



District Grand Lodge of India S.C.
&
Grand Chapter of U.S.R.A.F.I.C.



NEWSLETTER

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**Edited By Bro./M.E.C. Noshir Godrej Paghdiwalla, D.S.M.,
Past Depute District Grand Master & District Grand Secretary
Past Depute Grand Superintendent & Grand Scribe Ezra
Hon. Grand Secretary (Scot.)/Hon First Grand Standard Bearer (Scot.)**



This Newsletter is only meant to convey the news and events under the jurisdiction of the Scottish District, but is not its official periodical. The views expressed herein are solely that of the Editor, and not necessarily that of the Scottish District.

EDITORIAL

The Light We Seek

In the ancient stones and quiet chambers of our Scottish Lodges, surrounded by symbols older than nations and truths deeper than oceans, we gather—not merely to perform ritual, but to engage in a quest that has shaped humanity since the dawn of consciousness: the pursuit of Light. The spirit of Freemasonry endures—not as a relic, but as a living, breathing force. It is in the warmth of clasped hands, in the solemnity of the ritual, and in the quiet humility of a Brother offering help where none was asked. Scottish Craft Masonry, with its unique heritage and broad influence, continues to be a light in a world sometimes dimmed by discord.

We gather in our Masonic Temples—not merely to perform ritual, but to engage in a quest that has shaped humanity since the dawn of consciousness: the pursuit of Light. Freemasonry, in all its complexity and tradition, does not promise us answers. Instead, it offers us tools—a square, a compass, a trowel—not to measure the world, but to shape ourselves. In an age where information floods us like a storm, wisdom remains the rarest of treasures. And it is here, in the silence between words spoken in the Lodge, that we begin to understand: Light is not something we find, but something we build within.

What is this Light? Some say it is truth. Others say it is virtue, justice, or divine understanding. Yet perhaps Light is not a thing, but a state—a clarity of being in which our actions align with principles, our hearts beat in harmony with humanity, and our minds are attuned to something greater than the self.

In Masonry, the allegories of stone and temple remind us that the inner edifice is what truly matters. The temple not made with hands eternal in the heavens is not a physical structure, but the perfected soul—the culmination of labour, love, and learning. Each working tool speaks not just of craft, but of character. Every Degree is not a step up in title, but a descent into deeper understanding.

But philosophy without action is merely decoration. Our world aches. There is discord in society, disillusionment in youth, and division in public discourse. If we are to be the bearers of Light, then it must shine through how we live, how we lead, and how we love. ***It is not enough to speak of Brotherhood; we must be the living proof of it.***

Let us remember that Masonic Light is not a prize given, but a fire kindled—a fire that must be tended with discipline, humility, and courage. And like all true fires, it spreads. One enlightened Brother has the power to ignite the spirit of a Lodge, a community, even a world.

We do not meet to escape the world. We meet to better face it. To study timeless truths so we might live them in temporal times. The work of a Mason is never finished—because the world always needs Light.

So, as we return to our lives outside the tiled Lodge, may we carry that Light into every word, every deed, every quiet moment of moral choice. For in doing so, we honour not only the Craft—but the GAotU, in whose service is perfect freedom.

Among our enduring values, none shines brighter than charity. Not simply the giving of coin, but the giving of self—the willingness to step beyond comfort to ease the burden of another. It is this kind of charity that our Operative forebearers modelled, labouring together not merely to build cathedrals of stone, but communities of strength. In Scottish Lodges, where the traditions of the Craft are steeped in centuries of communal life, charity is not occasional—it is essential. We build funds, yes. But more importantly, we build relationships that bridge hardship with hope.

And yet, charity alone is not the full measure of our Craft. We are, in every Lodge, mentors. It is in the Scottish ritual—distinctive and rich—that one can see the layers of wisdom passed not in lectures, but in example. The Entered Apprentice watches the Fellowcraft, the Fellowcraft learns from the Master Mason, and all learn from the present and Past Masters who, though silent in office, speak volumes in presence.

Mentorship is not a programme; it is a pattern of life. Our Lodges are among the last places in society where young men sit beside elders—not in competition, but in communion. In a world that often rushes past reflection,

we offer the stillness of shared experience. We teach not only signs and words, but how to face adversity with dignity, how to lead with humility, and how to grow without pride. And we are all still learning.

What makes this possible is the principle that often receives too little applause but undergirds all we do: unity in diversity. The Scottish Craft, like our nation, has always been a tapestry woven of many colours and cultures. We are Brothers and the Lodge, when true to its purpose, knows no barriers of class, creed, or culture. Here, a stonemason and a surgeon kneel on the same floor, bound by the same obligations, striving toward the same Light.

In an era where division is often amplified, Freemasonry offers a counter-current. We do not erase differences—we embrace them, refining them through the square of tolerance and the compass of understanding. The Scottish ritual reminds us that we are all rough ashlar, and only through patient shaping—guided by principle and practice—can we approach perfection.

But unity is not passive. It requires effort. It requires us to be better listeners, more generous spirits, and tireless builders of bridges where others erect walls. It requires us to seek the Brother beyond the politics, the culture, the generation, and to see in his eyes not the stranger, but the self.

So what, then, is the charge to us today, as Scottish Freemasons? It is to be men of action and of contemplation. — not only in our Lodges, but in our communities. To mentor, not by command but by consistency. To give, not only from the wallet but from the well of kindness. To remind the world that there is still a place where honour, fraternity, and spiritual aspiration are not obsolete—but essential.

In the East, we see a symbol of rising Light. But it rises only because we work through the darkness. Charity, mentorship, unity—these are not luxuries of a forgotten age. They are the foundations upon which we must still build, stone by stone, soul by soul. Let us then rise from our refreshment renewed. The world does not need louder men. It needs **better** ones. Let that betterment begin with us.

“ASCENT OF LIGHT AT THE SUMMIT” **A MASONIC CONCLAVE AT UMLING LA**



left to right are: W. Bro Jatindar Singh, Bro. Kunal Basu, W. Bro. Vinay Zade, W. Bro. Praveen Sahani, W. Bro. Mehernosh Mavalwala, R.W.M. Gp. Capt. Digvijay Mohbe, W. Bro. Vinod Fule, W. Bro. Hiren Shah, W. Bro. Pradyumna Bhole and W. Bro. Umesh Kedarpawar.

In the last issue of our Newsletter, we had communicated the news of a few of our temerarious brethren from Lodge K. R. Cama No. 1366 S.C. at Nagpur planning a masonic adventurous mission to Umling La, Ladakh - the highest motorable pass in India at 19024 feet (5798 meters) above sea level to create a record of sorts to commemorate the Spirit of Freemasonry through a symbolic meeting at the highest point in India

In a breath-taking display of Masonic adventurous resolve, Brethren from across India did convene on 24th June 2025 at Umling La after traversing from Nagpur by train via Ambala, Delhi, Manali, Sarchu/Jispa, Leh, Khardung La, Nubra valley, Turtuk, Shayong, Pangong lake, Hanle and finally reaching Umling La, the world's highest motorable road, to conduct a symbolic Masonic meeting amidst the stark beauty of Ladakh. This historic event is a tribute to the enduring spirit of Freemasonry, which transcends borders, climates, and even altitude.

Umling La, the world's highest motorable pass, situated near the Indo-China border in Ladakh, offers a panoramic yet stark terrain that symbolizes perseverance, brotherhood, and the pursuit of light—ideals that resonate deeply with Masonic principles. This historic Masonic meeting was convened not only to honour the geographic heights of India but also to spiritually elevate the fraternity. Due to the extreme altitude and military sensitivity of the region, careful coordination was essential like obtaining Permissions from the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) and local authorities. The meticulous but torturous labyrinthian planning also involved Brethren undergoing medical clearance, transportation of life-supporting gear, thermal gear, and communication devices.

In a breath-taking escapade symbolizing the ascension of the human spirit and the Mason's journey from the darkness of the valley to the light of truth. The bravura and virtuosity of these brave hearts was symbolic of a Toast to Universal Brotherhood and Peace and Symbolized the ascension of the human spirit and the Mason's journey from the darkness of the valley to the light of truth. The Silence of the Himalayas offered a moment of solemnity, where nature itself seemed to respect the sacredness of the gathering. The hoisting of the Tricolor and Masonic Banner hoisted alongside at the acme represented patriotism and fraternal unity.

The meeting at Umling La was a historic first for Indian Freemasonry, showcasing the fraternity's ability to adapt, endure, and hold true to its ideals in even the most inhospitable environments. This event reaffirmed the Brethren's commitment to light, learning, and universal brotherhood—at the very rooftop of India, notwithstanding the severe cold and thin air limiting the session and the Ritual paraphernalia being adapted for harsh environmental condition.

With true Masonic ethos, on 26th June 2025, our Brethren conducted a Charity drive at Mahabodhi Maitri Geriatric Home – Leh, where 40 sets of fully body thermals tops & lowers, woollen socks, woollen gloves, winter slippers, woollen caps were donated.

Bro. Jatinder Singh - District Grand Senior Warden presented the District Grand Lodge Rank certificates to W. Bro Mehernosh Mavalwala, Secretary of Lodge K. R. Cama as the District Grand Lodge Almoner and to R.W.M. Bro. Gp. Capt. Digvijay Mohbe as the District Grand Sword Bearer.

Fortunately, there were no major cataclysm and things went off as planned to a tee. We hope that the audacious and avant-garde spirit of our Bro. Mehernosh Mawalwala and Group Captain Digvijay Mohbe who both conceptualised the mission shall orchestrate future symbolic meetings at significant landmarks to strengthen bonds and highlight Freemasonry's relevance to both tradition and exploration.

The setting of the Masonic meeting added profound meaning to the occasion:

- The Great Heights echoed the Mason's quest for light, growth, and perfection
- The Silence of the Peaks fostered contemplation and unity
- The Indian Tricolor and the Masonic Banner flew together, symbolizing harmony between patriotism and fraternal duty
- Ritual paraphernalia had to be adapted for **harsh environmental conditions**

The Masonic meeting at Umling La stands as a historic and spiritual milestone. It was a tribute to the fortitude, unity, and eternal search for truth that define Freemasonry.

APPENDANT DEGREE OF ROYAL ARCH MARINERS

On Wednesday, 14th May 2025 Companions of Royal Arch Mariners' Lodge attached to Royal Arch Chapter Rising Star of Western India witnessed an impressive ceremony of the installation of Bro. P. Venkatraman as the Worshipful Commander Noah. It was a pleasure to see the participation of a motley number of brethren.

In Scottish Freemasonry, the Royal Ark Mariner (RAM) degree, also known as the Degree of Worshipful Commander Noah, is an appendant degree closely associated with the Mark Master Masons and is believed to have been originated in the mid eighteenth century. It is not part of the "Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite", but rather an appendant degree administered under the Supreme Grand Royal Arch Chapter of Scotland.



*Sitting L to R:- Vispi Marolia, Noshir Paghdwalla, P. Venkatraman, Kersi Limathwalla, Adi Aga,
Standing:- Nishant Bafna, Saifee Nasrullah, Percy Bamboat, Zawareh Wadia, Rashid Contractor,
VishwaMohan, Neville Mistry, Tehmtan Dalal, Hannan Nasrullah, Ranjit Joshipura, Salim Khan,
Jehan Dhalla and Zerrick Dastoor.*

It draws its symbolism and teachings from the biblical story of Noah and the Ark, focusing on themes such as faith, obedience, and salvation. typically conferred in a single ceremony. The presiding officer is called the Worshipful Commander Noah, symbolizing Noah himself and the narrative centres on Noah's preparation for the Flood, construction of the Ark, and his righteousness in the eyes of God. In this degree there is a heavy use of ark imagery, water, and the rainbow, representing deliverance and divine covenant.

The degree, typically conferred in a single ceremony, is highly symbolic, focusing on the values of moral conduct, obedience to divine law, and survival through righteousness. The Ark, animals, flood, and covenant with the rainbow are central elements of the degree and the candidate assumes the symbolic role of Noah's sons (Shem, Ham, or Japheth), being brought into the ark as a sign of trust and worthiness.

The regalia includes a rainbow-colored jewel or ribbon, symbolizing the covenant and divine promise and the officers wear aprons and collars distinctive to this degree. During the working of this degree, the brethren are beholden to its teachings of Obedience to divine instruction (Noah building the Ark without question), Salvation through faith and righteousness, Hope in adversity, as symbolized by the Ark surviving the flood and finally, the importance of moral conduct in achieving spiritual safety.

The key Scriptural Elements in this degree comprises of a narration when God commands Noah, a righteous man, to build an ark to preserve life during the coming flood. As a result, Noah, his three sons (Shem, Ham, and Japheth), and their families are spared. The rainbow becomes the symbol of the covenant between God and man.

The Theme of this degree dwells on Emphasising the virtues of faith, obedience, moral uprightness, and divine reward for righteousness. It symbolizes the journey through moral and spiritual storms, with the Ark representing salvation or the Lodge itself.

"PLASTIC-FREE LIVING"

A SUSTAINABLE SHIFT FOR A HEALTHIER PLANET

The use of plastic as a medium of use in the various chores in our daily life, though convenient, has at the same time proved to be a hazard of mammoth proportions due to the non-biodegradable nature and a wildlife hazard. Besides, in its process of production, harmful chemical releases of a toxic nature are released and the fragments of microplastics contaminate water, soil, and even the food chain.

In the current times avoiding plastic becomes a significant step toward eco-friendliness because plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental issues today. Some of the measures that need to be implemented are advanced usage (preferably bulk purchases) of reusable containers like glass, stainless steel, or bamboo alternatives. Also recommended are using wax wraps, paper bags, cardboard containers, cloth covers, or glass

lids, carrying fabric tote or backpack. Further, Avoid disposable cutlery and straws and instead switching to bamboo or metal versions.

We are proud to note that Lodge Zoroaster No. 800 S.C. has taken a lead initiative in this direction by embarking on an ecological positive step at Freemasons' Hall Mumbai. As a first step, plastic bottles at the banquet are an absolute taboo and they insist on glass bottles instead. Besides, they are venturing on undertaking a movement for segregation and recycling all single use plastics generated by the users of this Premises.

The users include the Masonic bodies beholden to different Constitutions as well as the restaurant housed in our premises. As a precursory step to this initiative, plastic bins are being provided and the users are being educated by Lodge Zoroaster. The plastics collected shall be picked up by "Project Mumbai" a Charitable Organisation specializing in recycling of disposable plastic.

ACHIEVEMENTS

MEC NIHAL FONSEKA APPOINTED TO SLT BOARD

Veteran banker and MEC Nihal Fonseka of Chapter Dalhousie NO. 182 S.C. under Grand Chapter U.S.R.A.F.IC. has been appointed to the Board of Sri Lanka Telecom (SLT) as an Independent Non-Executive Director.

Fonseka is a retired banker and served as the Chief Executive Officer of DFCC Bank from 2000 until 2013. Prior to joining DFCC Bank, he was the Deputy Chief Executive of HSBC Sri Lanka. He was the Senior Independent Director of John Keells Holdings PLC, Sri Lanka's largest public listed conglomerate with a market capitalisation of over \$ 1 billion, for 10 years until June 2024.



He is a Member of the Governing Board and Monetary Policy Board of the Central Bank of Sri Lanka (CBSL) since July 2022, after having served as a Member of the Monetary Board of the CBSL from 2016 to 2020. Currently, he is also a Director and Chairman of the Group Audit Committee of Brandix Lanka Ltd., one of the largest apparel exporters in Sri Lanka supplying global brands, with manufacturing operations in five countries. He is also the Chairman of Phoenix Industries Ltd., and an Independent Director and Chairman of the Investment Committee of Phoenix Ventures Ltd. He was the President of the Sri Lanka National Advisory Council of the Chartered Institute of Securities and Investments, UK, from 2011 to 2021.

Fonseka was a past Chairman of the Colombo Stock Exchange and the Association of Development Financing Institutions in Asia and the Pacific (ADFIAP). He has also held non-executive public sector positions as a Director of the Employees' Trust Fund Board and as a Member of the Presidential Commission on Taxation (2009), National Procurement Commission, and the Strategic Enterprises Management Agency (SEMA).

He holds a BSc from the University of Ceylon, Colombo, and is a Fellow of the Institute of Financial Studies, (FIB), UK, and is an Honorary Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Securities and Investments, FCSI (Hon), UK.

We, from the District, wish him every success in his assignment.



Installation meeting of Royal Arch Chapter Dalhousie No. 182 S.C. at Colombo, Sri Lanka conducted on Saturday, 17th May 2025.

M.E.C. Anjana Ratnasara was installed as the First Principal of the Chapter, M.E.C. Romesh De Silva as the Second Principal and M.E.C. Anuja Premaratna as the Third Principal. EC Kanishka Rajakaruna assumed charge as Scribe Ezra and MEC Nihal Jawayardena as the Treasurer.

"Doing their Bit"

Lodge St. Andrew's in the East No 343 SC readily responded to an appeal by our District and extended its support by contributing for the restoration of the Freemasons' Hall at Mumbai ravaged by fire on 15.02.2025. RWM Bro. Gautam H of the Lodge made a small and humble contribution to The District Grand Secretary Bro. Noshir Paghdwalla on behalf of Brethren of his lodge St. Andrew's in the East.



"HISTORY IN THE MAKING"

Bro. Vihaan Hingorani, aged 18.6 years, son of our ever ebullient Bro. Gautam Hingorani, was Initiated into Freemasonry by the brethren of Lodge St. Andrew's in the East No. 343 SC on the 28th of June 2025.

A proud and nostalgic moment for his father uncle Bro Devesh Hingorani and Grandfather W. Bro. VC Sharma and Brethren who were all in attendance to give blessings and support to the Third Generation Young Mason in the family who embarked on his Masonic journey. While welcoming him in our fold, we wish him the best Masonry has to offer.



A SYMPHONY OF RITUAL AND REVERENCE: **THE EXEMPLARY CEREMONIAL COMMITTEE OF THE DISTRICT**

In the grand tapestry of Freemasonry, where symbolism, precision, and tradition form the warp and weft of our noble Craft, the current Sub-Committee for Ceremonials of our District shines as a beacon of excellence. With unswerving dedication and a reverence for ritual, this distinguished body has strived to raise the bar of ceremonial work, so that every activity is transformed into a moving testament to the values we cherish.

Among the many sub-Committees that are formulated to adorn the diadem of our Masonic District, the Ceremonial Committee shines with such enduring brilliance—a body whose devotion, discipline, and distinguished service continue to elevate the Craft to ever-greater heights of splendor and solemnity. W. Bro. Furokh Santoke and W. Bro. Gautam have travelled distances to visit various daughter Lodges at their own expense not merely to perform the rituals but even transfiguring the simplest of ceremonies into a tapestry of enlightenment and emotion, stitched with golden threads of harmony, dignity, and awe.

Their tireless attention to minutiae, and commitment to upholding ancient landmarks are matched only by their passion for mentoring Brethren in the fine art of ritualistic excellence. By imparting knowledge, offering guidance, and setting an inspiring example, they nurture a culture of pride and precision within the District. Moreover, the Committee's ability to blend tradition with warmth ensures that every action resonates with the true heartbeat of Freemasonry. In their hands, ceremony is not performance—it is sacred purpose.

The Committee with the initiative of Depute DGM Bro. Zubin Amaria is currently – in consultation with the District – contemplating releasing of a handbook on ceremonials so as to ensure uniformity in the performance of ceremonials, which would, undoubtedly nurture within the Brethren a deeper appreciation for the Craft.

Of late, they have also organized virtual meetings on subjects of Masonic protocol, practices and roles and functions of various offices within the Lodge.

We, at the District, raise our collective voice in unfeigned gratitude and admiration for this illustrious Committee whose true greatness lies in their magnanimity of mentorship. For, in their silent toil and splendid performance, they serve not only our District but the very soul of Freemasonry itself—reminding us, time and again, that when ritual is performed with heart and honour, it becomes not just an act, but an art.

A CENTURY OF LIGHT: THE CENTENARY OF LODGE MADRAS NO. 1342

On the sunlit shores of South India, a quiet flame was kindled — one destined to glow across a hundred years. It was the year 1925, and amidst the cultural mosaic of Chennai (then Madras), a city ancient yet ever-evolving, a Lodge was consecrated on 5th November beholden to the Grand Lodge of Scotland: namely, Lodge Madras No. 1342 S.C. Its foundation laid in ideals eternal and unshakeable.

Since then, Lodge Madras has stood with solemnity and hope, as a sanctuary of fraternal strength, moral inquiry, and timeless ritual — a space where men of every walk of life could meet upon the level, act upon the plumb, and part upon the square. Ever since then, the Lodge has remained true to the Craft but within these sacred walls, the tools of Masonry have passed from hand to hand, unchanged in spirit.

We honour those founders whose vision carved this Lodge into being, as well as the countless Brethren who followed — Worshipful Masters, Wardens, Secretaries, and Stewards — each one a living stone in the enduring edifice of Lodge Madras. Their names are inscribed not just in minute books, but in the living memory of the Lodge itself.

Now, in this Centenary Year, we pause — not in idleness, but in reverence. We reflect on a hundred years of light and labour. We celebrate the harmony forged across generations. We rededicate ourselves to the great Masonic virtues: Brotherly Love, Relief, and Truth.

All our Brethren are invited to participate in the Centenary celebrations planned on Saturday, 13th September 2025 at Chennai. The Organising Committee has prepared an attractive flyer which has been sent to all the Brethren.

Let the centenary jewel shine not merely as a symbol of longevity, but as a torch passed to new hands — a beacon guiding future Brethren as surely as it guided those in 1925. The work is not yet finished. The temple is never complete. But still we build, still we learn, still we meet — under the banner of unity, guided by the Great Architect of the Universe.

May Lodge Madras No. 1342 S.C. continue to flourish in strength, dignity, and harmony for the next hundred years and beyond. Let the square still remind us of fairness, the compasses of restraint, and the trowel of unity. Let our Lodge continue to be a haven where the world's noise yields to harmony — where the soul, like stone, is hewn, smoothed, and set in the great edifice of human brotherhood. And so, we raise our eyes — not only to the past, but to the future. The next hundred years await. May those who follow us find the path clearer for our having walked it. **In the East, the light still rises. And the Craft endures.**

AN INVITATION TO UNITY AND LIGHT: Annual Communication/Convocation of the Scottish District in India 12th September 2025 – Freemasons' Hall, Chennai

It is with fraternal warmth and joyful anticipation that we extend all Brethren a cordial invitation to attend the Half yearly Communication of the District Grand Lodge of India, to be held on Friday, the 12th of September 2025, at 6.15 p.m. at the historic Freemasons' Hall in Madras (Chennai).

Prior to the same, at 4.00 p.m. Companions of the Scottish District are invited to attend the Half yearly Convocation of Grand Chapter U.S.R.A.F.I.C. notice of which has already been sent.

These gatherings, held in the gracious heart of South India, are more than mere meetings—they are a reaffirmation of the timeless bonds that unite us as Scottish Freemasons. It is an opportunity to rekindle old friendships, forge new ones, and witness the strength and spirit of our District moving forward in unity and purpose.

The ceremonial proceedings will be conducted with full dignity, and will be followed by a convivial festive board where Brotherhood and Benevolence will once again take their honoured place. The details of Registration are incorporated in the flyer sent out by the Organising Brethren of Chennai.

Madras, with its rich Masonic heritage and deep cultural tapestry, promises not only a memorable Communication but also a chance to walk in the footsteps of many worthy Brethren who have kept the Light of Freemasonry burning brightly for generations.

Whether you are a Master Mason or a seasoned Past Master, your presence will enrich the occasion. Let us stand united in spirit, in duty, and in Brotherhood as we continue our collective journey beholden to the Grand Lodge of Scotland and let us gather together in strength, dignity, and mutual respect under the banner of the GAOTU.

Make your travel plans early and be part of this significant event in our Masonic calendar and make a note of carrying your own regalia at the Meetings. We look forward to welcoming you in the cradle of Scottish Freemasonry in South.

