



**"YOU ARE THE  
LIGHT  
OF THE WORLD..."**

RID 3291, Zone-16  
**Rotary**  
Garden Reach



**2345th RWM**

**UNITE FOR GOOD**  
Rotary 

**Peacebuilding & Conflict Resolution**

*Building Bridges Through Understanding*



— Listen  Empathize  Unite —

*Creating Peace, Restoring Hope*



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## Anniversary Greetings

Feb 11th : Spouse Sharmistha & PP Chinmay Pal

### Peace beyond Silence: The Rotary Path to Lasting Harmony

PP Tanu Roy

Peace is often understood as the absence of conflict, but in reality, it is far more demanding. True peace exists when people live with dignity, opportunity, and a sense of belonging. In India, many tensions arise not from visible violence, but from structural violence—deep-rooted inequalities in access to education, livelihoods, healthcare, and justice. These silent forces, if left unaddressed, gradually weaken social harmony.

India's experience shows us that sustainable peace cannot be imposed; it must be nurtured locally. Community-based mechanisms such as Panchayati Raj institutions, Lok Adalats, self-help groups, and civil society forums have long played a role in resolving disputes and restoring trust. These grassroots approaches succeed because they are rooted in dialogue, cultural understanding, and shared responsibility. When people feel heard and included, conflict loses its power.

At the heart of conflict resolution lies **mediation**—the art of listening with empathy. Mediation does not seek to erase differences, but to create safe spaces where disagreements can be expressed without fear and understood without judgement. In a diverse and often polarised society, the ability to facilitate respectful dialogue is one of the strongest tools for peace.

India's international posture increasingly emphasises dialogue, multilateralism, and inclusive growth. Its advocacy for the Global South at forums like the United Nations reinforces the idea that peace is inseparable from development and equity.

By championing diplomacy, humanitarian aid, and conflict prevention, world leaders can shape not just treaties—but mind sets.

World leaders, too, carry a critical responsibility. By choosing diplomacy over domination and inclusion over exclusion, they can address conflicts before they escalate. Policies that reduce inequality, strengthen institutions, and promote cooperation are not just political choices—they are peace interventions.

Yet peace does not begin in global forums alone. It begins in communities—and this is where Rotarians become protagonists. Through education, skill development, water and sanitation projects, youth engagement, and inter-community service, **Rotary International** addresses the root causes of conflict rather than merely responding to its symptoms. Rotarians serve as trusted bridges—across cultures, faiths, generations, and ideologies.

Peace is not passive. It is purposeful, patient, and deeply human. When Rotarians choose service over silence and dialogue over division, they help build a society where harmony is not accidental, but enduring.

#### A Call Rooted in Indian Values

India teaches us that peace is not passive tolerance—it is active harmony. It requires **listening across differences, correcting injustice, and serving consistently.**

As Rotarians, when we choose dialogue over division and service over silence, we step into our role as protagonists of peace. In a nation as diverse as ours, this may be our most meaningful service of all.



PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION



DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT



WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE



MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



ENVIRONMENT



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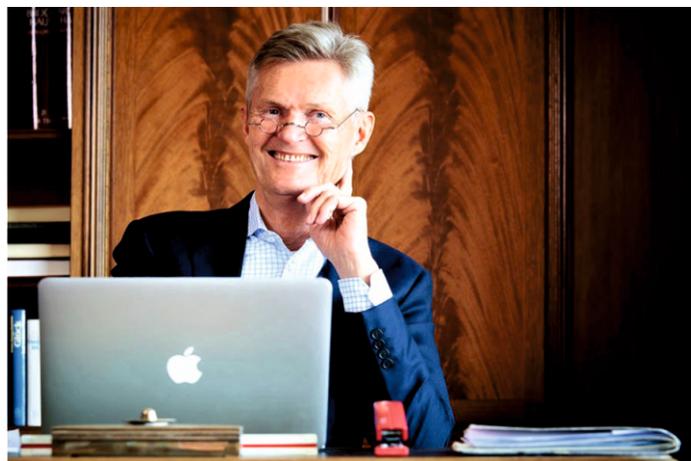
## Building Peace at Scale

Holger Knaack, TRF Trustee Chair

February is Peace building 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 peace builders. 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 organisations, 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 recognised 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 recognising 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.



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*The Festival Cricket Match was conducted with remarkable enthusiasm, meticulous planning, and exemplary coordination by the leadership of Rtn. Amartya Chakravarty and Rtn. Bandaru Mohan along with their respective Clubs on February 8th, 2026 at Calcutta Rangers Club, Maidan. The event stood as a shining example of Rotary fellowship, spirited camaraderie, and true sportsmanship.*

*The match witnessed vibrant participation, competitive yet friendly gameplay, and an atmosphere filled with energy and goodwill. Every aspect of the event — from team coordination to on-field management — reflected thoughtful preparation and seamless execution.*



*A special note of appreciation is extended to our gracious First Lady Spouse Gopa and Club President Rtn. Bandaru Mohan for their exceptional hospitality at the Calcutta Rangers Club. The elegant venue, well-organised arrangements, and warm reception significantly enhanced the overall experience, making the occasion both delightful and memorable for all attendees.*

- **Best Batsman: Mr. Rajdeep Paul** – for his commanding performance, confident stroke play, and match-defining contribution.
- **Best Bowler: PRID Anirudha Roychowdhury** – for his disciplined line and length, strategic brilliance, and impactful bowling spell.
- **Rotary Calcutta Mega City was the worthy Champions.**

*The Festival Cricket Match not only celebrated sporting excellence but also strengthened inter-club fellowship and reinforced the enduring bonds that Rotary represents.*

*Such well-executed initiatives continue to inspire collaboration and unity. We look forward to many more engaging and impactful events in the future.*



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**BELIEVE  
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## Alumni Honouree works to transform mindsets in Peace-building efforts

As a child during Sri Lanka’s 26-year civil war, Pushpi Weerakoon planned to become a lawyer. “I was born into a civil conflict, walked minutes away from bomb blasts, and saw parents of my schoolmates killed,” Weerakoon said. “From a very early stage, I understood the cost of conflict, and I knew I had to do something about it.”



In 1999, with Sri Lanka a member of the British Commonwealth, Weerakoon headed to the University of Buckingham in the UK. There she earned a bachelor of law and a postgraduate diploma in international and commercial law.

Weerakoon fully intended to continue traveling down the barrister’s path, but nature intervened. She was visiting Sri Lanka from England when, on 26 December 2004, an earthquake erupted beneath the Indian Ocean off the northwest coast of Sumatra, an Indonesian island. The most powerful earthquake ever recorded in Asia and one of the deadliest natural disasters in history, it spawned a monumental tsunami that hit Sri Lanka and more than a dozen other countries and left more than 220,000 people dead.

Moved by the devastation, she began volunteering with groups to help survivors. The director of the country’s Alternative Dispute Resolution Institute asked her to train grassroots leaders in mediation, drawing on her law education. “After the tsunami,” Weerakoon explained, “so many small claims clogged up the main court system.” It was hoped that

those newly trained leaders could help resolve contentious issues in Sri Lanka’s well-established community-based mediation boards.

She travelled throughout the country holding mediation workshops for three weeks of every month for two years. Because the country was approaching the final stages of the civil war, she was accompanied by members of the military into high security zones.

“Remember,” she said, “I was trained to be a lawyer, where you think in terms of black and white and then punishment.” But in a situation where combatants on both sides think they’re right, Weerakoon continued, “that’s not a matter of black and white. It’s a matter of transforming mindsets, about opening up and sharing thoughts and values and ideas — and the law doesn’t exactly help that.

“With that thought, I came back home and that was it; I decided I’m not going to be a traditional lawyer.”

What followed were years of additional study and an impressive aggregation of degrees on her way to becoming an internationally respected peace-builder, supported by Rotary at multiple steps along the way. She received an MBA from the University of Wales, a master’s in conflict transformation at Eastern Mennonite University (with the help of a Rotary Ambassadorial Scholarship), a master’s in public administration from the John F. Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, and a PhD in peace and conflict studies at the University for Peace.

She also studied at the Rotary Peace Centre at Chulalongkorn University in Bangkok, earning a diploma in peace studies and conflict resolution. “Chula was very hands-on,” said Weerakoon, clearly impressed with the peace centre program. “It’s not this theory and that theory. It was very practical: If it’s a class on mediation, you sit down and actually mediate.” There were also trips in the field where peace fellows interacted with Indigenous people whose lives and livelihoods were threatened by plans for a hydroelectric dam. “What Rotary exposed me to was like gold,” she said. “The experience to see it, and then now having to actually do it.”

For the last nine years, Weerakoon has worked at the United Nations International Organization for Migration, where she has taken leading roles not only in Sri Lanka, but in such far-ranging destinations as El Salvador, the Bahamas, and Micronesia, mediating disputes, supporting disaster recovery, and combating sexual violence. In Bangladesh, home to



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PEACEBUILDING AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

Kutupalong, the largest refugee settlement in the world, Weerakoon served as IOM's refugee support officer. In that capacity she helped design a social cohesion strategy and coordinated efforts to address the Rohingya refugee crisis. In June, Weerakoon was honoured for her work with the Rotary Alumni Global Service Award at the Rotary International Convention in Calgary. During her seven-minute speech, **she challenged Rotary members to ensure that graduating peace fellows have the resources to best employ their newly acquired skills. "Rotary does not just spark change," she said. "It cultivates generations of it. Let's make sure we have the valuable insights from the post-fellow fraternity ... that will help Rotary build a mechanism to continue to carry the legacy forward."**



DISEASE PREVENTION & TREATMENT

Her speech offered only hints of the things she has accomplished as an internationally respected peace-builder. Instead, she emphasized how Rotary had been there for her at each step of her life's journey. "What Rotary gave me wasn't just scholarships," she said. "It was a family, a belonging. It was the certainty that, no matter where I am, I would not be alone."

## Ribbon of Commitment

### Bharat Pandya, TRF Trustee



WATER, SANITATION & HYGIENE

Ask 10 people why they give to The Rotary Foundation, and you will get 10 different answers ranging from "to help the needy"; "I want to share" to "the feel-good factor" and more. One thread runs through all answers — Giving allows you to look beyond yourself. Giving brings you love, joy, happiness, inner peace and self-worth. It expands your horizon and exposes you to a different way of thinking and an altruistic way of living.



MATERNAL & CHILD HEALTH



Giving to The Rotary Foundation is a way to support service projects around the world and in your own community addressing some of the world's most critical challenges. In fact, TRF allows you to contribute to a vast, highly efficient global network of community volunteers (Rotarians) who are dedicated to 'Doing Good in the World'.



BASIC EDUCATION & LITERACY

We give to TRF to fulfil our promise of eradicating polio. The journey has been long and challenging, but today we

are closer than ever to a polio-free world. This is the time to redouble our efforts. Because the End Polio Now campaign is not just about raising money; but it is about children receiving drops of vaccine across the world... and ensuring that future generations of children will be free from polio forever.



COMMUNITY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Supporting the Annual Fund today allows us to do global grants tomorrow. During the past 107 years, the Foundation has spent over \$5 billion on life-changing, sustainable projects.

Supporting the Endowment Fund ensures a bright tomorrow for our Rotary Foundation. By increasing our endowment, we can ensure that Rotary can do good in the world well beyond our lifetime.

My friends, when we give to TRF we do not know who will benefit from our giving, and in which part of the world. But one thing is sure that the blessings of the beneficiary will come back to you again and again.



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Thank you, dear readers, for your dedication to Rotary. Rotary members like you are the heart of our organisation, and your acts of caring, kindness and generosity play an essential role in advancing TRF's mission. So here I am with a bouquet of thanks for your support; but I am also here with a ribbon to remind you of your on-going commitment and hope that you will give to TRF again this year and every year.



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## **Minutes of the 2344th RWM held on February 3rd, 2026 at BNR Officers' Club, Garden Reach**

1. The President Bandaru called the meeting to order & requested all members to rise for the National Anthem.
2. In the absence of the Club Secretary, PN Shubhayan Sengupta, secretarial duties were conducted by PP Mousumi Bhattacharyya.
3. The President informed members that a Festival Cricket Match between Rotary Calcutta Megacity and Rotary Garden Reach will be held on February 8th, 2026 at the Calcutta Rangers Club ground, as the BNR ground is unavailable.  
Team Captain: PP Sanjay Bhatt, Chairman (Cricket Match): Rtn. Santosh Singh.
4. Medical Camp will be conducted on February 15th, 2026 at Matua Mission, Kalikapur from 10 am onwards. Expected patients: approx. 150; Tests: General hygiene check-up, BP, Blood Sugar, ECG (by Balananda Hospital); Eye check-up: Susrut Eye Foundation; Medicines: To be procured by Rtn. Amar Saha.  
Doctors: Balananda Hospital and club members.
5. Another medical camp will be organised jointly with Rotary Budge Budge on February 22nd, 2026 for Malis and Support staffs of Maidan sports clubs (similar to last year).  
Dental Check-up: Conducted by Rotary Budge Budge doctors. General Medicine, Cardiology, and Sugar & BP: Balananda Hospital; Eye Check-up: Susrut Eye Foundation.
6. The 7th Board Meeting will be held on February 24th, 2026 at BNROC, subject to the venue's availability.
7. President-elect Dr. BN Jha announced the Board and Sub-Committees for the Rotary Year 2026–27, which were intimated to all members.
8. Acting-secretary PP Mousumi conducted the club business.
9. President Bandaru confirmed the minutes of the last meeting and terminated the meeting.



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WE MEET EVERY TUESDAY AT 7.30 P.M. AT B.N.R. OFFICERS' CLUB, GARDEN REACH, KOLKATA - 700 043

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