rotary.

I have also been able to deal with little issues that clubs have. In some cases, of course, the nature of the assistance they demand has been beyond my ability to extend or comply with.

But I can honestly say that when I represent you at RI I truly speak on behalf of grassroots Rotarians.

Election issues

One of the messages I am carrying to districts from the Rotary Leadership is that it is time that districts put a stop to all forms of electioneering, canvassing and campaigning whilst picking their District Leadership. The maximum number of complaints that come up before the RI Board on account of election disputes are from India. In addition to complaints on the election of District Governor, the Board also now is getting complaints on DGNC elections and CoL elections.

This attitude of complaints negates all the good that we do and all the progress we make on other fronts. It spoils the image of India in particular and the sub continent in general.

Legal costs

The Board and indeed the hierarchy of Rotary are tired of the complaints that are coming in from India and the high legal costs incurred by the Board on account of elections connected litigation. While we are attempting to reduce costs in every front it seems a shame that our cost of litigation is going up. Remember all this is our money – yours and mine.

Further, the leadership believes that when Rotary elections are conducted in this environment, it does long-term damage to the organization and causes deep rooted rifts between members whilst driving away potential new members. It also results in very poor caliber members offering themselves for leadership positions. This

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Asia Zone 4,5 & 6A

we do not need the Board to tell us because we are aware of it ourselves.

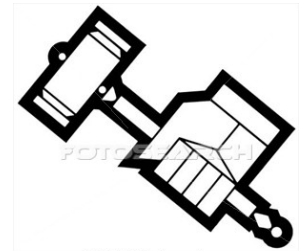
The President, the President-Elect and the General Secretary have requested and asked that we immediately put an end to this deplorable situation and this is the message that I carry throughout India.

Checks and balances

RI is currently in the process of setting together a series of regulations and practices which will curb electioneering. Some of the actions being contemplated include:

- 1) *Disqualify both the nominee and the challenger and / or challengers or candidates, if it appears that one or all of them are guilty of some infractions of the rules. In such cases, the Board would be authorized to appoint a PDG to serve as Governor of the district in the disputed year.*
- 2) *Remove from office any DG who acts improperly in conducting the election process or knowingly condones improper acts.*
- 3) *Declare that a PDG, who acts improperly in promoting or assisting a candidate, is no longer in good standing. In addition, for districts that experience three or more election complaints in a five year period, the Board would be authorized to dissolve the district and to divide its clubs among the surrounding districts.*

I am requesting every DG to appoint a completely independent person to take charge of all matters concerning elections. This person must be an individual trusted by and acceptable to every member of the district – if there is such a person. If you do not have such a person, this in itself is a sad indictment of the district.



I am requesting DGs and DGEs that hereafter candidates be precluded from funding their PETS or Assemblies or segments of their Conference Programme. The practice of candidates putting up posters (with or without their photo) welcoming participants to district events must cease. Such candidates will be debarred from contesting the election altogether and the DG is compromising his own position in the process as these acts can only be done with his concurrence.

We have a fair idea of the districts which encourage these methods and if a DG does not take steps to effectively end this practice then he does so at his peril.

The practice of candidates visiting clubs offering cash for projects and sometimes even as payment of membership dues must also stop.

In fact it will be a good idea if candidates stop visiting clubs during the entire year in which they offer, or intend to offer, their name as a candidate for election, until the election process is complete.

Spread the word around

Please print this message in your GML and share it with your College of Governors. Please also inform the candidates for Governor in your district and put your Club Presidents on notice as well. Please inform any Rotarian who is aware that the above conditions are being violated or being observed in the breach, that he is free to write to you (DG), with a copy to me. If such accusations can be substantiated, please assure them that appropriate action will follow.

We now have a President coming from India. It is incumbent upon us to project the best image possible of this country.

Please know that in all matters concerning election issues I will act firmly but fairly without fear or favour.

Please do not reply to krr0911@gmail.com through which you get *Leadership Connect*, but write to me at my usual e- mail ID krr@printcare.lk

Suspension of Volunteer Service Grants – the rationale



I have had many Rotarians writing to me in anguish about the suspension of the Volunteer Service Grants (VSG). Let me assure you, at the outset, that the Trustees are appreciative of the difference the Volunteers make to any project. They are indeed ambassadors of Rotary. We ourselves have known of the plastic/ dental/ orthopedic surgeons to the English teachers, water and sanitation experts who go as messiahs to remote areas to work for the needy, taking time off from their professional practice year after year. There are many volunteers ready to serve and there are many more sites awaiting expert volunteers. However, the suspension of the Volunteer Service Grants (VSG) was inevitable. Let me try and explain the rationale behind this decision by the Trustees.

With the world-wide economic melt-down and the consequent dramatic reduction/ elimination of investment income, The Rotary Foundation (TRF) was placed in a situation where it had the option of cutting programme or in the alternative, selling investments to fund its programme. Clearly the option of choice was evident; cut programme in the hope that it would only be a temporary blip.

In the process VSG was one of the casualties. Whether it should have been cut or whether some other programme should have been reduced instead is/was a matter of debate and discussion. The protagonists of each programme whether it be a scholarship or matching grant or 3H or GSE, are equally passionate about the particular programme which they support and are of the firm view that TRF was wrong to have reduced the budgets on these programme. They would state with great sincerity that the programme they espouse is of vital importance to represent the mission of TRF and that TRF is meaningless without this programme.

Unfortunately, in the present scenario if one programme was to be re-introduced or allowed a bigger budget, then necessarily a cut had to be made somewhere else because the size of the pie had reduced.

In the case of VSG, providing funding for travel was different as compared to funding a grant for any other activity. Travel came with many logistical and liability concerns that could not be ignored.

Another reason which influenced the decision to temporarily do away with VSG was the additional costs incurred at staff level in implementation, as quite clearly spelt out by yourselves. I am not justifying the system but am merely stating that this is the system which exists today for apparently justifiable reasons, which I do not wish to elaborate on now.

It's a fact though the elimination of VSG saw savings both in terms of operations and programme budget expenses and TRF actually eliminated three positions as a result of this decision.

The Trustees, of course, in the meantime, had fully recognized the need to reduce bureaucracy throughout the TRF structure. They have identified the need to simplify process. The Future Vision Plan addresses precisely these very situations. Districts will be able to opt for the Programmes of their choice with the new District Grants and we are certain that VSG will be a popular choice. You could perhaps have a VSG approval in a matter of days not weeks!

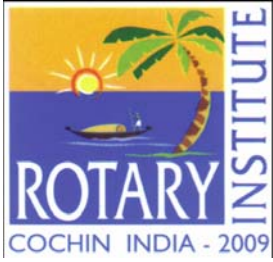
There will also be a number of safeguards and efficiencies in place for TRF and Rotarians. Districts will be trained on how funds can and cannot be used for travel as part of the qualification process. In addition, travel may be purchased locally instead of through RITS, which will further streamline the process. The initial problems and discrepancies that will surely arise with stewardship controls and the local purchase options will be fine tuned during the pilot, so that we are as close as possible to near perfect, when rolled out to all districts in the world.

For those of you who have a compelling reason to participate in this programme at this point in time, perhaps a good way out is to work with one of the Future Vision Plan Pilot Districts who might be willing to fund the activities of volunteers like yourselves. Maybe the Trustees can also look at a possibility where VSG is funded by the DDFs of Districts. This seems an eminently viable alternative.

In the meantime we can only hope that a favourable market coupled with judicious management of the TRF by the Trustees will soon see all the programmes back at the old levels.

Volunteers!

Cochin Institute '09



September 18-20, 2009

By the time this issue reaches you will almost be ready for leaving for Cochin. If some of our Leaders have a holiday in Munnar, others have plans to visit the Guruvayoor Temple, some are set to go to Trivandrum. There are others intending to cover other South Indian destinations! A Zone Institute always triggers the travel bugs.

From the Institute updates, you will have known that the Institute will be featuring a galaxy of Leaders, importantly President-Elect Ray Klinginsmith and Judie, Trustee and RI Past President Bill Boyd, RI Past President Raja Saboo and Usha, Rotary International President Nominee-Designate (2011-12) Kalyan Banerjee and Binota, Trustee Ashok Mahajan and Nayantara, Former President of Sri Lanka, Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunge, and former UN Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information, Brand Guru Harish Bijoor, 25/11 hero Karambir Singh Kang (Taj Mahal Hotel), unparalleled "author" of Courage Alexis Leon ,and many others.



GETS on September 16 - 17 and The Foundation Seminar on September 18 morning will form the prelude to the Institute as usual. The Foundation Seminar will be anchored by Trustee PRID Ashok Mahajan.

PDG Dr. C S Ramachandran will lead the GETS as the Training Leader. A whole set of Training Seminars are being held prior to the Institute to prepare our Leaders for their roles. DGN Seminar led by PDG Raju Doshi, DG Seminar by DG TM Subramaniam, District Trainers by PDG Surendra Seth and CoL Reps by PDG Aziz Visram. There is the natural excitement on reunion of 'Class' mates, some teams working with great enthusiasm.

One notable departure that's being made in the programme in this Institute is that the Break-out Sessions will be done away with. Several Leaders had conveyed to me their serious misgivings about the usefulness of Break-out Sessions; it was found that normally these sessions do not draw good participation both in terms of attendance and discussions. Now, more time will be available for the speakers and I expect you to participate in the interactions actively during the sessions.

PDG Sunil Zachariah and team have readied everything for you, and are awaiting your arrival, I will not be surprised if they have also ordered a rain-free weather! There is an air of excitement. Vanathy and I are looking forward to according a warm welcome to you and your spouse at the institute.

The Queen of the Arabian Sea, awaits you! Come and experience the unusual!

