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FORTNIGHTLY BULLETIN OF THE ROTARY CLUB OF GAUHATI SOUTH (RI DIST 3240)

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'There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as though everything is a miracle.'

--Albert Einstein

From the Editor

February is a time to recognize and celebrate Rotary's commitment to **Peace and Conflict Resolution**—one of our seven areas of focus. This month reminds us that peace is not just the absence of conflict but the presence of understanding, dialogue, and proactive efforts to foster harmony in our communities and beyond. **World Peace and Understanding Day 2025:** Observed annually on February 23, World Peace and Understanding Day highlights the importance of dialogue and mutual respect in fostering global harmony. Closely associated with Rotary International, this day serves as a reminder of the power of collaboration and a call to action for promoting empathy, communication and cross-cultural ties.

In today's world, divisions, whether political, religious, or ideological, often seem insurmountable. But peace begins when we recognize that those who see the world differently than we do, who vote for the other party, or belong to another faith, are not our enemies. They are our neighbors, our colleagues, and, in Rotary, our fellow members in service. One of Rotary's unique strengths lies in the fact that it eschews politics and religion, allowing people of vastly different viewpoints to come together in common cause to make the world a better place. This is more valuable than ever in an era when civil discourse is often lacking.

Rotary has long been at the forefront of peace building, and as Rotarians, we have the power to make a real difference. Some ways we can take action are by **Promoting peace through dialogue** by engaging in conversations that bridge differences, whether in the workplace, the club, or within the community. Hosting community dialogues or cultural exchange events can foster understanding and mutual respect; **Educating for peace** by partnering with schools to introduce peace education programmes that teach conflict resolution skills, emotional intelligence, and global citizenship to young people; **Volunteering for mediation and conflict Prevention Initiatives** by supporting, if possible, local mediation programmes, participating in restorative justice initiatives, or helping to resolve disputes within the community; **Joining or supporting a Rotary Peace Project**; **Spreading kindness in daily life** – small acts of kindness, listening with empathy, offering support to someone in distress, or simply promoting a culture of respect—can help create an environment where peace thrives.

Rotary's motto, *Service Above Self*, reminds us that every act of service contributes to a more peaceful world. Let us all consciously foster tolerance, understanding, and cooperation.



ROTARY HIGHLIGHTS SIX 'CHAMPIONS OF PEACE'

EVANSTON, Ill., USA (24 Feb. 2025) — Six Rotary members and participants from around the world have been recognized as *Rotary People of Action: 'Champions of Peace'* for their contributions to peacebuilding, conflict resolution, and sustainable community development.

Around the world, Rotary members engage with communities, collaborate with experts, and build partnerships to address the underlying causes of conflict. Through service projects, humanitarian aid, academic training, and youth exchanges, Rotary helps to create healthier and more peaceful societies where people can thrive.

"Peacebuilding starts with individuals who take the first step toward resolving conflict, building trust, and fostering understanding," said Stephanie Urchick, Rotary International President. "By leading efforts in their communities, these honorees exemplify how grassroots efforts can lay the foundation for lasting peace."

For over a century, Rotary has committed itself to addressing the needs of communities across the globe. To recognize these efforts, Rotary honors six initiatives annually through the **People of Action Honors program**. This year's '*Champions of Peace*' include:

- **Anne Kjaer Bathel (Germany)** – A Rotary Peace Fellow alumna and founder of ReDI Digital Kids, Anne leads a project that provides psycho-social support and digital education to refugee children in Germany, helping them regain stability, confidence, and future opportunities. Since its inception, the program has reached over 4,000 children, fostering social inclusion and empowerment.

- **Sanela Music (Bosnia-Herzegovina)** – A Rotary Representative to the United Nations in Geneva, Sanela spearheads the Harmony Project: Mental Health Matters, which addresses transgenerational trauma and fosters interethnic reconciliation in post-war Bosnia-Herzegovina. Her work has empowered students and educators to build emotional resilience and combat stigma around mental health.

- **Swati Herkal (India)** – A Rotary leader and philanthropist, Swati pioneered a regenerative agriculture

initiative that supports small farmers in India. By introducing sustainable farming techniques, her project has increased crop yields, reduced financial strain on farmers, and revitalized rural economies—helping to prevent migration and social unrest.

- **Linda Low (USA)** – A Rotary Peace Fellow and founder of the Global Partners in Peace Rotary Club, Linda created Leadership Dialogues, a program designed to bridge societal divisions through structured, values-based discussions. The initiative has engaged over 2,000 people worldwide, promoting deeper understanding and conflict resolution.

- **María Cristina Cifuentes (Colombia)** – A Rotary Peace Fellow and climate advocate, María played a vital role in integrating peace-focused strategies into Colombia's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Climate Agreement. Her work ensures that vulnerable communities affected by armed conflict are included in national climate resilience strategies.

- **Domino Sulieman Frank (Chad)** – A Rotary Peace Fellow with over 20 years of experience in peacebuilding, Domino leads the Corridors of Peace project, which provides vocational training for displaced women and girls in Chad. His initiative equips participants with marketable skills, fostering economic independence and stability in conflict-prone regions.

Rotary members throughout the world develop and implement sustainable, community-driven projects that fight disease, promote peace, provide clean water, support education, help mothers and children, grow local economies and protect the environment. Over the last 100 years, US \$5.5 billion has been awarded through The Rotary Foundation – Rotary's charitable arm that helps clubs work together to perform meaningful, impactful service.

Rotary also awards up to 130 fully funded fellowships for studies at its seven Peace Centers each year, which has trained more than 1800 peace fellows from over 140 countries since 2002, preparing them for leadership roles in government, NGOs, and international organizations.



ROTARY PEACE CONFERENCE SEEKS TO HEAL IN A DIVIDED WORLD

Etelka Lehoczky

Building peace requires thoughtful, sustained efforts and meaningful partnerships, Rotary International President Stephanie A. Urchick told attendees at a peace conference in Istanbul. The presidential conference, held 20-22 February, focused on “Healing in a Divided World.”

In her opening address, Urchick described the dedication required for true healing to take place.

“Our time together here is a testament to our shared belief in the power of peacebuilding,” she said. “But let’s acknowledge something essential: The act of ‘Healing in a Divided World’ is not something we can achieve quickly or easily. It takes an intentional commitment over time.”

Participants from various backgrounds outlined how that commitment could take shape.

At a session focused on technology and media, speakers discussed how technology can reinforce both peace and conflict. They highlighted the impact of artificial intelligence, the ways technology can bolster peacebuilding efforts, and the expansive threat of misinformation.

Sheldon Himelfarb, an award-winning filmmaker and the founder of PeaceTech Lab, called for peacebuilders to forge a global response to misinformation. The danger it poses, he argued, is comparable to that of war, pandemics, and climate change.

“Misinformation [is] a problem so serious, and so far-reaching, that I believe it is rapidly becoming (if it’s not there already) an existential threat to the planet,” he said. “Fortunately, each day there are more and more people working on this new existential threat, developing tools for fact checking, content labeling, media literacy, AI for peacebuilding, and more.”

Healing the environment and humanity

Other sessions focused on environmental issues in peacebuilding. Nada El Agizy, president of the Rotary E-Club of Egy-International and director of sustainable development and international cooperation at the League of Arab States, emphasized a particular threat in the Middle East.

“Climate change poses one of the most significant challenges the Arab States region has ever faced,” she said. “The region is considered one of the world’s foremost climate-change hotspots, and it is highly vulnerable to the negative impacts of global warming.”

Yana Abu Taleb, the Jordan director for EcoPeace Middle East, said it will be impossible to forge a sustainable peace in the region without doing more to fight climate change. Taleb’s organization brings together environmentalists from Jordan, Palestine, and Israel to promote sustainable development and advance peace efforts in the region.

“Peace will come, but we have to work for it,” Taleb said. “We have to understand that there will be no lasting peace between countries throughout the Middle East if the protection of our shared environment is not put at the center of conflict resolution.”

In the final session, attendees heard from a survivor of the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda. Freddy Mutanguha was 18 when his parents, four sisters, and nearly 80 members of his extended family were murdered. After this unimaginable loss, he dedicated his life to preventing such atrocities and building a more peaceful world. Mutanguha, a member of the Rotary Club of Kigali-Mont Jali, Kigali, Rwanda, is now director of the Kigali Genocide Memorial and CEO of the Aegis Trust. He said the Kigali Genocide Memorial represents a decision to heal.

“We made a choice that in Rwanda, remembering should also mean healing,” he said. “Our generation needs to break the cycle of hate and build foundations for peace and prosperity. Peace is not a theory for us. It is real, urgent, and requires resolve.”

A new Rotary Peace Center welcomes scholars

Attendees at the conference included the first 13 Rotary Peace Fellows at the Otto and Fran Walter Rotary Peace Center at Bahçeşehir University in Istanbul. The newest of Rotary’s seven global peace centers, it offers

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peacebuilders based in the Middle East and North Africa the opportunity to earn professional development certificates in peace and development studies.

“Through its Peace Fellowship program, the center will equip a new generation of leaders with the knowledge, skills, and networks they need to address the root causes of conflict and to build sustainable peace in their communities and beyond,” Urchick said.

The Rotary Peace Fellows come from countries including Egypt, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kenya, Pakistan, Sudan, Somalia, and Yemen. During their fellowships, they will pursue projects such as aiding migrant single mothers, creating peacebuilding content for social media, strengthening grassroots organizations, and educating youth through sports programs. Several of the fellows’ projects aim to empower refugees.

“Climate change and unsustainable agricultural policies contribute to the number of people involuntarily displaced,”

said fellow Havva “eyda Bodur in her biographical statement. “Humanity must find comprehensive solutions immediately. Otherwise, one day, everyone from all walks of life has the risk of being a refugee.”

In concluding the conference, Urchick called on the participants to forge partnerships to work for peace and said the new peace center reflected the essence of Rotary.

It “is more than just a physical space. It is a symbol of what we can achieve when we work together,” Urchick said. “Rotary’s success has always been rooted in partnerships, whether it’s between clubs, with local communities, or with global institutions. The challenges we face today demand nothing less than the combined efforts of governments, nongovernmental organizations, academia, and grassroots organizations. By fostering collaboration and sharing resources, we can amplify our impact and drive real progress “.



Rotary International President Stephanie Urchick addresses a general session at the 2025 Rotary Presidential Peace Conference in Istanbul, 20-22 February 2025.



MINUTES OF THE 2327th WEEKLY REGULAR MEETING HELD ON 7th FEBRUARY, 2025

The 2327th Weekly Rotary Meeting was held on 7 February, 2025. The evening began with a fellowship hosted by Rtn. Renu Goswami, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all attendees. The meeting was called to order at 6:30 PM by President Rtn Chandan Rajkhowa. It commenced with the National Anthem, followed by a warm welcome from the President, who expressed gratitude to Rtn. Renu Goswami for hosting the fellowship and presented a rose as a token of love and appreciation.

Birthday wishes were extended to Rtn. Renu Goswami, and a cake-cutting ceremony was held in her honour.

Rtn. Gayatree Goswamee introduced the guest speaker, Padmashri Dr. Kushal Konwar Sarma, popularly known as the Elephant Man of Asia. Dr. Sarma delivered an insightful presentation on the topic ***Future of Elephants: Report from the Trench***. He shared personal experiences

in his association with the treatment, management and conservation of this magnificent animal both in wild and domestic situation. He also narrated some very adventurous moments while dealing with some rogue elephants. The members engaged in an interactive discussion with him after his deliberation.

Secretary Rtn. Priyama Goswami presented the secretarial report, noting the attendance as follows:- Rotarians: 26, Annes: 5, Guests: 3, Rotarylets: 1. Total attendees: 35. The Sunshine collection for the meeting amounted to Rs. 120/-.

The meeting concluded with a formal vote of thanks, delivered by Rtn Probin Borthakur and was adjourned at 7:30 PM. The proceedings ended with the rendition of the *Jatiya Sangeet*.



