



JULY IS MATERNAL AND CHILD HEALTH MONTH

Francesco Arezzo RI President 2025-26



Dear friends,

Serving as Rotary International President has been one of the greatest honors of my life.

Together, we visited communities around the world, celebrated service, welcomed new members, advanced our work to end polio, strengthened The

Rotary Foundation, and witnessed the extraordinary impact Rotary members make every day.

But what I will remember most are the people. The conversations we shared, the friendships we strengthened, and the kindness I experienced everywhere I traveled.

Thank you for welcoming me into your clubs, your communities, and your lives. It has been an honor to serve as your Rotary International President.

I know Rotary's future is bright because of each of you. Thank you for helping us Unite for Good.

Olayinka Hakeem Babalola RI President 2026-27

Olayinka Hakeem

"Yinka" Babalola, of the Rotary Club of Trans Amadi, Nigeria, serves as the President of Rotary International. His term commenced on July 01, 2026, making him only the second African leader in the organization's history, and he chose the presidential theme "Create Lasting Impact".



Key Details & Background

- **Geographic Milestone:** Babalola is the second African leader to lead Rotary International, following Jonathan B. Majiyagbe (2003-2004).
- **Professional Background:** He has spent decades in the international oil and gas industry, notably in senior positions with Shell, and serves as the founder of Riviera Services Ltd.
- **Rotary Journey:** Babalola's Rotary career spans more than 30 years, beginning in Rotaract in 1988 before he joined Rotary in 1994. He has previously served Rotary International as a vice president, district governor, and member of the board of directors.



Two clubs, one vision: creating lasting impact together

There are evenings that feel less like a formal meeting and more like the beginning of a meaningful journey. My visit to the Rotary Club of Battersea Power Station, England, on 14 May was precisely that — warm, insightful, collaborative and deeply inspiring.

I was representing my club as 2026-27 secretary. Few venues can rival the symbolism of Battersea itself — a landmark that once powered a city and now continues to power conversations, creativity, community, and connection. Quite fitting, perhaps, for a Rotary gathering focused on how to Create Lasting Impact.

What stood out throughout the evening was the remarkable spirit of fellowship demonstrated by the members of the club. From the very first interaction, there was an unmistakable sense of warmth that made us feel less like visiting guests and more like old friends reconnecting after years. In Rotary, we often say that service builds bridges across cultures and continents; evenings like these remind us that those bridges are built equally through kindness, openness, and genuine human connection.

A special note of gratitude to Secretary Ré Johnson and President Charlotte Kirwan for their gracious invitation, thoughtful hospitality, and the generosity of spirit with which they hosted us. Leadership is often most visible not in grand speeches but in the atmosphere leaders create around them — and the welcoming, inclusive, and collaborative environment reflected precisely that. Their passion for community service, paired with a forward-looking vision for Rotary, was evident in every discussion we shared.

The conversations between both clubs were immensely enriching. It was encouraging to exchange perspectives on our ongoing initiatives, discuss pipeline projects for Rotary Year 2026–27, and explore avenues where our clubs may collaborate more closely in the future. Despite operating in different geographies and cultural contexts, it was fascinating to see how aligned our aspirations truly are — whether around youth engagement, community development, humanitarian outreach, or building sustainable impact through partnerships.

Rotary has always been at its best when ideas travel faster than borders. One club plants a seed, another helps it grow, and together we create something far larger than ourselves. The discussions during the evening reflected exactly that philosophy. There was genuine enthusiasm around fostering stronger engagement between District 1130 (England) and District 3291 (India), and I sincerely look forward to translating these conversations into meaningful action in the months ahead.

One of the absolute highlights of the evening was the privilege of listening to club member Michael Warren speak about the extraordinary history and evolution of Battersea Power Station through his artwork and personal experiences. Hearing the story of the iconic landmark from someone who has documented its journey passionately over the decades was captivating. His reflections beautifully demonstrated how art can preserve memory, identity, and heritage in ways history books often cannot. As someone deeply appreciative of storytelling and legacy, I found the session profoundly moving.

Equally heartwarming for me was seeing how warmly the members welcomed my daughter. Rotary is not merely an institution; it is a family built around values of empathy, respect, and service. At no point did she feel like an outsider in an unfamiliar room. Instead, she was embraced with warmth, curiosity, and encouragement. As a parent and as a Rotary member, that meant a great deal to me. Who knows, perhaps the evening may even have quietly planted the first seeds of a future Rotarian's journey. As the old saying goes, "People may forget meetings, but they rarely forget how they were made to feel."

In a world that often appears increasingly fragmented, evenings like these reaffirm why Rotary continues to remain relevant and powerful. Beyond projects, plans, and meetings, Rotary thrives because of relationships — relationships built on trust, shared purpose, and collective goodwill.

My sincere thanks again to the wonderful members of the Rotary Club of Battersea Power Station for an unforgettable evening of fellowship, learning, and collaboration. I genuinely look forward to strengthening this relationship further as we move ahead together in the spirit of service and partnership to Create Lasting Impact.



Dutta, third from right, with members of the Rotary Club of Battersea Power Station.

Happy Birthdays

Rtn. (Dr.) Sharmila Sengupta falling on July 06

Rtn. (Dr.) Jharna Ray falling on July 11

*PP Rtn. Sanjay Ray, Rtn. Manas Kumar Ghosh &
Mrs. Pratima Dutt spouse of Honorary Member Rtn.
Samirendu Dutt falling on July 16*

Anniversary

*Mrs. Arpita & Rtn. Manas Kumar
Ghosh falling on July 14*

How Dr. Abraham George is Building a World Of Second Chances

In 1965, three years after the Indo-China war, Dr. Abraham George—then a young captain in the Indian Army's artillery division—came close to death. His regiment was stationed in the Himalayas at 14,000 feet, battling extreme cold and low oxygen.

"I was leading 300–400 soldiers in a no-man's-land near the Chinese border. We were digging bunkers by blasting through rocks, preparing for possible conflict," he recalls. One explosion went horribly wrong, leaving him severely injured.

In the aftermath, as he lay recovering, a new resolve took shape: to build a life that would matter—and to use it in service of others.

As a child, he had watched soldiers train near his grandfather's home in Thiruvananthapuram. "I was fascinated by it all—the discipline, the uniform. I was a mischievous kid, but I wanted to join the military.

My parents didn't know much about it, but they supported me. I joined the National Defence Academy at the age of 14," he says.

In his memoir, *Mountains to Cross, Finding Life's Purpose in Service*, released last April, Dr. George recounts the moment of the accident as a fateful crossroads. In an interview with the Reader's Digest India, the social entrepreneur, philanthropist and the founder of Shanti Bhavan Children's project says it made him pause and think about what he was doing. "The [injury] was the breaking point," Dr. George says. "But it changed my life."

After being discharged from his duties on sick leave, he spent time with his family and pored over books. He was deeply influenced by *Reverence for Life* written by Albert Schweitzer. "It's about the how we all have an obligation to help those who are suffering, and the sanctity of life itself," he says. He was also moved by British philosopher, Bertrand Russell, a leading anti-war activist, who is known to have famously said, "War does not determine who is right—only who is left."

"I realized that I didn't want a life built around conflict. I do agree that somebody has to do that job, but I couldn't see myself doing it for the rest of my life," he says.

In December 1968, he arrived in the United States for a new chapter and found himself amid the civil-rights unrest and political upheaval. "I knew I was witnessing history unfold," he says. After earning a business degree and a PhD in international finance and development, he eventually founded Multinational Computer Models, a company that, by 1990, served 200 Fortune 500 clients—giving him the means and clarity to pursue sustainable philanthropy.

By 1995, Dr. George was back in India and ready to launch the non-profit through which he would route his social work—the George Foundation, whose aim was to improve the lives of marginalized people, focusing on poverty alleviation, environmental health and gender equality. However, its most notable accomplishments over the years are Project Lead-Free and the establishment of Shanti Bhavan.

Project Lead-Free was the most extensive blood-lead screening study ever conducted in India. Between 1997 and 1999, the foundation screened over 22,000 people, of which 15,000 were children in seven major Indian cities. The



Dr. Abraham George sold his successful U.S.-based business to focus full-time on philanthropy. After a near-death moment granted him a new lease on life, Dr. Abraham George chose to turn his blessings outward, creating opportunities so at-risk children can begin again.



results were astonishing. More than half under the age of 12 in urban areas had alarming blood lead levels, far exceeding 10 mcg/dl. Before this study, the Indian government had not recognized lead poisoning as a serious health threat. Confronted with the data, India's three major oil-refining companies committed to phasing out leaded petrol. Unleaded petrol in cars became law by 2000.

Dr. George also set his sights on creating a pioneering model for education. A residential school near Hosur, straddling the border of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka, Shanti Bhavan is a radical experiment, designed to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty. "We take in children, one from each family, from age four, and provide full-time lodging, education, meals, and a comprehensive upbringing," he says. The students hail from the most marginalized communities, including Dalits. Many have contended with abject poverty, violence, broken homes, parental fights and severe caste discrimination. Removing them from this toxic environment and creating opportunities for them was important.

But it wasn't easy. In the early days, when Shanti Bhavan's volunteers were sent to rural areas around the school, they were regarded with suspicion. People were convinced it was a scam. With patience and persistence, they gained the community's trust and formed its first batch of students.

When Shanti Bhavan Residential School officially opened in 1997, it welcomed its first cohort of 48 students—24 girls and 24 boys. Their commitment to these children and their families went beyond schooling: the institution supports its students through college and into their first jobs. Today, its graduates have gained entry to universities in India and abroad, transforming not only their own futures but those of their families. In 2024, a second Shanti Bhavan school opened in Chikkahosahalli, a village near Bangalore. A total of 400 students study across both schools, with an equal number having already graduated.

The cost of educating one child is a little over 2,200 USD [₹2.09 lakh] a year, says Dr. George. All facilities for the children are offered for free. After the 2008 financial crisis, in which he was hit hard, Shanti Bhavan depended on external donors for the first time. One of the biggest donors was Dr. George's own mother, herself an accomplished NASA scientist and one of the first Indian women to earn a PhD in physics. "She gave away all her life savings to Shanti Bhavan," he says. "None of us siblings inherited anything. She was so proud of the school and the children."

Despite the significant challenges, Dr. George claims to be the happiest of men. His legacy is not measured in wealth or recognition, but in the children in whom he invested over the years. "Transforming society—that's what we aim for. Only that can create lasting change."

By: Kamala Thiagarajan, readersdigest.in :: June 18, 2026



Minutes of 2175th RCM of RC Calcutta Jadavpur held on June 17, 2026 Wednesday at Casa Broadway, Kolkata at 6.30 PM

President Rtn. Sudipta Kundu called the meeting to order and welcomed the members present.

- National Anthem was led by Rtn. Shakhi Banerjee and joined by all.
- President Rtn. Sudipta briefly talked about some projects planned for coming days:
 - Establishing a rose garden at Godapiashal MGM High School, Medinipur.
 - That on June 20, 2026, LBC will be celebrating its milestone of touching '1000th Life' through a program called "Meet The Stars" to honour the courage of cancer warriors and survivors and celebrating the dedication of its beneficiaries, volunteers, donors and well-wishers to be held at Rotary Sadan, Kolkata. PP Rtn. Partha S. Sarkar urged members to make it convenient to attend the program and celebrate this special moment.
 - On June 20, 2026, Rotary District 3291 will be organising a CSR Workshop at Rotary Sadan 3:00 PM onwards. President Rtn. Sudipta requested if few of us could attend the same

considering the importance of CSR funds for the benefit of the club.

- Next, President Rtn. Sudipta talked about some projects for which there would be a genuine need for some fund raising to be able to continue with the work:
 - Beautician & Tailoring training courses at Sarenga, Bankura.
 - Donation of a generator at Godapiashal MGM High School, Midnapur.
 - Lat Sashadhar Sardar SmiritiSishu Niketan at Kultali, South 24 Parganas needs 5 Havells water pipe for drinking water for getting water from a nearby water pump. 110 children would be benefitted with this support. Honorary Member Rtn. (Dr.) Indrajit Ray had previously offered to extend his support through 'Vidyapith' for the same.
- President Rtn. Sudipta announced that the next RCM will be held on July 02, 2026 at Casa Broadway for the new Rotary Year under Presidentship of Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir, with Rtn. Manas K. Ghosh as the Club Secretary.
- Next, Rtn. (Dr.) Saiful Anam Mir conducted the club business and extended birthday greetings to Mrs. Smita Ray, spouse of PP Rtn. Sanjay Ray falling on June 21.
 - President Rtn. Sudipta invited PP Rtn. (Dr.) Kunal Ray to address the gathering. PP Rtn. (Dr.) Kunal Ray heaped praises on President Rtn. Sudipta for presenting such a wonderful year and appreciated the way all board members and other fellow members extended support to the outgoing President for carrying out his duty as the leader of the club.
 - Finally, as this happened to be the last RCM for the Rotary Year 2025-26, President Rtn. Sudipta thanked all the board and club members for their continued support and encouragement extended to him all through and further appreciated the all out efforts in making the good work possible through which RC Calcutta Jadavpur tried to uphold the motto of Rotary- 'Service Above Self' and tried to make a difference in the society. He also called upon each & every member to be there for the upcoming year and continue doing the good work for the club and "Create Lasting Impact" for the society. He also offered his best wishes to the next board for the upcoming Rotary Year. President Rtn. Sudipta was very generous and thoughtful to customise nice T-Shirts embossed with RI Logo and Rotary Club of Calcutta Jadavpur written on it and gifting the same to those who were present. Members present were delighted for such a gesture from the outgoing President and applauded him for his great leadership.
- Minutes of the 2174th meeting, was confirmed by the members present and the meeting was concluded, with thanks to everyone. Next, President Rtn. Sudipta invited everyone to join for fellowship and celebrate the moment

