

COVID LIFELINE

The Digital Newsletter of **Rotary India's Covid Vaccination Task Force**

Volume 1, Issue 1 : March 2021



HOLGER KNAACK
President,
Rotary International

Dear Rotarians,

As you are aware, polio eradication remains Rotary's number one goal and our only corporate project, and it's imperative that we remain laser-focused on achieving a polio-free world through our global programme. However, the COVID-19 pandemic is the greatest health crisis to affect the world in the last century, and every community is affected. As an organization that has brought polio to the brink of eradication, we have a moral obligation to lend our expertise and membership base to support the countless people worldwide who have been impacted by the pandemic.

Your leadership is to be commended for creating the Rotary India's Covid Task Force which will create awareness and enable clubs to take action. I trust that your digital newsletter will keep Indian Rotarians informed of the massive task the Indian government is undertaking to provide vaccinations and how Rotarians can participate in the promotion.

There is no service organization better positioned to offer assistance to ensure that all people in all parts of the world are vaccinated against COVID-19. The effort of Rotary India's Covid Task aligns with our mission and calls for our involvement in light of our experience and leadership on global polio vaccine advocacy and delivery.

Rotary's story in polio eradication is still being written. It will be complete when the remaining two countries eradicate polio. But now we are part of another story. It will be a story that will showcase how Rotarians in India joined together to prevent the spread of Covid 19 virus. With 1.3 billion people waiting to be immunized, Rotary must be an active participant in promoting the vaccination against Covid-19.

I encourage the Indian Rotary clubs to work with their local health departments and agencies to determine how Rotary can support COVID-19 vaccine introduction and delivery and continue to carry out efforts to stop the spread of the virus.

Every action that you take provides a better, safer life for someone, somewhere.



K. R. RAVINDRAN
Trustee Chair,
The Rotary Foundation

Dear Rotarians,

There have been a handful of moments in history when the world seemed to have changed overnight; one of those was on 13th March 2020 when WHO declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic.

Rotary's corporate program was the eradication of Polio. In view of that we understood that we could not get enmeshed with another 'once in a generation pandemic', the light of which this generation perhaps has never seen. But we could also not sit back while countries around the whole world were being brought to their knees.

At a hurriedly summoned meeting of the top leadership of both Rotary International and The Rotary Foundation, we quickly set up an *ad hoc* committee chaired by President Holger Knaack and myself to study the possible responses we could make.

We agreed that we would not participate in the funding aspects or otherwise in the purchase of vaccines. Apart from that we agreed we would support in fact encourage clubs, to involve themselves in the logistics of vaccination, of which we had plenty of experience. This would necessarily involve connecting with the state governments and the local administrations.

We also believed that there will always be resistance to vaccines and we could play a big role in convincing people why vaccines were the only way out at this time. In the meantime, vaccine or no vaccine, we could effectively work toward stopping the spread.

To achieve a level of success in India you need someone with the intelligence, the connections and the vigour to mount the combat and lead with enthusiasm. I am so glad the leadership in India appointed PRID Ashok Mahajan. He has a Herculean undertaking ahead of him. But he will give great impetus to the task.

I wish him well in this noble duty as he does God's work on earth.



SHEKHAR MEHTA
President - Elect,
Rotary International

My Dear Fellow Rotarians,

I am happy to see the steady progress being made in the COVID vaccination process. Chairman PRID Ashok Mahajan and his team have taken up the matter in right earnest. There have been meetings at the highest level including a telecon by me with the Health Minister just a week back.

On the other hand Rotarians across India are working in different places with the local administration. The Government officials are receptive to Rotary's participation as per local needs, because of Rotary's expertise in Polio vaccination.

I encourage each district to develop a plan in consultation with the local officials. Let us put our best foot forward in ensuring that more and more people are vaccinated at the earliest. The numbers are huge and it could be a long haul toward complete immunization. So it would require proper planning and execution at all levels.

As Rotary Opens Opportunities for us to live up to our motto, let us Serve to Change Lives.



RAJASHREE BIRLA
Aditya Birla Centre
for Community Initiatives
& Rural Development

Dear Ashokji,

Thank you very much indeed for apprising me of Rotary's forthcoming initiative, teaming up with the Government of India for stemming the spread of COVID-19 and aligning with them on the vaccination process.

COVID-19 has had a devastating effect. The damage it has caused across nations is immeasurable. Our Government is working hard to patch the developmental pieces. The Government's vision is to ensure that each one of our 1.3 billion population is vaccinated. This is a herculean task. To reach every nook and cranny of our nation for the COVID vaccination calls for total involvement with champion NGOs, who can help the Government's vision to reach fruition.

There is a record of success in the past, combatting equally ferocious diseases like leprosy and polio. As a Corporate group and as an individual involved in Rotary's projects, witnessing Rotary's involvement and success has been very encouraging.

It is a testament to Rotarians' commitment and your stewardship towards our people's well-being in the health domain. It augurs well for the COVID programme to have you play a leadership role, supporting the Government, as Chairman of the Rotary India's COVID Vaccination Task Force.

I wish you every success in this laudable project going forward hand-in-hand with the Government of India.

A jab in time ... saves nine

Leading lights of Rotary get their vaccination shots



PRIP Rajendra Saboo



RI President - Elect Shekhar Mehta



RI Director Dr. Bharat Pandya



PDG Dr. Jayant Kulkarni, RI Dist. 3141



PDG Dr. Mohan Chandavarkar, RI Dist. 3142



PDG J. B. Kamdar, RI Dist. 3232



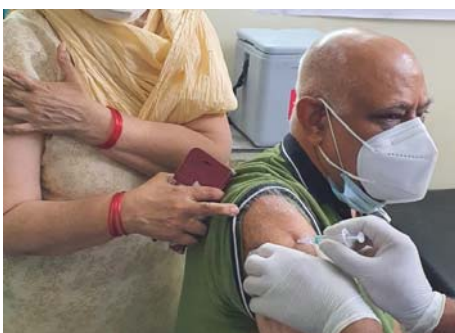
PDG Jogesh Gambhir, RI Dist. 3250



PDG Dr. Rajeev Pradhan, RI Dist. 3132



PDG Rajiv Modi, RI Dist. 3250



PDG Vinod Bhatia, RI Dist. 3053

IN THE NEWS

Rotary Club of Madras joins hands with Government of Tamil Nadu for Covid Vaccination

Press Clipping from 'The Hindu'

Govt. seeks Rotary Club's support for vaccination drive

Health Secretary writes to the club seeking logistics support

SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT
CHENNAI

The Rotary Club of Madras (RCM) will be partnering with the State government in its COVID-19 vaccination drive.

In a letter to club president Kapil Chitale, Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan issued an invitation to the club to assist in the procurement and delivery of COVID-19 vaccines and suitable cold-chain equipment, assist in effective vaccine management up to the point of service delivery, and strengthen logistics services.

Chairman of Rotary International's COVID Task Force in India Ashok Mahajan welcomed this initiative.

The Rotary Club of Madras will serve as the nodal agency in Tamil Nadu and coordinate with the State government on behalf of Ro-



Happy to help: Health Secretary J. Radhakrishnan with members of the Rotary Club of Madras. • SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT

tary Clubs in the State and as a channel for raising CSR funding for the vaccination drive. Gauthamadas, chairman, Special Projects (Pandemic & Disaster Mitigation) of the Rotary Club of Madras, will collaborate with K. Vinay Kumar, Joint Director, Immunisation, on this project.

The State government partnered with Rotary Club of Madras in phase II of the red measles vaccine programme in 1985, prompting Rotary International to appoint the latter as the nodal club to kick off the PolioPlus drive in India. Rotary Club of Madras' role included the provision of technical support, forecast, procurement and delivery of vaccines.

TASK FORCE UPDATE

A CLARION CALL TO ARMS

"I remember drummers walking into the streets and announcing the vaccination programme for smallpox in a singsong tone and the need to eradicate smallpox Hereafter you will not hear drum beats call you for vaccination, but see only messages in your phones asking you to avail of the facility."

When the COVID Task Force Chairman PRID Ashok Mahajan talks – even on a Zoom Call – the audience latches on to every word. On the 20th of February, the Rotary Club of Delhi Southex with the support of over 40 Clubs from across the country organised a lecture by PRID Ashok Mahajan on COVID 19 Immunisation and the Role of Rotary.

There is no substitute for preparation in any task – and especially while making a speech to your "equals" in Rotary. PRID Ashok mesmerised the participants with the extensive research he had carried out. He set a benchmark for every speaker to emulate.

Beginning with an account of Dr. Edward Jenner, who pioneered Vaccination, he covered mankind's efforts to tackle diseases through mass immunisation. His presentation encompassed the efforts made in eradicating Smallpox and Rotary's only Corporate Project, viz. Polio Eradication.

Drawing on the Polio Immunization Drive, he painted a vivid canvas of the Social Mobilization efforts of Rotary and its Partners in making Polio Immunisation a "People's Movement".

He outlined how the use of Banners, Billboards, Caps, Aprons, T-Shirts, et al. can be effectively utilised for Social Mobilisation in the fight against COVID 19. A natural corollary would be the enhancement of Rotary's Public Image.

While strongly advocating the need for Social Distancing, wearing of Masks in public places and above all promoting Vaccine acceptance, he asked all Rotarians to lead by example and to practice what they preach.

He explained many of the challenges faced by Rotary in the Polio Immunisation Campaign, a significant one being the Resistance faced by Immunisation Teams. He, himself, had been and continues to be at the helm of Rotary's Muslim Ulema Committee of Rotary's INPPC, which proved to be a game-changer in the fight against "vaccine hesitancy". He anticipated that similar challenges would have to be faced in Covid vaccination in India.

He concluded by making an impassioned appeal to all Rotarians to gear up for the cause, because sooner rather than later, the Government of India would call upon Rotary to once again act as a catalyst for creating lasting change.



PDG DEEPAK KAPUR

Vice Chairman,
Covid Vaccination
Task Force

Covid Vaccination - RISK or REWARD - A virtual meet by RI Dist. 3054

District Governor RI Dist. 3054 Rajesh Agrawal appointed PDG Anil Agrawal as the Chairman of the District Committee for Covid Vaccination. We organised a virtual meeting on 20th January, 2021 with the intention of clearing myths surrounding the vaccine.

PRID Ashok Mahajan and Zonal Coordinator PDG Ashok Panjwani gave insights on how to go about this difficult task. Invited speakers Dr. Sudhir Bhandari (Principal and Controller, SMS Medical College and Hospital, Jaipur) and Dr. Nischal Bhatt (Member of Gujarat State Covid Vaccination Task Force) gave a detailed account about Covid Vaccines that are available at present in India. The session demystified the issue and cleared all doubts about the safety and efficacy of the vaccines. The meeting was attended by more than 300 members from 12 districts in India and Pakistan.



PDG ANIL AGARWAL

District Committee RI Dist. 3054



Life or death for a young child too often depends on whether he or she is born in a country where vaccines are available or not.

- Nelson Mandela

TASK FORCE UPDATE

COVID VACCINATION : RISK OR REWARD? An awareness program by RI District 3141

A virtual awareness program on Covid immunization was conducted by District 3141 under the leadership of DG Sunnil Mehra, organized by District coordinator PP Dr Indumati Gopinathan (Pathologist) guided by Zonal coordinator PDG Dr Jayant Kulkarni on 2nd of February 2021. The program was graced by the presence of PRID Ashok Mahajan, Chairman, Rotary India's Covid Vaccination Task force.

The chief guest and expert speaker was from WHO, India Dr Pankaj Bhatnagar, NPSP Team leader. The meeting was hosted by RC of Bombay Chembur West and had a record 100% co-hosting by all 107 clubs of the district.

After the address by DG Sunnil Mehra, PRID Ashok Mahajan spoke on "A shot of hope", highlighting Rotary's yeoman service in Polio eradication from India and Rotary's potential role in creating community awareness on Covid immunization. Zonal coordinator for Districts 3141 & 3142 PDG Dr. Jayant Kulkarni introduced guest speaker, pediatrician Dr Pankaj Bhatnagar.

Dr. Bhatnagar, in his well-illustrated powerpoint presentation explained the basics of immunization and its goals. He highlighted the fact that vaccination is a well researched process from the times of Edward Jenner and Small Pox which is now eradicated. The COVID vaccine is aimed at prevention of COVID infection and also reduction in mortality and severity of the disease. He elaborated on the complete infrastructure involved in the process and the role of the cold chain maintenance. He addressed FAQs from the audience. The Q&A session was moderated by PP Dr Haresh Asnani the technical coordinator of the CVTF District team.

Following the program, a soft copy of the compilation of the Q&A session was circulated to all the Club presidents and District groups.



PP DR. INDUMATI GOPINATHAN
District Co-ordinator
RI Dist. 3141



Reception of expedition crew members at joint club meeting at Kashipur

In response to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's call to Rotary to enhance awareness of the National Covid Vaccination Program, District Governor of RI Dist. 3110, Dinesh Chandra Shukla planned an ambitious Covid Vaccination Awareness Expedition in partnership with Inner-wheel District 311 covering 1500 km of area consisting of central, west north part of UP and central part of Uttarakhand.

This expedition was announced as National Awareness Festival with the purpose of making the Indian public aware of health and hygiene. Rotary-Innerwheel Covid Vaccination Expedition (1500 Km.) was organized from 22nd of January to 25th of January. This expedition also integrated all clubs and rejuvenated all the members and club after dullness in club activities due to social distancing norms.

'Flag off Ceremony' of this historical journey was organized on 22nd of January, 2021 at Kargil Park, Motijheel in Kanpur. In this ceremony, good wishes for the journey were sent by the State Minister of UP, Mrs. Neelima Katiyar & Dr. Anil Mishra (CMO, Kanpur). DG Dinesh Chandra Shukla & Mrs. Udit Sharma (Chairperson of Inner Wheel District 311) and off the flagged off the expedition.

The expedition route was Kanpur - Etawah - Agra - Sasni - Hathras - Aligarh - Ujhani - Bisauli - Rampur - Kashipur - Bareilly - Kanpur. Mayors, Local MPs, MLAs, Local administration and local medical officers team received expedition crew members at every place. Local clubs were requested to spread awareness by organizing parallel meetings inside the cities. The closing ceremony was held on Monday, 25th Jan 2021 at Rotary Saheed Smarak Park, Phool Bagh, Kanpur. Closing program was followed by a felicitation ceremony and cultural program.

The Covid Vaccination Awareness Expedition also included huge car rallies, public meetings and official meetings in the cities. Mass publicity was given to this expedition by local news papers. Local administration and MP/MLAs spoke very highly of the Rotary organisation.

FROM THE CHAIRMAN'S DESK



PRID ASHOK MAHAJAN
Chairman, Rotary India's
Covid Vaccination
Task Force

LET US CREATE HISTORY AGAIN.

10 years ago, Rotarians of India, helped create history. A large, highly populated, diverse country like ours is polio free, since Jan 2011 – a monumental achievement. This incredible success was due to a seamless partnership between the Govt. of India, WHO, UNICEF, CDC, The Rotary Foundation and Gates Foundation. Each of these partners excelled in their allotted role.

Since then, Rotary has taken on other challenges including Measles and Rubella. Years of work on polio has brought some major benefits. Our health sector, human resource is trained and can easily be redeployed for injectable vaccines. Our infrastructure such as cold chain, transport is in place all-over India and the immense experience that we have gathered will stand us in good stead in the future.

Friends, India stands on the threshold of another gigantic task, off vaccinating 1.3 billion people with the Covid Vaccine. This pandemic has caused worldwide havoc with public health, economic wealth and social harmony. Yet, despite all the odds, humanity is fighting back with all its intelligence and ingenuity. For the first time in history, a vaccine has been developed within a year of the outbreak of a disease.

The Government of India is advised by the best brains from the scientific and medical community. The vaccinations are the result of a lot of dedicated research, development and testing.

Your ability to create awareness, minimize resistance, take proactive actions and above all ... your selfless volunteerism is unparalleled. Let us join hands with Govt. to create history – yet another historical achievement awaits us. Let us ensure that every Indian can walk free of Covid, forever.

ROTARY INDIA'S COVID VACCINATION TASK FORCE ORGANISATION MATRIX

