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Dist. Governor: Dr. Ramendu Homchaudhury
Club President: Rtn. Sunando Sen
Club Secretary: Rtn. Arindam Ghosh
Club Editor: Rtn. Subhojit Roy

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METRO MAIL



BULLETIN OF ROTARY CLUB OF CALCUTTA METRO CITY



South Asia Perspective — Building Understanding in Diverse Societies

In South Asia — home to immense diversity, history, and complexity — World Understanding Month carries special meaning. As Rotary International commemorates its founding on February 23, Rotary clubs across India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, and Pakistan are uniquely positioned to foster harmony through service.

This region faces shared challenges: public health disparities, climate vulnerability, youth unemployment, and educational inequality. Rotary's non-political, non-religious platform allows it to operate above divides, focusing instead on common human needs.

South Asian Rotary clubs can strengthen regional understanding by launching cross-border vocational exchanges, joint environmental projects, disaster response collaborations, and youth leadership forums that connect future changemakers across countries.

Individual Rotarians can play a transformative role — mentoring first-generation learners, supporting women entrepreneurs, promoting literacy, and facilitating community conversations rooted in respect and facts rather than emotion.

In societies where diversity is both strength and strain, Rotary offers a neutral civic space where professionals unite for service. World Understanding in South Asia is not about uniformity — it is about cooperation despite difference.

That spirit, born in 1905, remains deeply relevant today.

Subhojit Roy

In Lithuania, 'Befrienders' Ease Loneliness

How a nation more than halved its suicide rate with helplines and other community-based approaches

By Marylou Costa

Taking phone calls from strangers wanting to share their life stories is not part of the typical job description for a nonprofit founder. But for Marius Čiuželis, it's all in a day's work. In 2016, he and his wife, Kristina, started Sidabrinė Linija, or Silver Line, an organization that offers free support to isolated older adults in Lithuania through regular phone calls with a "befriender" matched to their interests.

"On the first day we spoke for 10 minutes. The next time we spoke for nearly an hour, and she shared a lot about her life," recalls Čiuželis, a member of the Rotary Club of Vilnius Lituanica International from 2019 to 2023. "Her husband of 50 years died about six years ago, and she has no children. She is completely alone and in poor health. A social worker visits twice a week, but otherwise she's basically locked in her house because she can't move."

Čiuželis says they discussed what bread she likes to eat and what kind of dessert he could bring if he visited. "She's an extremely lonely woman who just wanted someone to talk to, like many elderly people, who don't necessarily want to talk about big philosophies, just day-to-day things, rather than listen to the radio or watch TV all day."

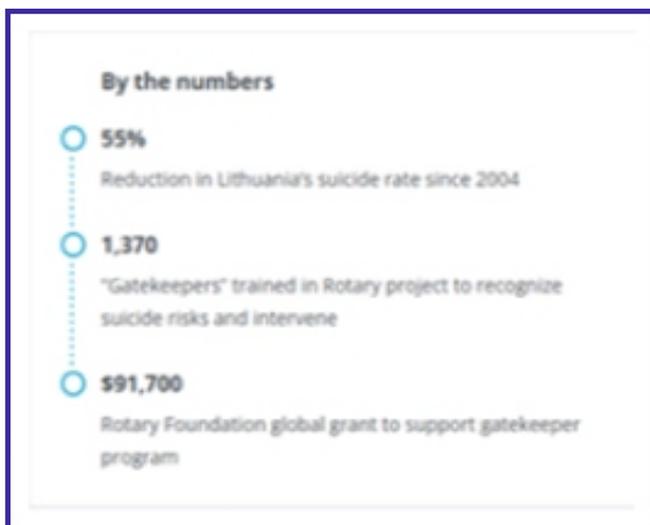


Marius Čiuželis co-founded the Sidabrinė Linija nonprofit with his wife, Kristina.

Image credit : Courtesy of Marius Čiuželis

Sidabrinė Linija, which has befriended 6,000 older adults since its inception, has been just one of the many pieces of the puzzle to reduce Lithuania's suicide rate, which is particularly high among older people due to a combination of isolation and a culture of keeping mental health issues bottled up. Older adults, according to Čiuželis, account for more than 39 percent of all deaths by suicide. In Lithuania, Čiuželis explains, asking for mental health support is still viewed with shame, particularly for older citizens who experienced Lithuania's Soviet rule from the 1940s to 1990. Economic and political instability followed, which caused high levels of unemployment, inflation, and poverty.

Sidabrinė Linija has received funding from the Lithuanian government as part of mounting efforts over the past 20 years to recognize the drivers behind the country's high suicide rate and move away from a culture of hiding problems toward one where it's considered OK to talk about them openly.



A view of Vilnius, Lithuania's capital. Image credit : Getty images

When Lithuania joined the European Union in 2004, it recorded a suicide rate of around 44 per 100,000 residents, one of the highest in the region. Since then, it has worked to reduce its suicide rate, which is now at about 19 people per 100,000.

In 2007, the Lithuanian government published its first National Mental Health Strategy, followed by the launch of its Suicide Prevention Bureau in 2015 and a Suicide Prevention Action Plan in 2016 with an emphasis on providing more community-based services and shifting away from an overly medicalized approach.

A national suicide prevention algorithm was launched in 2018 across all medical and social services to more easily identify at-risk individuals and offer specialist support. Last year, this algorithm led to 600 people receiving a full package of mental health support services and 1,200 undergoing comprehensive assessments, which is not insignificant in a country of just 2.9 million people.

Another cornerstone of Lithuania's campaign has been its mental health ambassador program. Launched in 2022, this initiative has deployed 100 ambassadors across the country who share their stories of seeking help for thoughts of suicide, to change attitudes and behaviors around mental health.

More generally, accessible mental health support is also expanding nationwide. Since 2020, free psychological well-being services have been available at centers in every one of Lithuania's 60 municipalities, providing drop-in access without a doctor's referral. These centers serve over 30,000 people annually, addressing issues such as stress, depression, and anxiety, with the aim of offering support early, before someone's mental health issues escalate into suicidal thoughts.

Beyond direct mental health interventions, stricter alcohol control laws have played a part. Tackling this has been crucial as alcohol use disorders correlate strongly with the highest-risk groups for suicide in Lithuania: middle-aged and older men in rural areas.

Another of the steps is government-funded suicide prevention and intervention training for people to become "gatekeepers" who can more readily recognize and help someone who may have suicidal thoughts.

Nearly 1,400 of these gatekeepers, drawn from local first responders, medical staff, teachers, and other community leaders, were trained through a project by Lithuanian Rotarians. Supported by a \$91,700 Rotary Foundation global grant, the project took place in nine communities from 2018 to 2020 and included the creation of local suicide prevention groups and additional psychological evaluations for at-risk individuals.

Throughout the country, around 10,000 people have become gatekeepers, half of whom have a mental health professional background. Among them is clinical psychologist Mantas Jeršovas, who has taken two free training programs — Safe Talk, a community-based program, and ASIST, or Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training, a more advanced two-day course on how to engage in deeper conversations with someone who is having suicidal thoughts. He is now a trainer himself, delivering free programs several times a year.

Challenges continue. The Lithuanian government has committed to support the influx of around 42,000 Ukrainian refugees since the Russian invasion in 2022, offering counseling and group therapy services.

And Sidabrinė Linija's Čiuželis wants to be sure the country's older people are not being left behind amid an emphasis on digital services and online communication campaigns and what he perceives as an overall government mindset to prioritize the young at the expense of the old.

A version of this article was originally published by Reasons to be Cheerful, a nonprofit solutions journalism outlet. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency, contact the 988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline in the U.S. by calling or texting 988 or going to 988lifeline.org. If you are outside the U.S., visit findahelpline.com to get connected with a service in your country.

This story originally appeared in the February 2026 issue of Rotary magazine.

RI Board Adopts New Zones Structure

Every Rotary year, the Rotary International Board of Directors makes minor changes to the list of zones based on decisions to merge or create new districts, or grant district requests to change zones. In addition, the Board conducts a comprehensive review at least every eight years to comply with RI Bylaws that districts and clubs be divided into 34 zones of approximately equal number of Rotarians. This is done to ensure that Rotary's Board of Directors accurately reflects our diverse and global membership.

In 2025, three Board-approved regional workgroups developed rezoning proposals for Asia, Europe/Africa, and the Americas. These workgroups submitted their proposals to the Zones Review Steering Committee, chaired by RI Vice President Alain Van de Poel, which consolidated them into a single, worldwide plan for the Board's consideration at their January 2026 meeting. The Board voted unanimously to approve this plan.

The Board will consider other zone-related issues such as sectioning, pairing, and director election rotation at its April 2026 meeting.

Updated maps are still to come, but for now members can access the zone list or contact Zones@rotary.org with any questions.

Rotary International Director for 2027-29

The Rotary International director elections in Zones 6, 10A, and 12, concluded on 1 February 2026. A balloting committee met by correspondence on 6 February to certify the balloting results, and RI President Francesco Arezzo has declared the following individuals as the directors-nominee from their respective zone:

Zone 6

Basu Dev Golyan of the Rotary Club of Biratnagar, Nepal

Zone 10A

Edna R. Sutter of the Rotary Club of Fort Bonifacio Global City, Philippines

Zone 12

Bo-Gon Kim of the Rotary Club of Gwangju-Bia, Korea

District News

Rangolsav
When colours meet camaraderie

Rotary UNITE FOR GOOD

Let's RID 3291 with you on the occasion of **Rangolsav**
When colours meet camaraderie

SATURDAY
MARCH 07 2026
Carpenter's Eco Tourism Resort Unit - II, Purulia

Organized by
Rotary Club of Purulia

Co-Organized by
Rotary Club of Midnapur

Activities and Prices

- Deluxe Double Bed - Rs. 5,500/-
- Cottage Double Bed - Rs. 6,000/-
- Premium Cottage Double Bed - Rs. 6,500/-
- Trip Occupancy - Rs. 5,000/-
- Quadrate Occupancy - Rs. 4,500/-

Price include

Stay for 7th High Night | Hot Programme with Lunch
Local Cultural Evening with Snacks | Gala Dinner with High End Artists | 8th Morning Breakfast

For Further details contact

- Mrs. Kunal Rajgaria**
Call: +91 98323 79059
- Mrs. Ghosh Mall**
Call: +91 98729 45934
- Mrs. Parimal Jatin**
Call: +91 93370 08133
- Mrs. Tabin Poddar**
Call: +91 98368 95585
- Mrs. Shampa Chakr**
Call: +91 94332 17988

District Holi Meet, 7th March'26 at Purulia

RCC Conference 28th & 29th March Bakkhali

Rotary UNITE FOR GOOD

Rotary Community Corps (RCC) Conference 2026
Organized by: Rotary International District 3291

Join Us for Two Days of Service, Leadership & Fellowship
Be part of an inspiring gathering of Rotarians and RCC Members as we celebrate community service, share impactful stories, and strengthen grassroots leadership.

MARCH | SAT 28 & SUN 29 | 2026

Hotel Deepak, Fraser Guri, Bakkhali, West Bengal 743367

Registration Charges

- Rotarians: ₹5000 per person
- RCC Members: ₹3000 per person
- AAC Members/RCC Members: ₹2000 per person

Registration Includes:

- ✓ Lodging
- ✓ Evening Snacks
- ✓ Dinner
- ✓ Breakfast
- ✓ Lunch

Payment Details

Account Name: ROTARY INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT 3291
Bank: SBI, Bank
A/C No.: 00000000000000000000
IFSC: IN000000000000

For Enquiry & Registration
Subash Chandra Roy
98368 95585
98368 95585

Let's unite at Bakkhali for a Stronger Community Tomorrow
Service • Development • Fellowship • Action

Greetings

Happy Birthday

2nd March - Rtn Sunrita Sen
5th March - PP Rtn Subhojit Roy

Club News

Thalassaemia Awareness at Ushapara in association with IIMC



On 24th February, Rotary Calcutta Metro City in association with Institute of Indian Mother & Child (IIMC), conducted a Thalassaemia Awareness Camp at IIMC Sikshangan Ushapara School. PP RTN Subhojit Roy ALSO District Public Image Chair was

the session facilitator and gave an extensive awareness talk to around 70 persons, which included girls & boys students of Class 9 & 10 and their parents. The awareness talk was well received and at the end of the awareness talk, a pledge was taken by all present to make India Thalassaemia Free and also to have their blood tested for Thalassaemia HPLC.

The Club was represented by Club Secretary Rtn Arindam Ghosh, PP Rtn Jharna Mitra I who coordinated the program) and Club President Rtn Sunando Sen at the Awareness Camp.

Clean & Green India Walkathon



On 28th February 2026, Rotary Calcutta Metro City participated in a Walkathon organised by the Variable Energy Cyclotron Centre (VECC), Dept of Atomic

Energy (GOI) for a Swachh Bharat Abhiyan. More than 200 persons, young and old women & men participated in the walk. Members from neighbouring Rotary Clubs also participated.

The walk started from the VECC Salt Lake campus around 7:30 AM and covered a distance of 5 KM inside Salt Lake. President Sunando Sen represented the club and the participation was facilitated by DPIC PP Rtn Subhojit Roy.

Forthcoming Programs

5th March '26, 12 pm - Visit & Handover of Rs 50000 to Thalassaemia Society of India in association with Ramawatar Trust and Rotary Calcutta South Central.

8th March '26 - Sponsorship of 10 IOL's at Beldanga Eye Hospital, Murshidabad

22nd March '26, 5 pm - DG's OCV, Venue: Outram Club.

23rd April '25, 6 pm - Swayam Siddha XVII, Venue: ICCR

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