



JANUARY IS VOCATIONAL SERVICE MONTH



VOCATIONAL SERVICES GIVE ROTARIANS THE OPPORTUNITY TO HELP OTHERS ESCAPE POVERTY AND GAIN A MEASURE OF SELF-RESPECT. AS BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL LEADERS, WE HAVE A DUTY TO LEAD AND ENCOURAGE GOOD ETHICS THROUGH VOCATION.

RID 3291
Rotary
Garden Reach



Light

WEEKLY NEWS LETTER

January 28th, 2025 - Vol. 47 No. 27

2298th Regular Weekly Meeting
Vocational Excellence Awards
Attendance: 23

Birthday Greetings
Jan 28th : Ayush, Son of Rtn. Tamal Ray

Anniversary Greetings
Jan 28th : Spouse Arundhati & PP Tanu Roy
Jan 31st : Spouse Kanika & Rtn. Dr. Subrata Lahiri
Spouse Priyanka & President Biswajit Saha

Kumbh Mela

In the Ashtam Ashtak of the Rigveda, it is written that one who travels during the auspicious period may cleanse themselves of their earthly sins with good deeds, charity, and piety. The poet Kabir wrote of Kumbh as a metaphor for the body:

[The atmatatv, the human soul, is inherited in the pitcher, Kumbh, of the body. When the body is broken, it is reunited with the parmatv tatv, in transcendent absolute truth.]

To Kabir, the Kumbh is a time to fill up one's pitcher-being with intellect and self-realisation. The Kumbh Mela is not just about individual spirituality; it's also a communal experience that emphasizes the importance of sangha, or spiritual community. Participating in group rituals, singing bhajans (devotional songs), and engaging in communal prayers and meditations amplify the spiritual experience. These collective activities reinforce the sense of belonging to a larger spiritual family and the realization that the journey towards enlightenment is shared, not solitary. Moreover, the teachings and gatherings at Kumbh Mela often emphasize the importance of **Seva** (selfless service). Many pilgrims engage in acts of charity and volunteerism during the festival, serving food, providing medical aid, or helping with crowd management. This emphasis on selfless service as a spiritual practice can profoundly impact individuals, highlighting the path of **Karma Yoga** (the yoga of action) as a means to spiritual growth and fulfilment.



Impact on Societal Norms and Values:

The festival has a profound impact on societal norms and values. It promotes the spirit of charity and community service, as seen in the massive free kitchens (langars) run by various organizations, serving meals to millions of pilgrims regardless of their social status.

The Kumbh Mela also reinforces the values of religious tolerance and harmony, as people from different faiths and beliefs come together in a shared pursuit of spirituality.

Social Dynamics and Transformation:

The festival also reflects the social dynamics and transformation within Indian society. It brings to the forefront various social issues such as the need for environmental conservation, healthcare, and sanitation. Many non-governmental organizations and social groups utilize this congregation to spread awareness and initiate social campaigns, contributing to the broader social welfare and consciousness.

In essence, the Kumbh Mela is a microcosm of Indian society, encapsulating its cultural richness, social complexities, and spiritual depth. It's a festival where cultural heritage is celebrated, social bonds are strengthened, and the collective consciousness is elevated, making it an integral part of the social and cultural fabric of India.

Preservation and Promotion of Traditional Arts and Crafts:

The Kumbh Mela is also a vibrant space for the preservation and promotion of traditional arts and crafts. Artisans and craftsmen from across the country gather to display and sell their unique creations, ranging from intricate handlooms, pottery, and jewellery to various traditional handicrafts.

This not only helps in sustaining the livelihood of these artisans but also plays a crucial role in keeping the rich heritage of Indian handicrafts alive.

Cultural Exchange and Learning:

The Kumbh Mela acts as a platform for cultural exchange and learning. Scholars, researchers, and tourists from around the world visit the festival, not just as observers but as participants, eager to learn about and experience the cultural and spiritual traditions of India. This exchange fosters mutual respect and understanding, bridging cultural gaps and promoting global harmony.

Social Cohesion and Unity

The Maha Kumbh Mela also fosters a sense of social cohesion and unity among the participants. Despite the vast crowds and the diversity of people attending, the festival is marked by a spirit of harmony and mutual respect. The shared experience of spiritual devotion and the collective participation in rituals create a bond among the attendees, transcending social, economic, and cultural barriers. This sense of unity is particularly significant in a country as diverse as India, where such events help reinforce the idea of a shared cultural and spiritual heritage.

The Kumbh Mela provides a platform for charitable activities and social service. Many religious organizations and ashrams (spiritual retreats) set up free food stalls, medical camps, and shelters for the pilgrims. These acts of generosity and service underscore the social responsibility that is integral to the festival, highlighting the importance of compassion and community support.

As we conclude, it's evident that the Kumbh Mela is not merely an event; it's a celebration of life, faith, and unity. It encapsulates the essence of human spirit, resilience, and togetherness, reminding us of the shared values and collective conscience that bind us all. Kumbh Mela continues to flow like the timeless rivers on whose banks it is celebrated—evolving, nurturing, and uniting.



PEACE AND CONFLICT
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT



WATER AND
SANITATION



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND
LITERACY



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT



SUPPORTING THE
ENVIRONMENT

Rotary's response to US's plan to withdraw from World Health Organization

Rotary notes the recent announcement that the United States intends to withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO), a partner in the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI). We remain resolute in our mission to eradicate polio. As a founding partner of the GPEI, Rotary has for decades worked closely with all the GPEI partners, the US government, and other governments to end polio worldwide. This effort has reduced the number of children paralyzed by polio by 99.9% since 1988. The global effort to eradicate polio has innovated many times over the years to come close to protecting every last child.

Although this decision creates new challenges, Rotary remains dedicated to ensuring that every child is protected from this preventable disease. We are confident that the GPEI will continue to adapt, to innovate, and to implement effective strategies to keep polio vaccines available for every child in the United States and around the world, especially those in the most challenging and remote regions. The most important decisions leading to a polio-free world are made every day by parents who present their children for vaccination.

We remain committed to working with all GPEI partners to fulfil the promise of a polio-free world. Together, we have ended smallpox, and together, we can ensure that polio becomes the second human disease to be eradicated from the planet.

How we increased Major Donors by 50 percent

Maurizio Mantovani, Endowment/Major Gift Advisor

It was a special day for The Rotary Foundation in Italy on 1 July 2024. At the launch, all incoming governors were recognized as Major Donors. This remarkable achievement was the culmination of an extraordinary two-year period, during which there was a 53% increase in the number of Major Donors in Italy and an impressive 87% growth in Legacy Gifts.

But this was not a random result. It was the outcome of relentless effort, a well-defined strategy, and a collective commitment involving numerous Rotarians, teams, and professional fundraising staff from Zurich. Step by step, we built a path that led to a shift in the culture of giving and strong mobilization around the Foundation's cause. Along this journey, there were challenges and difficulties, but also many satisfactions and valuable lessons learned.

1. The strength of the team

A key contributor to success was the team we built. At the start of my tenure, I quickly realized that fundraising in Italy could not rest solely on the shoulders of the endowment/major gift adviser or the regional Rotary Foundation coordinators. Instead, it had to become a shared commitment embraced by a broader network of individuals actively present in the field to represent the Foundation's voice in clubs and among members who never attend international, national, or other meetings.

Building on what had already proven to be a winning idea from my predecessor, I created a large, well-structured team that could ensure continuity. Each district has its own representative dedicated to Major Gifts and the Endowment Fund, and these representatives began working with me as a team. With regular training sessions, clear and measurable objectives, and consistent monthly monitoring, this team became an integral part of our strategy and success.

2. The key role of District Governor

District governors in Rotary are figures of great authority. Their influence and direct support are essential to motivating clubs and, above all, encouraging members to actively engage with the Foundation. The governor's example is a powerful source of inspiration: through their actions and decisions about the team supporting them in the district, they can significantly impact the growth of fundraising efforts.

Meeting governors during their governor-nominee and governor-elect years, attending seminars at Rotary Institutes, and having the opportunity to discuss with them as an E/MGA the necessity of appointing specific district representatives for Major Gifts were crucial steps.

Governor involvement increased significantly during this period. So much so that the newly started Rotary year began with the participation of all Italian governors, who have now all become Major Donors.

3. Cultivating relationships: targeted events and concrete actions

Major Donors, even those who contribute significantly, often lack sufficient opportunities to connect with the Foundation, learn more about its work, and reinforce their commitment and the reasons that initially drove them to give.

We decided to organize an annual National Summit for Major Donors and Bequest Society members in Italy. This regular event provides donors with the opportunity to meet, engage with peers, hear the stories of other supporters, receive direct updates from the Foundation, and listen to contributions from the organization's senior leaders. It has now become a cornerstone event, a must-attend for Italian Major Donors. Many attendees often bring along friends and loyal supporters of the Foundation, who, in turn, are inspired to give themselves, creating a virtuous and fruitful cycle of





PEACE AND CONFLICT
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT



WATER AND
SANITATION



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND
LITERACY



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT



SUPPORTING THE
ENVIRONMENT

generosity.

4. The importance of Rotary staff

Fundraising is a complex activity that requires specific and cross-functional skills. I am very grateful for the qualified and professional support I received from the staff in Zurich, the Italian Major Gifts Officer, as well as the staff in Evanston. My personal advice to the E/MGAs who will undertake this extraordinary role is to make the most of the opportunity and build a strong, structured partnership with the staff, so that the plans and efforts in the field are translated into concrete results.

5. Maintaining focus on goals and celebrating achievements

Setting clear and measurable goals for each year, as well as for the entire three-year period, is essential to keep the team focused, monitor progress, and adjust the course when necessary. When I started my assignment, I set myself the goal of recruiting 50 new Major Donors each year. I succeeded and even surpassed this target.

For the third year, we decided to raise the bar. Our goal is to organize a **“One Million Dollar Lunch,”** scheduled for May 2025. The team is motivated and ready to achieve this goal, and I am excited to celebrate our success soon!

Vocational Excellence Citations Awardees

Srimati Munmun Ray



It is with profound respect and admiration that Rotary Garden Reach present this Vocational Excellence Citation to Munmun Ray and the dedicated team of Ramakrishna Gayatri Sevashram at Dongaria Village, South 24 Parganas, for their exceptional and unwavering commitment to uplifting and educating poor and destitute children in the community. Through the inspiring efforts of Ramakrishna Gayatri Sevashram, she has provided these children not only with access to education but with a nurturing environment that fosters their passion, potential, and hope for a better future.

In recognition of her Service above Self, tireless dedication, and unwavering passion for the cause of educating and uplifting the lives of poor and destitute children, Rotary Garden Reach honours Munmun Ray and the entire team at Ramakrishna Gayatri Sevashram for their exceptional work and their lasting impact on the community of Dongaria Village.

Ramanna Rao



It is with great admiration and recognition Rotary Garden Reach presents the Vocational Excellence Citation to Ramanna Rao, whose exceptional commitment and tireless efforts in the field of environmental conservation have left a profound impact on the Garden Reach area. Over the past two years, he has dedicated himself to planting 2000 trees, significantly contributing to the greening of the region and improving the quality of life for its residents.

His passion for nature and his unwavering belief in the power of environmental restoration have driven him to take action, transforming barren spaces into lush, green landscapes. What sets Ramanna apart is not just the sheer number of trees he has planted, but the care and thoughtfulness with which he approaches each planting. He has taken the time to educate the local community about the importance of trees, and his efforts have inspired many to follow in his footsteps. His work serves as a reminder of the power of individual action in addressing environmental challenges.

Rotary Garden Reach honours Ramanna Rao, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to Environmental Conservation and his dedication to making the world a greener, healthier place.





PEACE AND CONFLICT
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT



WATER AND
SANITATION



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND
LITERACY



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT



SUPPORTING THE
ENVIRONMENT

Only India can usher in global peace

India is well-positioned to take on the leadership role in ushering in global peace as “the world is witnessing an unprecedented upheaval with violence, conflicts, economic inequalities, environmental crises and technological disruptions which have led to a deadly cocktail” that puts humanity in peril, said Palki Sharma Upadhyay, TV journalist and editor, Firstpost YouTube channel.

Speaking at a session titled ‘Rotary brings peace,’ at the Kochi Institute, she gave a vivid description of the uncertainty plaguing the world. “We need to address the systemic breakdown in the global order, and India as the leader of Global South has the immense potential to lead the world in navigating through wars, economic disparities and disruptions caused by AI and other emerging technologies,” she said. The raging Ukraine war since 2022 had resulted in global disarray as it affected the energy markets, food supplies, and led to over 30 million people displaced in Europe, the biggest since the World War II. “There is lot of uncertainty as we don’t know how the Ukraine war will shape out in the near future,” she warned.

India and other countries are trying to stop the war “through a diplomatic solution. Indian PM Modi told Russian President Putin that ‘this is not an era of war’ in the early stage of the Ukraine conflict,” she said. The Oct 7, 2023 terror attack by Hamas and taking of hundreds of Israelis as hostages has become a full-blown war between Israel on one side, and the Hamas-Hezbollah-Iran bloc on the other side of the divide.

In this complex Israel-Palestine conflict, over 40,000 innocent lives were lost in Gaza over the last two years, and “at present we have around 30 armed conflicts including those in Syria, Yemen, Sudan and Ethiopia.” Over five lakh people had died in Syria in the last 13 years in a raging civil strife, she said. (Syrian rebel group Hayat Tahrir al-Sham has captured power, and President Bashar al-Assad and his family have fled to Russia.)

Non-state actors

In today’s conflict-ridden world, nation states have to contend with non-state actors like terrorists, lone wolves and mercenaries who don’t observe “any rules of modern warfare.”

The military-industrial complex of the US has benefitted as it exported over 50 per cent of its arms and weapon systems, worth \$2.4 trillion, to these conflict zones in last 2–3 years, she said.

Turning her focus to economic disparity, she said, “globalisation has concentrated wealth in the hands of few rich countries and individuals with a World Bank report saying that 9.2 per cent of the population lives on less than \$2 a day.”

Another UN report details that 700 million people are hit by extreme poverty.

While tackling the scourge of poverty, “it is not enough to provide just food, as we need shelter, education, health and opportunities for growth.” There is staggering disparity and distress in Sub-Saharan Africa, parts of South Asia and Latin America, and there is an urgent need to address “social unrest, conflicts and the migration crisis in these regions,” she explained.

A UN study had stated that “climate change is a major threat to global peace, and it is a force multiplier with droughts, floods and other natural disasters on the rise due to historical emissions of greenhouse gases.”

While nations play the blame game on meeting emission targets set at COP Summits, climate change will not wait for political consensus. “We have to understand that floods, droughts and hurricanes are geopolitical events. The worse hit





are poor countries with scant natural resources, even as their people migrate to other places in search of livelihoods, thus becoming planet refugees.” Some European nations pay African states for restricting their people from taking the perilous boat rides. “If they still land in Europe or America, they are called aliens and are detained and deported,” she said.

Climate change events alone had shaved off four per cent GDP of West and Central Africa.

Emerging challenges through AI platforms are “a perfect storm waiting to happen and we don’t know what effect they will have on the job markets and the social fabric.” While policymakers are trying to catch-up with tech platforms like AI, “politicians claim to serve the people, but in reality, they serve their own interests at the expense of others.” In recent years, 50 countries have held elections for new political set-up, and “whenever there is a regime change, we can expect more disruptions like in Uganda, the Maldives and Bangladesh. We still don’t know what effect Trump 2.0 will have on the global geopolitics.”

For decades, as champion of unity in diversity with faith in its non-violence and pluralism, India was in an eminent position to take centre stage in geopolitics, she said.

We talk to all

India has not sided with any country in the ongoing wars, as “we are a peacebuilding nation.” We buy drones, weapons from the US, high-tech defence platforms and oil from Russia, have close ties with both Iran and Saudi Arabia, and nurture friendly ties with both Israel and Palestine.

As an ideal candidate for peace leadership, “we have the goodwill of all nations in the world.” India has sent its peace-keeping force to 40 countries with “over 200,000 Indian soldiers helping in rebuilding livelihoods in strife-torn regions of Congo, South Sudan, Lebanon, Afghanistan and other countries.” India is trying to reform the United Nations in tune with the “multilateral rule-based global order we are striving to usher in. During the G20 Summit in Delhi, we have inducted the African Union in the elite group.” More collaborations and partnerships are in the offing to foster dialogue

for a multilateral world order which is now fractured and torn by violence and conflicts.

Earlier, past Trustee Gulam Vahanvaty said that a third Rotary Peace Centre offering a short-term course to train 40 peace fellows in two batches in a year will be set up either in South Korea or at the Symbiosis University, Pune. “Already we have five Peace Centres offering long-term Masters courses and two centres for short-term certified programmes affiliated to top varsities in the world,” he said. Each peace centre turns out 50 peace scholars a year, and “all their visas, airfare, boarding, lodging and tuition fees are met by Rotary,” he said.

Rotary is committed to global peace through promotion of understanding, fellowship and integrity, he said. Vahanvaty, along with PDG Muthu Palaniappan, handed over the Pride of India Award to Palki Sharma.





PEACE AND CONFLICT
PREVENTION / RESOLUTION



DISEASE PREVENTION
AND TREATMENT



WATER AND
SANITATION



MATERNAL AND
CHILD HEALTH



BASIC EDUCATION AND
LITERACY



ECONOMIC AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT



SUPPORTING THE
ENVIRONMENT

Minutes of the 2297th RWM held on January 21st, 2025 at AAEI Club, Kolkata

- 1. President Biswajit Saha called the RWM to order and requested the members to rise for the National Anthem.**
- 2. The Assistant Governor's Visit is scheduled for February 4th, 2025, followed by the District Governor's (DG) visit on March 4th, 2025. BNROC is confirmed as the venue for the AG's visit, as informed by Club Secretary. PP Tanu Roy will assist the Club in preparing a proper presentation for the AG to ensure a smooth DG visit.**
- 3. Mr. Amal Nayek, of RCC Champa Mahila Society, could not attend due to prior commitments. He provided all relevant bills and details of outstanding payments related to:**

Repairing of washrooms and supply of running water & manufacturing of 12 sets of benches and tables. The total outstanding amount is Rs. 17,422.
- 4. PP Dr. Sumanta Dasgupta raised concerns about the effectiveness and relevance of existing Rotary Community Corps (RCCs). Over the years, RCC activities were not consistently reported to the Board. It was decided that PP Dr. Sumanta Dasgupta will draft guidelines for RCCs & PP Mousumi will coordinate with RCCs and ensure the clubs' compliances.**
- 5. Rtn. Tamal Ray expressed concerns over poor attendance at the annual picnic and the resulting financial shortfall. To ensure better participation, it was unanimously decided that all members will contribute Rs. 500 for the annual picnic, regardless of attendance.**
- 6. Club Secretary conducted the club business.**
- 7. On confirmation of the minutes of the last meeting, President Biswajit terminated the meeting.**