

Let there be peace...

Songs, dance, lights and the Peace Flame from the Netherlands — the Peace Congregation hosted by Mahadevi Birla World Academy was one of its kind

More than 30,000 paper cranes, in hues of red, blue, green, pink and other colours, adorned the premises of Mahadevi Birla World Academy as the school hosted teachers, parents and students of 14 other city schools during a Peace Congregation.

The cranes were a tribute to Sadako Sasaki, a victim of the atomic bomb in Japan and known for the story of a thousand origami cranes. The congregation was part of the Kolkata Peace Project adopted by the school that saw the World Peace Flame, that has been burning in the Netherlands for the last decade, come to India. After Bangalore and Delhi, the flame was lit in Calcutta in collaboration with Divyesh Bhandari of Imbroglia Productions and the World Peace Flame Foundation in the Netherlands.

The congregation was followed by a two-day workshop that sensitised students about the importance of peace through activities and discussions to help them attain inner peace in the face of violence all around us. Realising the need to address the spiritual quotient of the students along with the IQ and EQ, the congregation also saw students take a pledge for peace, illuminate the campus and sing in unison.



Around 1,400 students representing the five elements of Earth presented Elemental Serenity, a dance production that highlighted the synthesis of the five elements for peace. They all splashed vibrant colours of nature on the stage with interesting props that were a treat to the senses. Yoga, martial arts, skating and more skills made for a memorable evening.

A peace congregation is special. Instead of creating a generation that get the highest



I think this initiative should be taken everywhere. It is a one-of-a-kind event — I have never seen anything like this anywhere. And it has been done beautifully, right from the presentation of the students on the stage to the ambience.



— Neena Singh

Executive director, Akshar School

We see so much of violence every day around us — the congregation was a good initiative and essential as well. The tolerance and acceptance level will go up with such workshops and events. In our school too we have assemblies and talks for greater harmony.



— Sangeeta Tandon

Principal, Shri Shikshayatan School

Our theme for this academic session is Let Peace Prevail. I got the idea of bringing the World Peace Flame to Calcutta. We had a two-day workshop where students from 14 schools participated to learn about inner peace and analyse the term through activity and discussion.



— Anjana Saha

Principal, MBWA

A peace congregation is special. Instead of creating a generation that get the highest scores, let us help our children deal with frustrations and failures so that their interaction with the outer world is not violent. For this to happen we need to learn to respect differences and let history not perpetuate hatred.



— **Amita Prasad**, dean of education and research, The Heritage School

Let us not judge anybody. Let us not become judgemental without reason. We are all born with flaws. I have been involved with people who are judged, who are punished again and again. And now their children are also being judged for all the wrong reasons. No child is born an offender. Let us find peace inside us by giving these children a normal childhood. We get back love only when we give love. Let the world be one because we are one.



— **Alokanda Roy**
Dansuese and social activist



The 100-odd choristers, dressed in hues of the rainbow, were the soul of the congregation. The choir sang the *Earth Song* and *What About Us*. This was followed by a Hindi song *Kuch Parvat Hilaye to Bataye*. Up next was *Last Night I had the Strangest Dream* which took everyone to the world that seems so distant and utopian but one that we all yearn for.



The moonlit evening was made brighter with around 2,000 "harbingers of peace" illuminating the school campus with lights. Teachers, students and parents joined in to stand for peace and harmony.



The World Peace Flame was lit by Divyesh Bhandari (centre), from Imbrogio Productions, Bangalore, MBWA principal Anjana Saha and the chief guests as the choir sang Gary Barlow's song *Sing*. "The aim is to educate children about inner peace with their studies, circumstances, peer pressure and how they can achieve inner peace. The project runs only in schools and works on students from classes VII to IX. Though the project will move on to other cities the workshops in the schools will continue," said Bhaduri.

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— **Anjana Saha**
Principal, MBWA

In today's scenario, programmes like this one are very important. Such events make us aware, not that we don't know, that each and every step we take, we need to inculcate this value in students and also in ourselves.



— **Sunita Arora**
Principal, DPS Howrah

It is a very important idea for the current times. We needed it and schools do it at some level or the other. It is a wonderful idea to have it as a congregation.



— **Sharmila Bose**, principal,
Sushila Birla Girls' School

Peace is the only alternative to violence and war and for that we will have to work together.



— **Sneha Koley**
Class VIII, Shri Shikshayatan School

The peace congregation is a unique exercise. The world is a family. We hope for peace and happiness to prevail.



— **Jagriti Bhutoria**
Class XII, MBWA

Peace comes from within. It is amazing to see so many people here for one cause.



— **Shreyoshi Roy Chowdhury**, Class VII, Sri Sri Academy

There is so much discord and violence in this world and so it becomes extremely important to promote peace.



— **Kanika Khetan**
Class XII, MBWA

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