



FRANCESCO AREZZO
President 2025-26

Presidential Message February 2026

At last month's International Assembly, President-elect Olayinka "Yinka" Hakeem Babalola called on members of the Rotary world to live out our presidential message for the 2026-27 Rotary year: Create Lasting Impact.

This February, as we observe Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, we have an opportunity to channel Yinka's call to action into real change.

Peace is not simply the absence of war. A life free from conflict but marked by hunger, instability, or the inability to care for one's family is not true peace. Peace requires liberty, opportunity, and respect for human dignity. Yet fear often blocks that path — fear of change, of cultural loss, of people we don't understand.

Fear isn't defeated through avoidance or aggression. Knowledge is the first step toward peace. Rotary embraces this idea. Our Rotary Peace Centers and their peace fellows, along with other peace education initiatives, demonstrate how knowledge builds trust and helps communities find solutions to conflict.

In Colombia, decades of conflict have left deep wounds. The 2025 Rotary Foundation Programs of Scale awardee, Pathways to Peace and Prosperity, partners with the United Nations World Food Programme to expand opportunity, improve conflict resolution, and connect people with social services. Its goal is to break cycles of violence, poverty, and food insecurity so peace can take root.

In Maharashtra, India, People of Action honoree Swati Herkal built peace through prosperity. Her project confronted farmers' declining soil health, rising debt, and illness caused by chemical fertilizers. She and her Rotary partners launched a regenerative agriculture program that revitalized the land, lowered costs, and restored stability. More than 1,100 farmers now participate and over 50 villages have adopted the model.

Rotary also advances peace by restoring dignity. In Chad, Rotary Peace Fellow Domino Frank discovered that more than 1,500 women who fought in a rebellion had been erased from reintegration programs. His advocacy led to Chad's first Rotary Foundation global grant and the creation of Corridors of Peace. More than 100 women — triple the goal — completed literacy and vocational training and formed a cooperative to support their families.

From Colombia to India to Chad, the lesson is clear: Peace is not a dream. It is the result of sustained action with a focus on true, lasting impact. To replicate these successes, Rotary clubs can take three steps: Learn from peace fellows and other peace experts in our organization, apply a peacebuilding lens to community assessments, and prioritize impact over ceremony.

In a world filled with fear, Rotary cannot be satisfied with half-measures and empty words. If we are truly people of action, then action must define us. Together, we can Create Lasting Impact — across the globe, in our communities, and in ourselves.

FEBRUARY IS
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PEACE & CONFLICT PREVENTION MONTH

"If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other"
Mother Teresa

The Rotary Foundation



Longtime Rotary member Ravishankar Dakoju and his wife, Paola, have pledged an extraordinary US\$50 million gift to The Rotary Foundation — one of the largest individual contributions in Rotary's history.

Source: <https://theazb.com/>

Rotary

MAGAZINE

Nanotechnology brings safer water to the Ganges Delta

By Kamala Thiagarajan

www.rotary.org :: January 2026



Across the Ganges Delta, water surges in from Himalayan snowmelt and monsoon rains, picking up pollutants along the way. As a result, West Bengal has India's highest share of waterborne diseases.

Growing up on the edge of the Ganges Delta in eastern India, Sajal Kanti Kayal understood from an early age that the most precious resource in the world was water. Here water comes in abundance. For six months of the year, it surges in from Himalayan snowmelt, monsoon rains, and tropical cyclones. But as it churns through the rivers of the state of West Bengal and neighboring Bangladesh on its way to the sea, that precious water picks up a dangerous payload.

“We’re surrounded by toxic water. Our ponds, canals, lakes — all polluted,” says Kayal. The 47-year-old is the founder and CEO of a charity that supports education, health care, and other local development in his home village of Kankura outside Kolkata. So he understands that clean water supports more than just public health. It can lift people out of poverty and increase the number of kids in schools. He knows this intimately. Over the years, he’s experienced hair loss, skin lesions, and frequent digestive upsets caused by tainted water.

“It’s a desperate situation,” he says. “There’s water everywhere, but not a drop to drink.”

Like many parts of the world, the region has surface water that is often contaminated by runoff, industrial pollution, and poor sanitation — a problem amplified by recurring floods. As a result, West Bengal has India’s highest share of waterborne diseases, particularly acute diarrheal diseases. Starting in the 1970s, officials encouraged people to drill what are known as tube wells into groundwater aquifers. But in a painful irony, that water too was contaminated with a deadly poison: arsenic.

The highly toxic element leaching into water is a widespread global issue, putting as many as 230 million people at risk, with most contamination arising from arsenic that is naturally found in rock and soil. It’s a particular problem in northeast India and Bangladesh, where experts once called the situation the largest mass poisoning in history. Long-term exposure causes a host of illnesses from skin lesions to cancer.

On the Indian subcontinent, rivers carry weathered rock from the Himalayas and deposit it as arsenic-rich sediment in the vast alluvial plains that stretch like a ribbon across northern India and Bangladesh. With no smell or taste, arsenic is undetectable in groundwater except through regular testing.

Several years ago, Arindam Roychowdhury, owner of a health care company in Kolkata, traveled to the remote subdistrict of Kakdwip, among the interwoven tidal channels and islands along the Bay of Bengal. He was dismayed by what he saw. “People had tied a rudimentary cloth filter over tube wells to keep the insects out of the water,” he says. “Villagers were consuming water from highly polluted ponds and using the same source of drinking water for washing clothes and utensils, as well as bathing. Some of these ponds were green, ridden with moss. The stomachs of the children I met were swollen like a bowl, and it was clear that there was immense suffering from waterborne illnesses.”

Roychowdhury, a member of the Rotary Club of Calcutta, wanted to help and knew his club, which focuses on service projects in health care, water and sanitation, and basic education and literacy, would be ready to join him.

An acquaintance at Tata Chemicals, a company specializing in the manufacture of chemical products for the pharmaceutical and other industries, told him about a filtration machine that employs a form of nanotechnology that is effective at destroying contaminants in water.

Because the systems use gravity-fed water pressure, they don’t require electricity, making them especially useful in rural areas with less reliable energy. The technology is affordable and scalable with systems designed for individual households and entire communities.

Tata Chemicals agreed to provide the water purifiers at a subsidized cost for the Rotary club’s project. After installing machines at four sites starting in 2022, the club received a \$30,000 Rotary Foundation global grant in 2024 to install 10 additional purifiers at schools, nongovernmental organizations, and other public sites to allow community access.

While the purifiers are highly effective at eliminating bacteria and viruses from water, they are unable to remove more than a small amount of arsenic. So the club uses them in villages with lower levels of contaminants, as levels can vary greatly even among wells in the same area. Surplus amounts of clean water are then supplied to nearby villages for a nominal fee.

The project is directly benefiting an estimated 25,000 people. Each machine can filter 1,000 liters (264 gallons) of water per hour. Now, the members are looking to expand with another 21 filtration projects at schools.

The club's international partner on the project is the Rotary Club of Colleyville, Texas, which also champions water and sanitation projects. The Colleyville club's president and past Foundation chair, Kithsiri Athulathmudali, was experienced in clean water projects, particularly in his native Sri Lanka, which experiences similar water quality challenges.

"What defines us is Rotary's Service Above Self mindset," says Athulathmudali, a former Sri Lankan ambassador to Qatar. "We see what needs to be done, whether it is half a world away or in our own backyard, and we roll up our sleeves and do it."



The Rotary Club of Calcutta received a Rotary Foundation global grant to install purifiers at schools and other public sites to allow community access. Courtesy of Arindam Roychowdhury

Since 2013, Rotary clubs have led more than half a dozen global grant-supported projects to address arsenic contamination in India and Bangladesh.

The problem is not limited to less developed countries. In places like California's agricultural heartland, residents, particularly in communities home to farmworkers, contend with water tainted by arsenic and fertilizer chemicals. There, too, arsenic is naturally occurring but can become more of a problem through excessive pumping of groundwater.

Globally, the issue remains a major public health problem without an easy solution beyond widespread testing and filtration, says Allan Smith, professor emeritus of epidemiology at the University of California, Berkeley and an expert on arsenic. "Methods for filtering arsenic have been around for a long time, but they do face problems," he says. Downsides include the need for careful disposal of filters containing concentrated arsenic that must be treated as highly toxic waste. Even with filters, regular monitoring of water quality is needed and requires trained staff. "This is not something that can be left to the local communities," Smith insists.

As part of its project, the Rotary Club of Calcutta made sure to allow for regular maintenance and periodic replacement of the filter cartridges, ensuring long-term effectiveness. On a two-week trip to Kolkata in 2024, Athulathmudali visited each of the villages to check on the state of the installations. Regular monitoring of water quality is crucial to the success of the project.

In another challenge facing the low-lying delta near Kolkata, sea-level rise and storm surges from intensified cyclones are increasing the salinity of groundwater. The area's mangrove forests serve as a natural defense, and villagers are replanting them in places to act as barriers along with earthen embankments, demonstrating that the solutions to the region's water woes must be multifaceted.

For now, the quality of life has improved in areas with the new water filters, including in Kayal's village of Kankura. "For adults and children alike, there's no greater blessing than clean water," he says. "It is the biggest investment towards our future."

Happy Birthday

Rtn. Jayatee Biswas falling on February 06
Ms. Sreyashi Bhaumik w/o Rtn. Manoj Bhaumik
falling on February 09
Rtn. Anup Tibrewal falling on February 11



Happy Anniversary

Ms. Krishnakoli Roy & Rtn. PP (Dr.) Partha Pratim Roy
falling on February 08
Ms. Pratima Dutt & Honorary Member Rtn. Samirendu Dutt
falling on February 10
Mr. Ashim Dutta & PP Rtn. Paromita Das Dutta
falling on February 11



The world's first AI Hospital, developed in China, is transforming healthcare, highlighting Asia's position in healthcare innovation.

By: Ms. Wara Samar

med-tech.world :: July 11, 2025



Artificial Intelligence and its developments have had a revolutionary impact on society, and healthcare is not an exception. China has made massive strides in AI integrated healthcare, and continues to do so as AI tools are deployed in hospitals across the country.

China's ambitions for artificial intelligence are staggering. The country is projected to invest more than US\$1.4 trillion into AI development by 2030, a figure that eclipses the GDP of many nations. But what's perhaps more astonishing is where some of that investment is already landing: hospitals powered not by humans, but by AI doctors.

In 2024, Tsinghua University made headlines with the launch of the world's first AI hospital, Agent Hospital—a concept that blends virtual AI agents, clinical care, and real-world pilot deployment into one tightly integrated system. Now that vision is being refined, tested, and expanded across China in what might be one of the most ambitious attempts to reimagine modern healthcare.

What is Agent Hospital, and why does it matter?

Tsinghua's Agent Hospital was made up of 14 AI doctors upon launch. At its core, is MedAgent-Zero, the self-evolving AI framework developed by the University's AIR (Institute for AI Industry Research). Moreover, in November of 2024, the "Zijing AI Doctor" was launched. Developed by a Tsinghua University spin-out start-up, Zijing Zhikang, to serve as the core component in AI Agent's ecosystem.¹ The system features 42 AI doctors across 21 clinical specialties, covering over 300 diseases.

Furthermore, each specialty has trained its virtual agents on over ten common conditions. And finally, by creating a pool of half a million synthetic patient cases to test and evolve diagnostic accuracy. These AI doctors can treat 10,000 patients with 93% accuracy in a matter of days, a feat that would take real doctors years to complete.

Furthermore, these doctors aren't chatbots; they're AI systems capable of autonomously working with AI generated patients in a fully-fledged closed-loop ecosystem.

The system underwent internal testing in November of 2024, in which the closed-loop environment was used to rapidly and extensively evolve the AI doctor agents. Moreover, internal testing enabled vast simulation, and refinement using virtual patient data and clinical workflows. Consequently, the system was made ready to undergo public pilot testing, which has since greatly superseded internal testing.

Transition from Internal Simulation to Public Deployment

The inauguration ceremony for Tsinghua Agent Hospital held last April marked this transition into public deployment.² During the event, the system's integration with Chang Gung Hospital was announced, emphasizing the institute's commitment and ambition to revolutionize healthcare.

From ophthalmology and respiratory medicine to radiological diagnostics, AI doctors take on tasks traditionally handled by their human counterparts—streamlining workflows, offering real-time recommendations, and lowering the barrier to care.

Garnering international attention, the event highlighted China's AI Hospital model to address physician shortages, and improve healthcare access, especially in underserved regions.

Beyond clinical deployment and streamlining medical services, the system will serve as educational groundwork at Tsinghua. As a result, educational integration will catalyze the rise of a new generation of "AI-collaborative physicians."

Beijing Tsinghua Chang Gung Hospital – Physical hospital, digital core

May 2025 marked a symbolic and strategic milestone: the Phase II expansion of Beijing Tsinghua Chang Gung Hospital, adding 500 new beds, raising its capacity to 1,500 inpatients and up to 10,000 outpatients daily.³ However, while the physical infrastructure grew, the real story was in the digital layer being embedded alongside it.

AI now supports nearly every step of the patient journey—from digital admissions and predictive alerts to infusion management, diagnostics, and mobile nursing stations. The hospital even partnered with the Tsinghua Academy of Arts and Design to incorporate "healing architecture," merging technology with cultural aesthetics for a more human-centered experience.

This is not a case of slapping AI on top of a legacy system. This is a full rethinking of what a hospital can be when clinical need, AI capability, and design philosophy converge.

DeepSeek: The other half of China's AI Hospital story

While Tsinghua is building a top-down, integrated model, another player is influencing the healthcare landscape from the ground up. DeepSeek AI, an open-source medical LLM developed in China, has taken a localized deployment approach.⁴ Taking this approach, its models are embedded in the intranets of more than 260 hospitals across 93.5% of China's provinces.

This model ensures patient data never leaves hospital firewalls, solving major data privacy and compliance concerns. And it's working. In cities like Shanghai, Shenzhen, and Chengdu, DeepSeek is already assisting physicians with:

- Automated pathology and slide analysis
- Rare disease screening and real-time clinical decision support
- Intelligent triage and symptom parsing for patients
- AI-generated medical documentation

At Ruijin Hospital, DeepSeek handles 3,000 pathological slides per day. At Chengdu First People's Hospital, it's powering telemedicine and chronic disease management.⁵ The Jinshan Branch of Shanghai Sixth Hospital has even integrated real-time AI workstations that reduce misdiagnosis risk.

Despite such deployments, only 0.7% of China's national healthcare system has adopted these AI models. This figure hints at immense potential but also underscores a growing divide. While urban centers push ahead, rural and underfunded hospitals risk being left behind.

The Bigger Picture: AI + Healthcare is a strategic imperative

The parallel evolution of Agent Hospital and DeepSeek reflects two paths toward the same goal: scalable, sustainable, and smarter healthcare. Tsinghua's Agent Hospital aims to build a new blueprint for integrated care, while DeepSeek is retrofitting intelligence into existing infrastructure.

Both are rooted in China's broader industrial strategy, where AI isn't simply a tool—it's a national priority. Healthcare is among the most critical applications, especially in the face of a growing elderly population, physician shortages, and uneven access to quality care.

Yet questions remain. Can we trust AI doctors to make clinical decisions? Will rural hospitals get left behind? Are current medical regulations equipped to manage non-human practitioners?

Answers are still unfolding, but one thing is clear: China isn't waiting around. The country isn't just theorizing the role of AI in healthcare—it's building it, hospital by hospital, model by model.

Minutes of the 2165th RCM of RC Calcutta Jadavpur held on January 21, 2026 at Casa Broadway, Kolkata at 6.30 PM.

President Rtn. Sudipta Kundu called the meeting to order and welcomed the members present.

- National Anthem was led by Rtn. Manas Kumar Ghosh and joined by all.
- President Rtn. Sudipta briefly talked about the projects that have been carried out, in between:
 - On January 08, 2026, students and teachers from Santospur Rishi Arobindo Balika Vidyapith visited the LBC help desk at SSKM Hospital and spent time with the kids admitted over there. It was an excellent opportunity for the team to interact with the kids and both the sides were very happy and shared lots of cheerful moments together. The visitors distributed few goodies to the kids there.

- On January 17, 2026, RC Calcutta Jadavpur conducted a Science Club at Udbhas, led by Rtn. (Dr.) Dipankar Chakraborti which was participated by PP Rtn. (Dr.) Kunal Ray, Rtn. (Dr.) Jharna Ray. Although, only few students were present, it was a very interactive and engrossing session. The kids as well as the attendees thoroughly enjoyed the session conducted.
- Again on January 17, 2026, the club donated some teaching aids and equipment to the play school at Kumirmari Island, Sundarbans led by IPP Rtn. (Dr.) Mainak Sengupta. The club also distributed 50 blankets to some of underprivileged residents at the precincts, for the winter season. Rtn. Manas K. Ghosh, Rtn. Soumya Chattopadhyay, Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir and himself took part in the projects.
- The next batch of Beautician Training course at Sarenga Village and also the next batch of Tailoring Training course at Sarenga Village are progressing satisfactorily.
- The Graphic Designing course at Santospur Rishi Arobindo Balika Vidyapith is going on, led by Rtn. Subrata Kundu.
- Further, President Rtn. Sudipta announced a few upcoming projects and requested the members to make it convenient to participate.
- On January 24, 2026, the club will conduct an educational tour of Raj Bhawan with teachers and students of Childrens' Welfare Association High School for Girls, Sarsuna, Behala, Kolkata.
- The proposed cervical cancer vaccination at the Sri Ramkrishno Ananda Ashram Girls High School at Naktala, would be conducted in early February 2026. All necessary arrangements for the same have already been made and the project will be conducted once the date is finalised.
- The club's annual picnic is scheduled on February 01, 2026 at PP Rtn. Jaydeb Banerjee's farm house at Panchla, Howrah. Members are requested to participate in numbers.
- On February 08, the club proposes to organise a cricket match for the fellow members. The logistics for the same will be arranged by the members for which the details will be shared soon.
- RC Calcutta Jadavpur intends to extend support to the home for street children at Kalikapur, Kolkata by providing monthly monetary support for a teacher to teach the students over there. Monthly contribution would partially be provided by Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Mir for the rest of the Rotary Year.
- **Update on District Conference:** The event was attended by PP Rtn. Jaydeb Banerjee, PP Rtn. Gautam Chakravarty, Honorary Member Rtn. Samirendu Dutt, PP Rtn. Partha Sarathi Sarkar, PP Rtn. (Dr.) Kunal Ray, Rtn. (Dr.) Jharna Ray, Rtn. Manas K. Ghosh and himself. The audiovisual presentation on thalassaemia, prepared by Rtn. Subrata Kundu was displayed in course of the event and was applauded by the attendees.
- **Regarding LBC Fund Raiser Program:** Upon request of President Rtn. Sudipta, Rtn. (Dr.) Kunal Ray talked briefly about the upcoming LBC Fund Raiser to be held on February 15, 2026 at Rabindra Sadan and encouraged members to be present for the event and also to donate generously for the cause. After a brief discussion about whether to be the lead host this year for the event, it was concluded that LBC being one of the signature projects of the club, it would continue being one of the lead hosts for the event. Fellow members were requested to donate generously to be able to arrange the designated amount needed for deposit for the same preferably within February 10, 2026.

Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir conducted the club business and extended birthday greetings to Rtn. Rajarshi Ranjan Maity falling on January 27 & Rtn. Sayoni Ganguly falling on February 03. Further, he extended anniversary greetings to Rtn. Soumya Chattopadhyay & Ms. Anwesa Roy falling on January 24, Rtn. Koyeli Dutt & Mr. Anshuman Dutt falling on January 26, IPP Rtn. (Dr.) Mainak Sengupta & Dr. Sampurna Sengupta falling on January 29, Rtn. (Dr.) Soma Banerjee & Mr. Ranjan Banerjee and PP Rtn. Swapan Chakraborty & Ms. Sephali Chakraborty both falling on January 30.

- Minutes of the 2164th meeting, was confirmed by the members present and the meeting was concluded, with thanks to everyone.