

RGM SPEECH AT RGL MEETING ON 11th FEBRUARY 2022

Respected MW Bro. Anish Kumar Sharma, Recipient of the Order of Service to Masonry, MW the Grand Master of the Grand Lodge of India; Respected Past Grand Masters MW Bro. Hari Pershad Mathur, Recipient of the Order of Service to Masonry and MW Bro Rajeev Ramkrishna Khandelwal, Recipient of the Order of Service to Masonry; esteemed members of Grand Deputation; my Regional Grand Master colleagues from the other three Regions – RW Bro VG Madhusudan from Southern India; RW Bro Dr Yagnesh Thakar from Western India and RW Bro Pervez Kaikobad from Eastern India; RW Bro PV Kumar, District Grand Master of the District Grand Lodge of Northern India; RW Brethren, VW Brethren, W Brethren and Brethren in all.

As I step into the second year of my tenure as the Regional Grand Master of our vibrant Northern region, I thank each one of you for being present here today in such large numbers from all over the Region. More than 850 participants have registered for this year's Annual Meeting which reflects your love for Freemasonry.

Brethren, I am very happy to inform you that we have acquired land in Dehradun last month for construction of Masonic Temple and charitable medical centre.

In my speech after my Installation as the Regional Grand Master in March last year, I had stated that good governance at the level of both the Regional Grand Lodge and the Lodges shall be my priority. I am happy to say that we have achieved that to a large extent. When I took over, many Lodges were not sending Summons of their meetings to the Region's office. Today, barring some chronic defaulters that are always there, almost all Lodges are regularly sending their Summons. The pendency of half-yearly returns is almost nil. The Regional Grand Lodge e-portal for filing of half-yearly returns and documents online by the Lodges, which was suffering from some glitches, is now working smoothly. The Regional Grand Lodge secretariat, led ably by our Regional Grand Secretary RW Bro Subhash Mahajan, responds to most of the communications received from Lodges within 48 hours. I am happy to inform you that all the Lodges have filed their half-yearly Returns for the period ended June 2022.

Our quarterly newsletter NORTHMASON is being regularly brought out by its Editor RW Bro Subhash Chawla. The annual issue has been given to all of you in the registration kit. I request you to read it thoroughly as it has very good articles on Freemasonry, higher Masonic Orders and the activities of the Region.

Brethren, my first year in office has been quite satisfying. Two months after I took charge as Regional Grand Master in March last year, we conducted a very successful two-day Workshop for

Assistant Regional Grand Masters & Lodge In-charges in Dehradun in May 2022 where senior Brethren conducted different sessions covering all the aspects of the role and duties of an ARGM. All the ARGMs found the Workshop very useful. We are going to hold the next Workshop for ARGMs this year in New Delhi sometime in the second half of March or early April.

Our half-yearly meeting and Diamond Jubilee celebrations at Kanpur were a great success and the registration of Brethren there also was one of the highest for a half-yearly meeting.

I have so far visited 32 Lodges in 10 Masonic centres and presented 25, 40 and 50 years Long Term Service Jewels to more than 70 Brethren.

I would like to make a special mention about how positive thinking in fraternal relations can result in a win-win situation for Freemasonry as a whole. Our Lodge in Jalandhar was facing some problems holding their meetings in the Masonic Temple owned by the English constitution Lodge.

I met RW Bro PV Kumar, District Grand Master of District Grand Lodge of Northern India. His positive approach has today resulted in our Lodge in Jalandhar holding its regular meetings in the Temple there without any problems.

Thank You very much RW Bro PV Kumar for your assistance and constructive role.

The most heart-warming development of my first year in office has been the Initiation of more than 270 Brethren into Freemasonry of which a significant number of Initiates are below the age of 35-40 years, which is a very healthy and positive sign for our institution.

Brethren, all our permanent charitable projects – General Williams Masonic Polyclinic and Masonic Eye Centre at Janpath, Masonic Public School at Vasant Kunj Delhi, Amrit Masonic Special School at Noida and Rohilla Star Charitable Dispensary at Faridabad -- are doing well. The construction of the additional block of classroom at Masonic Public School in Vasant Kunj to increase the student strength by 800 students is progressing as per schedule. We are confident that the entire project shall be completed before the commencement of the academic session in 2024.

There is always a scope of improvement when it comes to our permanent charitable projects. We are working on some innovative plans for full utilisation of the capacity, space and equipment at Masonic Eye Centre and Rohilla Star Charitable Dispensary. We hope to increase the number of students at Amrit Masonic Special School by at least 50 per cent after the construction of additional rooms and renovation of the existing building that was completed just over a year ago.

I am thankful to MW Bro A K Sharma, MW the Grand Master for contributing 5.50 lacs for Northern India Masonic Charitable Society, I also extend thanks to The Fraternity Club for contributing Rs 10 Lacs to Northern India Masonic Charitable Society & Rs 2 lacs for Rohilla Star Masonic Charitable Society. I am also great full to all brethren & Lodges for donating generously for all charitable institutions of Delhi NCR.

While Charity will be collected in later stage, I make an appeal to all of you on your personal behalf or on the behalf of your Lodge to announce your charity for our Charitable Institutions and Region.

Brethren, just about 25% of the members of Craft Lodges are members of Royal Arch Chapters and Mark Lodges. This is not only the trend in our Region but in the other three Regions. To motivate the Brethren to join these higher Masonic Degrees, the Grand Lodge of India has amended the Rule in the Book of Constitutions relating to eligibility of a Brother to be elected as Worshipful Master. With effect from 1st January 2024, a Brother who is not a member of a Royal Arch Chapter and Mark Lodge cannot be elected as the Worshipful Master of a Craft Lodge. However, Lodges in centres that do not have a Royal Arch Chapter or a Mark Lodge can apply for a Dispensation from MW the Grand Master for exemption from this condition.

The Half-Yearly meeting of the Region will be held in Jaipur this year. The exact dates and month will be intimated to you in due course.

Brethren, you may recall that I had announced the formation of RGM's Council for Growth and Excellence in Freemasonry at the half-yearly meeting in Kanpur in September last year. The Council has prepared a Guide for New Initiates. It is now my happy privilege to request MW the Grand Master to release the Guide. I also invite RW Bro Vishal Bakshi to join us.

The annual issue of NORTHMASON, our quarterly newsletter, has been prepared with lot of hard work by its Editor RW Bro Subhash Chawla. I request MW the Grand Master to formally release the NORTHMASON newsletter. I also request RW Bro Subhash Chawla to come on the dais.

I thank the Organising Committee led by its Chairman RW Bro PK Sharma for all the hard work in successfully organising this annual meeting. I am personally aware that all the chairmen and members of the sub-committees have really worked very hard.

I will not take more of your time as you must be looking forward to the speech of our beloved and respected leader, MW Bro Anish Kumar Sharma.

I thank all the brethren and greet you and your family well.