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## RI President's March Message



March is here, and for Rotary International, that means celebrating Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Month — a time to shine a spotlight on one of the most transformative areas of our work.

This month is an opportunity to reflect on The Magic of Rotary and the profound impact we create when we come together with determination and purpose.

Years ago, I experienced this magic firsthand in the Dominican Republic. When a group of members helped people install water filters, three children watched with amazement as dirty water entered one end of a filter and clean water emerged from the other. When we paused the demonstration, one child tugged at my sleeve and pleaded, “Show me the magic again.”

To them, it felt magical. It was also the result of countless hours of effort — planning, transporting, and installing the filters — alongside local partners who were dedicated to

making clean water accessible. In that moment, I realized that what seemed like a small act could change residents' lives. That is The Magic of Rotary.

This story is a testament to the incredible potential of our global family to create change. Water projects exemplify our reach, our partnerships, and our unwavering commitment to improving lives. Consider Rotary's work with USAID. That partnership has enabled us to work with communities and governments to improve access to sustainable water and sanitation services for thousands of people in the Dominican Republic, Ghana, the Philippines, and Uganda.

Partnerships remind us that Rotary's impact is amplified when we work together. Through our strategic alliance with the United Nations Environment Programme, we're advancing the Community Action for Fresh Water initiative. This program equips Rotary members with the tools and resources to protect, restore, and sustain freshwater ecosystems.

When we make use of Rotary grants and advocate for clean water in our communities, we create a ripple effect that extends far beyond individual projects.

As we embrace the spirit of the month, I encourage every Rotary member to seek out new partnerships. Collaboration multiplies our efforts and helps us reach more people in need.

Whether it's joining forces with local organizations, forming alliances with international agencies, or mobilizing your community, every step we take together brings us closer to a world where everyone

has access to clean water and safe sanitation.

The Magic of Rotary shines brightest when we work in harmony with others to create lasting good. Together, we can turn dreams into realities that transform lives and communities. The result may feel like magic at times, but we know it's from the power of our collective commitment and compassion. Let's harness this magic to make a difference this month and beyond.

**Stephanie A. Urchick**

President 2024-25

March 2025

## Kolkata Rotarians take up the battle to prevent cervical cancer in girls

One Rotarian in Kolkata losing his wife to cancer some 15 years ago has resulted in an impressive programme to vaccinate a few thousand girls against cervical cancer in West Bengal. In an initiative powered by the Rotary Club of Belur, West Bengal, RI District 3291. And supported by some other clubs in



*A school student being given HPV vaccine against cervical cancer*

the Howrah region, Rotarians are reaching out to protect school girls from the scourge of cervical cancer.

Project chair and past president of the club Vishnu Dhandhanian says after breast cancer, cervical cancer accounts for killing the largest number of women in India. The greater worry is that most girls and women are not even aware of the existence of cervical cancer, leave alone the dangers posed by it. "In fact, 10 years ago, even I didn't know anything about cervical cancer," he admits honestly.

## Reducing Your Plastic Footprint

It's time to wean away from single-use.

The world is too plastic-dependent to expect a complete ban on the mouldable 'wonder' polymer. Indeed, any government would think twice before making such a rash decision. This is because plastic has varied uses, including in medical devices, automobile spare parts, plumbing, sewage systems, packaging, construction material, furniture, toys, shopping bags, clothes, cosmetics and much more. And since a cheaper and viable alternative is not yet on the horizon, annual global plastic production is estimated to reach 1.3 billion tonnes by 2060. However, a serious effort is being made to cut its consumption



Given this, if you still wish to live in a plastic-free world, you must have access to a machine which can transport you back to a time before Belgian American chemist Leo Baekeland created Bakelite, the first synthetic mass-produced plastic in 1907. Or perhaps, to avoid the ubiquitous plastic

bags that have invaded our homes and bazaars, you may wish to go back to the early 1960s before Swedish engineer Sten Gustaf Thulin, working for Celloplast, patented the one-piece polyethene shopping bag, which became a rage across the world.

Unfortunately, SpaceX and Elon Musk have yet to offer time travel into the past. So, you have no option but to live in the reality of the present, which is grim when it comes to plastic. A study by Nature magazine last year ranked India as the highest plastic polluter in the world, above China. The study estimated that India emits 9.3 million metric tonnes of plastic annually and is responsible for one-fifth of global emissions. Plastic emissions include materials that have moved from controlled systems for waste, managed or mismanaged, to the environment where they are under no control.

Much of the plastic waste generated in India (5.8 million tonnes) is incinerated, releasing toxic pollutants into the air that cause respiratory and other health problems. Plastic waste is also dumped randomly at street corners or in informal landfills. It either leaches harmful chemicals into the ground or finds its way to drains, waterways, rivers and the sea. According to the UNEP, unlike other materials, plastic does not biodegrade for centuries, and its pollution chokes marine wildlife, damages soil and poisons groundwater, and can cause health damage, including respiratory illnesses, endocrine disruption and cancer.

Given the gravity of the situation, what can the average citizen do when systemic reform is what is called for? Surely, he or she cannot be expected to stop powerful corporations from producing plastic. However, they can control consumption and reduce their plastic footprint at the individual level. The less plastic we use, the better.

So where does one start? The low-hanging and important fruit here is single-use plastic. This includes plastic bottles, shopping bags, straws, cups, glasses, plates and cutlery, wrapping paper, cling films, etc. Single-use plastic accounts for 43 per cent of India's total plastic waste despite a July 2022 government ban that forbids the manufacture, distribution, stocking, sale, and use of 19 select single-use plastic items, including cups and cutlery. Carry bags of less than 120 microns also came under the ban.

The enforcement of the regulation has not been as effective as envisaged because single-use plastic is still very much around, perhaps because there is no suitable and cheap alternative or because of pressure from business lobbies.

Whatever the reason, we can do our bit by avoiding single-use plastic items as much as possible. How do you go about this task? To start with, carry a reusable cloth bag when you go shopping. This ensures you don't come home with half a dozen use-and-throw small plastic bags in a larger bag. Collecting them after your weekly shopping does not make sense because you can do nothing with the bags other than throw them into the garbage can, from where they will go to the local garbage dump and then to a landfill.

Similarly, you could insist on soft drinks bottled in glass rather than plastic bottles. Carrying your water in a glass bottle or a flask ensures you don't have to buy water in a single-use plastic bottle. Plastic plates, cups and cutlery, though convenient, must be avoided. Individual choice is key to reducing your plastic footprint, and you must bring about a behavioural change in your attitude towards single-use plastic.

In your kitchen, you could store cereals, pulses and sugar in glass or steel containers. That would be a lot better than the cheaper plastic option. Small decisions like that do make a difference. For example, using a wooden peg to hang out clothes to dry would be far more environment-friendly than the plastic alternative.

Another source of concern is microplastics, defined as any plastic less than 5mm in length. However, they can be microscopic, one nanometer in length. Microplastics are found in cosmetics, clothing, food packaging, and construction. They can also be formed during plastic degradation. It is estimated that 35 per cent of all ocean microplastics come from erosion of synthetic textiles like polyester, acrylic or nylon-based clothing. These particles are released during the washing process when they go through the drainage system and end up in rivers and seas. An average wash load releases over 700,000 nano fibres per wash.

Microplastics can be harmful to humans, animals and marine creatures because they release toxic chemicals that can disrupt and impact body functions. Invisible to the naked eye, it can be unknowingly ingested and can cause much harm. This is why one must avoid cosmetics that contain microplastics and synthetic clothing.

It is all about making wise choices. You may not always be able to avoid plastic. But when you can, opt for a tested and natural alternative. You will not regret it.

## THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING (AGM) of ROTARY CLUB OF BALLYGUNGE, held in the Cosy Room of Calcutta International Club on 05/12/2024

The President requested members to assemble and called the AGM to order.

- (1) The Nomination Committee Chair IPP Rinku Das Chowdhury has been appointed to form the upcoming Board for the Rotary year 2025-2026. It is proposed to call a Special AGM to discuss the formation of Board for the Rotary Year 2025 - 2026.
- (2) The President requested IPP to present the accounts for the previous year for member's approval. The accounts presentation was done formally and discussed with all member. Book of accounts accepted and confirmed by all member present in AGM.
- (3) The same Auditor as previous year is reappointed as Auditor for current year.

The President terminated the meeting.

## Minutes of the 2505<sup>th</sup> RWM held in the Cosy Room of International Club, Kolkata, on 05/09/2024

- President called the 2505<sup>th</sup> RWM to order.
- The President requested all to rise for the National Anthem which was sung in chorus.
- The President announced the dedicated Memorial Service for our beloved Rotarian PP Asoke Kr. Chandra will be held after the RWM attended by his family; friends in Rotary and our members in RCB. He welcomed the family members of PP Asoke Kr. Chandra.
- President declared the successful completion of our project on Teachers Day held at our Interact Club, Shri Gandhi Vidyalaya; and briefly discussed the proceedings of the project. The chairperson of the district project Nabadisha joined hands with our club and actively contributed and participated. It was followed by a cultural programme by the students.
- The President announced one project has been planned on 14<sup>th</sup> September to be held in Rotary Sadan at 10:30 am. It is a panel discussion & workshop with interactive sessions covering basic problems of mental health and the beneficiaries will be the students and their parents/guardians. The panel will comprise of doctors, psychologists. President requested all members to attend the programme.
- President announced on 21<sup>st</sup> September another project has been finalised with Interact Club of Shri Gandhi Vidyalaya, for eye check up camp in their school premises. Followed by the installation of Interact Club.
- President declared one more project is in the preliminary stage covering the Literacy Project arena of Rotary Services; where we will distribute some computers/systems/desktop peripherals to schools.
- President announced a cloth distribution project will be held as done every year during the Durga Puja festival. He requested PP Sanjoy Dey to come forward with the proposal. The same was discussed and initial planning finalised.
- The President requested members to come forward with suggestions/thoughts/feedback, if any.
- President handed over to the Secretary for Club Business.
- The Secretary welcomed and thanked the Guests / family members of PP Asoke Kr. Chandra and members of RCB for joining the RWM followed by the memorial service and announced the Club Business.
- Minutes of meeting confirmed.
- Secretary Handed Over to the President for further proceedings.
- President terminated the meeting.

**Members Present : 12, Guests Present : 05**



## Minutes of the 2506<sup>th</sup> RWM held in the Cosy Room of International Club, Kolkata, on 12/09/2024.

- President called the 2506<sup>th</sup> RWM to order.
- The President requested all to rise for the National Anthem which was sung in chorus.
- The President announced one project has been planned on 14<sup>th</sup> September to be held in Rotary Sadan at 10:30 am. It is a panel discussion & workshop with interactive sessions covering basic problems of mental health and the beneficiaries will be the students and their parents/guardians. The panel will comprise of doctors, psychotherapist/psychologists. President requested all members to attend the programme. It will be held in 3 parts : Workshop & Activities ; Panel Discussion ; Interactive Session with Students & Parents/Guardians.
- President announced on 21<sup>st</sup> September another project has been finalised with Interact Club of Shri Gandhi Vidyalaya, for eye check up camp in their school premises. Followed by the installation of the Interact Club.
- President announced on 28<sup>th</sup> September another project at Sarat Memorial School in Park Circus has been finalised for Health & Eye check up camp in their school premises.
- President declared one more project is in the preliminary stage covering the Literacy Project arena of Rotary Services; where we will distribute some computers/systems/desktop peripherals to schools.
- President announced Rotary Club of Calcutta has proposed to give 4 sewing machines to RCB as part of their project.

- President requested PP Ashif Shah to speak about the Mobile Check up Van Project of Rotary Club of Calcutta. PP Ashif Shah shared details with the members. RCB can be partner in the project by contributing 500 USD.
- President announced a cloth distribution project will be held as done every year during the Durga Puja festival. Members are requested to come forward with proposals and beneficiaries. A hat collection was proposed for the project.
- The President requested members to come forward with suggestions/thoughts/feedback, if any.
- President handed over to the Secretary for Club Business.
- The Secretary welcomed and thanked the members of RCB for joining the RWM and announced the Club Business.
- Secretary Handed Over to the President for further proceedings.
- President terminated the meeting.

**Members Present : 08**

## Minutes of Meeting the 2514<sup>th</sup> RWM held in the Cosy Room of International Club, Kolkata, on 9<sup>th</sup> January 2025.

- 1) President called the 2514<sup>th</sup> RWM to order.
- 2) President requested all to rise for the National Anthem and the same was sung in chorus by the members.
- 3) President informed the members about the last District Meeting and events took place therein.
- 4) President with heavy heart announced the voluntary retirement of our very beloved Balaram da, Nanda, Anjali di and Gautam Dasgupta.
- 5) President requested the fellow members for clearance of the payment of SAD and Souvenir.
- 6) President declared that a drawing competition to be held soon and to be organized by our fellow Rotarian Riya Mukherjee
- 7) President declared a project to be led by Rtn. Jayanta Chattopadhyay for distribution of 10 Rickshaw Vans to the selected beneficiaries. The program is to be held at Nepalgunge, South 24 Parganas.
- 8) Another project has been declared by the President whereby 4 number of computers will be funded by Rtn. Sanjay and to be donated on behalf of our club to Kajir Chora High School.
- 9) An annual picnic to be held on January 25, 2025 on behalf of our club and to be hosted by Rtn, Subhankar.
- 10) President handed over to the Joint Secretary, Rtn. Jayanta Chattapadhyaya, for the happy announcements and it has been informed the members of the forthcoming birthday of President Dr. Amlan Bhattacharya, which is on January 1, 2025.
- 11) Joint Secretary, Rtn. Jayanta Chattapadhyaya welcomed the members to join the RWM and to participate in important matters concerning the club.
- 12) The Minutes of the last meeting was confirmed.
- 13) Joint Secretary, handed over to the President for business.
- 14) President terminated the meeting.

**Members Present : 11**

## Minutes of the 2515<sup>th</sup> RWM held in the Burul Riverside, Kolkata, on 25<sup>th</sup> January 2025

- 1) President called the 2515<sup>th</sup> RWM to order.
- 2) President requested all to rise for the National Anthem and the same was sung in chorus by the members and guests present.
- 3) President informed that 100 blankets would be distributed at Naba Udayan Sangha, Guma, Habra on 26<sup>th</sup> January 2025. 50 blankets were sponsored by the President of the Club while other 50 blankets were from the district grant.
- 4) President informed that PP. Rtn. Indrani Gupta has been appointed as the Chairperson of the Shantih Organization Committee and she has been given the responsibility to choose the members of the Committee and different chair heads, as she deems fit. The Shantih event will be held on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2025 at the Indian Museum. The event will be jointly organized with the NIP and will be a District ICM.
- 5) President informed that a Drawing Competition will be held on Saturday, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2025 and Rtn Ria Mookerjee has been asked for coordinate with Mr Bilolaksha Das.
- 6) President informed that ten Van Rickshaws would be distributed within March 2025. The total cost Rs.1,28,000/- will be shared jointly by RC Ballygunge (25%), the Beneficiaries (25%) and the balance 50% to be borne by EIRWT (Eastern India Rotary Welfare Trust).
- 7) President proposed two Totos would be distributed, the cost of which would be jointly borne by PP. Rtn. Indrani Gupta (50%) and the balance 50% to be borne by EIRWT (Eastern India Rotary Welfare Trust).

- 8) President handed over to the Joint Secretary, Rtn. Joydeep Mookerjee., for the happy announcements.
- 9) Joint Secretary, Rtn. Joydeep Mookerjee welcomed the members to join the RWM and to participate in important matters concerning the club.
- 10) The Minutes of the last meeting was confirmed.
- 11) Joint Secretary, Rtn. Joydeep Mookerjee, handed over to the President for business.
- 12) President terminated the meeting (RWM 2515).

**Members Present : 11**

## Minutes of the 2516<sup>th</sup> RWM held in the Cosy Room of International Club, Kolkata, on 06/02/2025

- President called the 2516<sup>th</sup> RWM to order.
- The President requested all to rise for the National Anthem which was sung in chorus.
- The President announced the completion of the Blanket distribution project, 100 nos blankets were distributed in Naba Udayan Sangha, Habra. 50 blankets sponsored by RI District 3291 and rest 50 nos sponsored by our President.
- The President requested Rtn. Jayanta Chattopadhyay to speak on the EIRWT Project of "Donation of cycle rickshaw". Rtn. Jayanta Chattopadhyay highlighted the details of the project and shared the progress details.
- President discussed the progress of the Drawing Competition for children.
- President declared the project covering the Literacy Project arena of Rotary Services; where we will distribute some computers/systems/desktop peripherals to a school. The project has been proposed by PP Sanjoy De and he has consent to donate 4 computers, and the project site and date finalization to be discussed.
- The President announced on 16/02/2025 there will be an outreach meeting to be held in The Square Mark, MohorKoonjo, Baruipur and requested members to join with friends and family. The meeting shall be followed by Lunch and fellowship.
- President requested PP Ashif Shah to speak about the "Rotary Vision on Wheels" a Mobile Eye Check up Van Project of Rotary Club of Calcutta with Rotary Club of Dubbo, Australia. PP Ashif Shah shared details with the members. RCB can be a Partner Club in the project by contributing
- 525 USD.
- PP Ashif Shah announced on 29<sup>th</sup> December 2024 another project Eye Checkup Camp was successfully conducted in our RCC, Hallan. He requested the President to felicitate the President of Rotary Club of Hooghly for his contribution towards the project. On the same day another Project was conducted with the Rotary Club of Urbana for raising funds. The project involved printing and distribution of Calendar on Wild Life Photography.
- The President announced the details on the Project "Life Beyond Cancer" a fundraising project to be held in Rotary Sadan on 15/02/2025 and declared PP Susanta Kumar Sarkar has proposed to donate Rs.5000 towards the project. President requested other members to contribute. PP Amitava Chakravorty explained the modus operandi of the Project and shared all information related to the operation details and Fund raising related to the Project. PP Ashif Shah shared the programme details of the Fund raising event and requested members to contribute Rs.10,000 towards the Project.
- The President declared RCB Flagship Project "SHANTIHI" will be conducted on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2025, Saturday, 5pm to 8 pm in association with NIP in Asutosh Birth Centenary Hall, Indian Museum. The Event will comprise a Panel Discussion on Folk Art - A way of peace in different cultures and communities, and the image of service to society.
- Followed by Programme with specially abled people, a Braille competition and an art exhibition of Paintings and Photography of marginalised artists.
- President handed over to the Secretary for Club Business.
- The Secretary welcomed and thanked the members for joining the RWM and announced the Club Business.
- All Minutes of the previous meetings confirmed by members.
- Secretary Handed Over to the President for further proceedings.
- The President requested members to come forward with suggestions/thoughts/feedback, if any.
- President terminated the meeting.

**Members Present : 13, Guest : 01**

