

District Conference Saturday March 17 DG's Welcome

My friends in Rotary,

I warmly welcome you all to this our Jubilee district conference.

While we officially opened this district conference last evening, we still have some formal welcomes to give which I will do shortly.

Putting on a district conference is a requirement of Rotary International. I quote from Rotary's Manual of Procedure:

The purpose of the district conference is to provide opportunities for networking, inspirational addresses, and discussions of Rotary-related matters. The event should recognize the service programs, projects, and public relations achievements in the district in order to inspire Rotarians to become more involved in service. The conference should also give Rotarians and clubs a vision of Rotary beyond the club level and provide a memorable fellowship experience. Many Rotarians have said that they were never truly enthusiastic about Rotary until they saw an inspirational presentation at a district conference.

The conference committee has put a lot of work in to making sure you have plenty of opportunity for all these things, in particular being inspired and proud to be involved in service activities.

Our conference theme this year is ***“Go for Gold at the Gong”*** which, picking up the Olympic year connection, and our golden jubilee, is chosen to help us *strive to do our very best* for this world of ours, to achieve the objects of Rotary in all respects – to provide humanitarian service, to encourage high ethical standards in all vocations, and to help build goodwill and peace in the world.

Our Year theme, announced 15 months ago by President Kalyan Banerjee ***“Reach Within to Embrace Humanity”*** has been a very motivating theme as it has captured these elements of what we are Rotarians do. President Kalyan's subthemes are the **Family, Continuity and Change**.

The family because getting our house in order – family, club or our

own lives in order is necessary if we are going to be effective in our outreach to others.

Continuity because we must as Rotarians accept the challenge and responsibility of keeping the wonderful programs of Rotary active and live not only now but for the future.

And Change therefore is critical if we are to maintain the relevance of our organisation and its attractiveness to new generations of Rotarians who have different skills, backgrounds, interests and priorities in life to us older Rotarians. As you all have been very much aware, encouraging an openness to change has been the focus of my club visits, both at board level and in my comments to club members.

I am delighted to hear and see that some clubs are experimenting with changes in their club meetings, and reducing the amount of traditional ritual.

Some clubs are much more cautious about change and I respect that - it is a club decision to maintain traditions if the members prefer it that way. But I have passed on the results of research and the words of our Rotary leaders who recognize that if not club by club, but across the membership generally we will have to modernize, and relatively quickly, to keep our organization vibrant and attractive to younger people, who are perhaps more interested in supporting causes than joining a club for fellowship. So while we are talking about change more now than we have in the past, I have no doubt at all that the years ahead will see the subject pushed and discussed even more strongly. And I see that exciting and healthy that right at the top of our organization we are addressing our future and the ways in which we can be most effective.

In particular, the explosion on technology and the advent of social media will shift a lot of our activity and focus – perhaps to conducting our planning and business activities through these forms of media, and meeting when we have hands on projects to perform or networking or social functions to support. So the culture will change from **Attendance to Engagement**, and our traditional clubs will gradually move along a spectrum of style from one end while our E-clubs might move from being pure E-clubs to

being hybrid clubs where some opportunity to meet is given to members. Some interesting concepts are out there now for debate and discussion and I hope that you will all be actively involved in having your say on these.

I also hope that we are demonstrating some changes in this conference that you will find a small step along this path of change and for the benefit of Rotary in our District.

It is now my very great pleasure to formally welcome our Official Party:

Past Governor Manjit Sawhney from District 3010 in India, and his wife, Rita.

District Governor Elect John Dodd and Janelle

District Governor Nominee (District 9685) Graeme Davies and Lyn.

Please give the official party a very warm welcome.

We also have a number of Past District Governors among us and I would like to acknowledge them:

[Insert Past District Governors who are present]

Please give our past governors a hearty welcome

It is now my great pleasure to introduce our Rotary International President's Special Representative, PDG Manjit Sawhney to address us.

Manjit originally came from Rawalpindi, but migrated to Delhi in 1947. He has had a distinguished career at school and university, and was a charter member and later the Star president of the Rotary club of Delhi South Metropolitan.

He has had a distinguished career in Rotary, serving as Governor of D3010 in 1997-98, and since then he has served on many rotary committees, both in India and internationally. Manjit has been awarded the Service above Self award, the Distinguished past

governor award and many other prestigious Rotary awards in recognition of his service. Manjit has been heavily involved in the now-successful polio eradication programs in India for many years and I know he will dwell a lot on this during his talk to us today.

He and his wife Rita also serve in other areas outside Rotary.

We are deeply honoured to have you here with us for our conference, Manjit and I now invite you to address us.