

PRESS RELEASE

21st December 2021

Lepra, a specialist UK leprosy charity, the Rotary Club of Dhaka Pathfinders and the Rotary Club of Banani Model Town sign Memorandum of Understanding to beat leprosy in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh; where one more person is diagnosed with leprosy every two hours, these organisations are committed to working together to change lives.

COLCHESTER, ESSEX – On the 14th December, Lepra signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Rotary clubs of Dhaka Pathfinders and Banani Model Town; members of the Rotary Global Network, an organisation that has over 46,000 clubs across the world.

Building on the foundations of the partnership formed between Lepra and Rotary in 2019, the signing of the MoU in Bangladesh represents a proud moment in this developing relationship.

The Rotary Club of Dhaka PathFinders, the coordinating club, will establish and build a consortium of rotary clubs throughout the leprosy-endemic districts of Bangladesh, working together to raise awareness and carry out screening and rehabilitation activities.

Trustee of Lepra and a member of the Rotary International Global Hub, Nayan Patel, said “By combining the expertise of Lepra with Rotary’s work in disease eradication, this MoU represents real progress in the fight against leprosy”.

“By working together, we can amplify our voice- spreading the word that leprosy is curable and that people affected by it shouldn’t face discrimination. We hope that our partnership will continue to grow and strengthen, changing the face of leprosy care in Bangladesh.”

As a part of the national commitment, the honourable Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina declared a Zero Leprosy Initiative by 2030. Bangladesh’s leprosy burden ranks fourth highest in the world, with almost 10% of people affected suffering from a leprosy-related disability. Alongside this, people routinely face prejudice, discrimination and social isolation.

Over 4,000 people in Bangladesh continue to be diagnosed every year, yet leprosy is curable if detected early. In order to make leprosy a disease of little consequence, it is essential to dispel the myths surrounding this ancient disease. Last year, despite the global pandemic and persistent lockdowns, Lepra reached 226,730 people in their communities, delivering health education events to raise awareness in order to reduce transmission and promote wellbeing.

Dr David Pahan, Country Director of Lepra was accompanied by his Lepra colleagues at the historic signing; joined by Rotarian Shusmita Khan, President Elect of Rotary Club of Dhaka PathFinders, Rotarian Eng. Md. Shahidul Sarker, President of Rotary Club of Banani Model Town as well as both present and past Presidents of the clubs; both of whom are members of the Rotary International District 3281.

For further information, please contact: Rotarian Shusmita Khan, President Elect of Rotary Club of Dhaka PathFinders (Phone: 01713209091)

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NOTES TO EDITORS

About Lepra:

On 31st January 1924, the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association (BELRA) was launched at Mansion House in the City of London. They operated under this name for 40 years, before renaming as the British Leprosy Relief Association (LEPRA) in 1964. They been known simply as Lepra since 2008. Currently, Lepra work in India, Bangladesh and Zimbabwe and offer support, training and health system strengthening to local and national governments in its projects countries. Lepra aims to provide early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation for people affected by leprosy. From raising awareness at a local level through to national advocacy, Lepra works to ensure that people affected by leprosy can lead normal lives; free from the damage the disease causes to their health, livelihood and future. You can find out more here <https://www.lepra.org.uk/>

About Rotary International District 3281:

Bangladesh saw the light of Rotary with the formation of Rotary Club of Dhaka on 22nd December 1937 being sponsored by Rotary Club of Calcutta. Later, in the erstwhile East Pakistan, six Rotary Clubs were organized namely Chittagong (1952), Narayanganj (1953), Khulna (1957), Mymensing (1957), Dhaka North (1967), Comilla (1968), and Chandpur (1970). After our independence in 1971, Rotary Club of Chandpur received Charter as the first Rotary Club in Bangladesh, on 12 April 1974. Since 1991-92, there were significant growth both in Number of Clubs and in Membership in RID 3280 and by the year 2010-11, the Club number went up to almost 170 and the Membership was about 5000. To handle this large numbers of club and Rotarian's the RID district was bifurcated as RID 3281 and 3282.

Rotary Club of Dhaka Pathfinders:

Rotary Club of Dhaka PathFinders is a member of the Rotary International through RID 3281. With 47 members this club aims to serve humanity through service and fellowship. The club has notable projects like Annual Medical Mission in association with USA based organization Partners for World Health, PRITILOTA – Menstrual hygiene project at garments factories in Bangladesh and Protidiner Golpo – a harassment prevention anthology project.

Rotary Club of Banani Model Town:

Rotary Club of Banani Model Town is the member of Rotary International & belongs to District 3281, Dhaka Bangladesh. This Club has been Chartered in 2014-15 with a group of young professionals. It has been played a significant role to the community through various service projects, specially establishing a School for the Autistic Students at Jhenaidah, a Sewing Training Institute at Tongi,



Female Friendly Toilet at Shariatpur, Regular Scholarship Program for the underprivileged Students in Association with China Government etc. This Club aims to lend their hands to the society & believes that "Mankind is our Business".

