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Rotary celebrates a century of service in India

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Rotary celebrated 100 years in India at the Rotary India Centennial Summit at Kolkata.

Nearly 4,000 Rotary members from 35 countries, government officials and topic experts explored ideas and solutions around disease prevention and treatment, water sanitation and hygiene, education and other topics relevant to India.

Mark Maloney, President, Rotary International; Shekhar Mehta, Rotary International President-nominee for 2021-22 and Dr Harsh Vardhan, Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare were part of the event.

Rotary began its journey in India from the city of Kolkata, on Jan. 1, 1920 inspired by the organization's motto, "service above self". In the last 100 years, Rotary has grown from one club to 4000 with 1.5 lakh Rotary members in India.

In 2018-19, The Rotary Foundation in India supported projects worth $22.81 million, including:

- Improving the education system;
- Tackling significant public health problems throughout the country;
- Providing women entrepreneurs with sustainable access to microfinance;
- Enhancing sanitation and hygiene standards, especially for women and girls;
- Providing access to clean and safe drinking water;
- Helping rebuild homes, schools, and businesses affected by natural disasters and much more.

As a driving force behind global efforts to eradicate polio – Rotary will join India in celebrating its sixth polio-free year on March 27, 2020. Since 1995, Rotary worked with the Indian government to institute National Immunization Days each year to immunize 172 million children under five years of age.

Congratulating Rotary on achieving this 100-year milestone, Jagdeep Dhankar, Governor of Bengal said, "The third decade of this century will be a decisive one for India, and organizations like Rotary, with its resources and commitment to creating positive and lasting change in the world, have an important role to play. Ending polio in India is a testament to Rotary's dedication and action. We look forward to collaborating with Rotary to address India's other challenges."

As part of the celebration, Rotary honored four individuals with its Rotary Hero Humanity Awards:

- Mr Bhrigu Borthakhur from Guwahati for his work supporting basic education and literacy;
- Mr Adhik Sadashiv Kadam from Pune for his work supporting economic and community development;
- Mr Swapnil Arun Gawande from Amravati for his work in supporting disease prevention and treatment for organ donation awareness; and
- Dr Shalini Saxena from Chandausi for her work supporting clean water, sanitation and hygiene with creating awareness around menstrual hygiene.

In his address to attendees, Maloney said, "As we celebrate our impact over the last 100 years in India, I'm inspired by these creative solutions to some of our toughest challenges, from economic inequality to conflict resolution to fighting disease. India is one of Rotary's fastest-growing countries with a 56 percent increase in membership over the last decade, so there is unlimited potential."

Mehta said, "For an organization with the motto "service above self", the best way to celebrate our 100-year milestone is to enhance our humanitarian activities, and this is what Indian Rotarians are doing. They have raised the bar so high that I am compelled to say that every Rotary member truly is the Koh-i-Noor in the Rotary world."

During his one-year term as Rotary's 111th president beginning on 1 July 2021, Mehta will focus on increasing Rotary's impact by expanding partnerships with organizations that specialize in promoting peace; fighting disease; providing clean water, sanitation and hygiene; saving mothers and children; supporting education and growing local economies.