



HOLGER KNAACK
Trustee Chair 2025-26

Trustee Chair's Message February 2026

February is Peacebuilding and Conflict Prevention Month, a perfect time to reflect on The Rotary Foundation's mission to advance world understanding, goodwill, and peace. Whether improving health, supporting education, or alleviating poverty, peace is at the heart of everything Rotary does.

Rotary Peace Centers bring our ideals into the world by training the next generation of peacebuilders. Since 2002, more than 1,800 Rotary Peace Fellows have become catalysts for peace in over 140 countries.

I am often asked whether our peace fellows continue working for peace after their studies. The answer is a resounding yes. Many serve in United Nations agencies, governments, nongovernmental organizations, and groups they've founded themselves.

Recently, I met with the recipients of our latest Programs of Scale award, Pathways to Peace and Prosperity in Colombia. This \$3 million partnership with the World Food Programme is establishing four peace hubs that will train 1,000 people in conflict resolution and support 700 entrepreneurs in communities touched by conflict.

During the meeting, I thought I recognized one participant as Brigitta von Messling, a German peace fellow I worked closely with in Berlin 13 years ago. But so much time had passed I wasn't sure. When I asked **Gladys Maldonado**, a leader of the Colombia initiative, she confirmed it was Brigitta:

Brigitta is based in my city, Cúcuta, and is an active member of my Rotary club. She does wonderful work with the United Nations as an observer of the 2016 peace agreement Colombia signed with rebels. She even travels to remote locations in the Catatumbo region, an area of northern Colombia that has experienced violence by armed groups.

She has my utmost admiration. I had the good fortune of meeting her three years ago. She's incredibly intelligent, with a gift for recognizing the strengths of others.

Brigitta is invaluable to my country, my city, and my Rotary club. She connected me with the World Food Programme so we could build the Programs of Scale project, which has filled my city and country with hope.

What Gladys said about Brigitta echoes so many stories we hear about Rotary Peace Fellows worldwide: They are invaluable. They remind us that peace is built one person at a time.

Your support of The Rotary Foundation opens countless opportunities for transformation.



Room 711

Is now a Rotary SHRINE

<https://rghf.org>



Where Rotary was born – February 23, 1905

The rain beat down on 127 N. Dearborn Street on November 15, 1983, as 100 Rotarians and wives crowded the 7th floor hallway of Chicago's Unity Building. Before them was the office of mining engineer Gus Loehr: Room 711. Here on February 23, 1905, lawyer Paul Harris met with Gustave Loehr, coal dealer Sylvester Schiele, and merchant tailor Hiram Shorey to create the world's first Rotary club.

ROOM 711 is now a Rotary SHRINE Twenty-two Chicago Rotarians had formed an Illinois corporation to save Room 711 as a Rotary shrine. Illinois Governor James Thompson sent a proclamation of good wishes, and Rotarian Max Bloom scissored the ceremonial ribbon.

Guests marveled at the room decorated with antiques and office equipment from the turn of the century: a roll-top desk, an early Dictaphone and check writer, a spittoon, and a Chicago Tribune dated February 23, 1905. One founding member observed that "the Paul Harris 711 Club is not a Rotary Club, but a group of Rotarians interested in preserving the cradle of Rotary.

The landmark will be maintained by Rotarian support around the world." "This room lives," the Rotarian Magazine stated. "It's more than wood and plaster. One can feel the presence of Rotary founders. Here, Rotarians can stand, think about our rich heritage, and say, "This is where it all began.'"

In 2014, the "room" was moved to RI's first floor museum.

Rotarians past and present, spouses, and others committed to the concept, ideals, and history of Rotary International who join the Paul Harris 711 Club understand that they are not joining a Rotary Club, but a corporation devoted to preserving and maintaining the place where Rotary and the entire worldwide service club movement was born on February 23, 1905. The Paul Harris 711 Club also supports the Rotary International Archives where historic Rotary artifacts, photographs, and documents are preserved.

Paul Harris 711 Club

– Mission Statement

The mission of the Paul Harris 711 Club is to assist in preserving the Room which is the birthplace of Rotary International and the cradle of the worldwide movement of service clubs comprised of business and professional leaders.

– Objectives

1. Foster research to keep alive the fellowship and mutual friendships created by those men who first met in Room 711 of Chicago's Unity Building on February 23, 1905;
2. Encourage Rotarians, other service club members, and the general public to recognize and honor Rotary International and other service clubs as pioneers of community volunteerism and global humanitarianism; and
3. Advocate and promote the collection and conservation of Rotary's history, heritage, and artifacts; and encourage similar activity by others devoted to the preservation, growth, and appreciation of the service club movement.

The first four Rotarians



From left: Gustavus Loehr, Silvester Schiele, Hiram E. Shorey, Paul P. Harris.

On 23 February 1905, Paul P. Harris, Gustavus Loehr, Silvester Schiele and Hiram E. Shorey gathered in Loehr's office for what would become known as the first Rotary club meeting.

Invest in development to bring peace, lift people out of poverty in conflict-ridden places: UN

Flagging that two-thirds of SDG targets off-track, the UN Secretary-General proposed debt relief for developing countries who are caught in the debt-servicing trap, among other measures

www.downtoearth.org.in :: June 20, 2025

By: DTE Staff



Investments should focus on food security, education, healthcare, livelihood generation and social protection.

Conflict and poverty have a close and cyclical relationship. Conflict directly impacts poverty and is also fed by it. Some 40 per cent of the 700 million people experiencing extreme poverty live in conflict-affected settings. Further, none out of 10 countries with the lowest Human Development Index are in a state of conflict currently.

To break this cycle, the world must prioritise investing in development, urged the United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres. “Poverty breeds despair. Despair fuels unrest. And unrest tears at the fabric of societies — feeding mistrust, fear and violence,” he said, speaking at the United Nations Security Council open debate on “Poverty, underdevelopment and conflict: Implications for the maintenance of international peace and security” in New York on June 19, 2025.

In places with slow development, malices such as inequality, corruption, human rights violations and terrorism thrive, and institutions are weakened, he added. Climate instabilities make it more challenging to effect a change.

The current conditions of taut global tensions are reversing gains, and things may become worse in the coming day, Guterres warned. “Conflicts are proliferating and lasting longer, displacing more than 120 million people from their homes — an unprecedented number of individuals with disrupted lives and futures.”

The scope for solutions is also shrinking amid “rampant geopolitical mistrust and divisions”, the Secretary-General added. If the current trends of economic slowdown, higher trade tensions, dwindling aid budgets and higher military spending continues, Guterres warned, two-thirds of the world’s population will be living in conflict-affected or fragile countries by 2030.

Investing in development, he said, is the best way to prevent conflict. “Development gives peace a fighting chance. It’s the first line of defence against conflict. But, right now, we’re losing ground. After decades of steady progress, we’re facing a development emergency.”

It has been a decade since the world adopted the UN-mandated Sustainable Development Goals. But a shocking two-thirds of the targets to achieve these goals are off-track, pointed out Guterres. “The world is falling short by over \$4 trillion annually in the resources developing countries need to deliver on these promises by 2030.”

He highlighted the financial challenges developing countries are already grappling with, as they feel the urgent need to develop. These include “limited fiscal space, crushing debt burdens and skyrocketing prices”.

He called for countries to renew their domestic and global commitments at the upcoming fourth Conference on Financing for Development. This will be needed to channel public and private finance to areas of most need.

He also advocated for urgent debt relief for countries stuck in a debt servicing trap and reshaping the global finance architecture to be more attuned to the realities and needs of developing countries.

Investments should focus on food security, education, healthcare, livelihood generation and social protection, he opined. For meeting climate goals, he proposed strengthening of green technology and extreme weather resilience. He also prescribed more equitable mobility, food, water and internet access and governance systems that are just and trustworthy. These, he stressed, are the pathways to bring peace and address poverty.

Happy Birthday

PP Rtn. Partha Sarathi Sarkar
falling on February 23

Ms. Rita Chanda w/o Rtn. Bhaskar Chanda
falling on February 28

Rtn. (Dr.) Soma Banerjee
falling on March 03

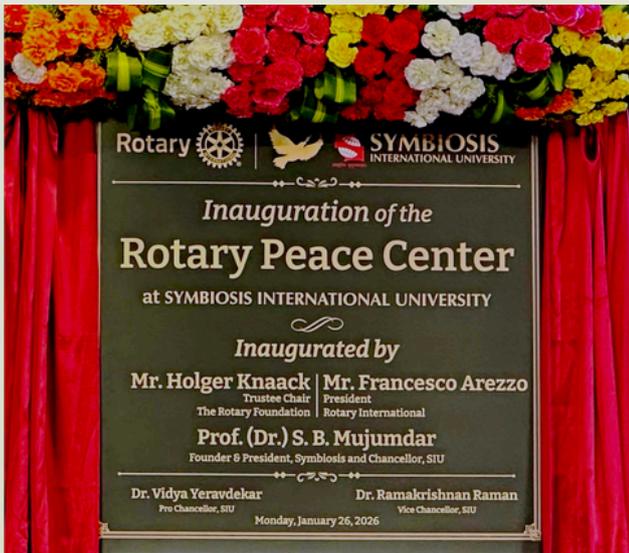
Happy Anniversary

Ms. Devjani Kumar & Honorary Member Rtn. Debasish Kumar
falling on February 18

Ms. Rakhi Sarkar & PP Rtn. Partha Sarathi Sarkar
falling on February 20

Ms. Anju Tibrewal & Rtn. Anup Tibrewal
falling on February 28

Ms. Sharmistha Kundu & Rtn. Subrata Kundu
falling on March 03



The inauguration of the 8. Rotary Peace Center at Symbiosis International University in Pune, India, The inauguration of the 8. Rotary Peace Center at Symbiosis International University in Pune, India,

Minutes of the 2166th RCM of RC Calcutta Jadavpur held on February 05, 2026 at Casa Broadway, Kolkata at 6.30 PM.

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

- National Anthem was led by Rtn. Shakhi Banerjee and joined by all.
- Then, President Rtn. Sudipta briefly talked about the projects that have been carried out, in between:
 - That on January 24, 2026, RC Calcutta Jadavpur conducted an educational tour of Raj Bhavan with teachers and students of Childrens' Welfare Association High School for Girls, Sarsuna, Kolkata. The club was represented by Rtn. Jayatee Biswas and Rtn. Sayoni Mukherjee.
 - The next batch of beautician and tailoring training courses at Sarenga Village are progressing satisfactorily.
 - The graphic designing course at Santospur Rishi Arobindo Balika Vidyapith is also progressing, led by Rtn. Subrata Kundu.

- Further, President Rtn. Sudipta announced a few upcoming activities of the club:
 - That on February 06, 2026, RC Calcutta Jadavpur will conduct a Cervical Cancer Vaccination Camp at Sri Ramkrishno Ananda Ashram Girls High School, Naktala, in association with Naktala Setu Sanshkriti Sanstha. The project is being sponsored by RC Belur, under Global Grant Project. All necessary arrangements have already been made and members are requested to attend in numbers.
 - On February 13, the club will conduct a Glaucoma Camp, scheduled at Berachapa, North 24 Parganas, led by Rtn. (Dr.) Asim Sil. Members are requested to make it convenient to attend the program.
 - RC Calcutta Jadavpur will be extending support to the home for street children at Kalikapur, Kolkata and provide monthly monetary support by way of tuition fees for a teacher to teach the students over there. The said contribution will be partially be provided by Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir, for the remaining part of the RY 2025-26.
 - That due to non-availability of a turf, the proposed cricket match amongst the fellow members is being postponed till March 2026. Members will be informed in due time about the event.
- Regarding LBC Fund Raiser Program: Upon request of President Rtn. Sudipta, PP Rtn. Partha S. Sarkar briefly talked about the upcoming LBC Fund Raiser to be held on February 15, 2026 at Rabindra Sadan and requested members to be present for the event and also to donate generously and purchase tickets for the cause.
- Next, Rtn. Sayoni Ganguly was formally inducted by PDG Rtn. Prabir Chatterjee, whereafter she told that she is filled with a profound sense of pride and gratitude for becoming a part of the family and expressed her willingness to be involved in various projects and services, as much as she could, to serve the society. Further, she briefly narrated how exciting it was for the students and teachers touring Raj Bhavan and hoped to organise and be a part of this kind of projects in future.
- Next, PDG Rtn. Prabir Chatterjee addressed the gathering and congratulated Rtn. Sayoni Ganguly for becoming a part of this prestigious club of the District. He expressed his sincere appreciation for all the service projects that RC Calcutta Jadavpur has undertaken and offered his best wishes for the future activities. He also encouraged members to join the upcoming LBC fund raiser event on February 15, 2026.
- Secretary Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir conducted the club business and extended birthday greetings to Rtn. Jayatee Biswas falling on February 06, Ms. Sreyashi spouse of Rtn. Manoj Bhaumik falling on February 09 and Rtn. Anup Tibrewal falling on February 11. Further, he extended anniversary greetings to Ms. Krishnakoli & PP Rtn. (Dr.) Partha P. Roy falling on February 08, Ms. Protima Dutt & Honorary Member Rtn. Samirendu Dutt falling on February 10, Mr. Ashim Dutta & PP Rtn. Paromita Das Dutta falling on February 11, Dr. Koutilya Bhattacharyya & Rtn. (Dr.) Emili Banerjee falling on February 15.
- Minutes of the 2165th meeting, was confirmed by the members present and the same was concluded, with thanks to everyone.