

Ranjan Roy: The man who ran the network

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Ranjan Roy
passed away 10.03.2018

NEW DELHI Earlier this year, on an obligingly sunny winter afternoon, a group of Times of India journalists descended upon the elegant, tastefully decorated Gurgaon home of [Ranjan Roy](#), chief of the [Times News Network \(TNN\)](#) and a member of the paper's national editorial board. By then, it was clear to his many friends and admirers that even Ranjan's indomitable will could no longer keep pushing his body, which had been ravaged by his years-long, courageous battle against cancer — through much of which he had continued to do a full day's job despite being told by colleagues to "take it easy". [Ranjan](#) had been the life and soul of every gathering in his 14-odd years with [TOI](#), and we wanted one more memorable party with him.

Vast quantities of food and drink were demolished, old stories were dug out and shared yet again, legs were gently pulled. Ranjan was his usual gracious self, as were his wife Vidhu and son Aman. As the lunch gradually neared conclusion, Ranjan cheerfully observed, "Now, that was an afternoon worth dying for." Only he could have said it without sounding even the slightest bit maudlin, and without a hint of self-pity. We all laughed, as we had so many times before, at his seemingly inappropriate, politically incorrect remarks that somehow came out just right when he said them, with that wonderfully impish charm and complete lack of awkwardness.

An alumnus of St Stephen's and the Ivy League [Princeton University](#), from where he did his Masters in Public Affairs, Ranjan blazed a remarkable trail through the Press Trust of India in New Delhi and the Associated Press in Kuala Lumpur and New York before returning to India in 2004 to head TNN. In the years that followed, TOI expanded from fewer than 10 editions to about 60, with a network of correspondents unmatched in the history of Indian media. It was a tough, high-pressure job that involved round-the-clock coordination and constant ideation, but Ranjan did it without breaking a sweat.

Pushing, prompting, cajoling, clarifying, he would spend hours working the phone as he meticulously curated the best stories from across the length and breadth of India. His role required him to function from Delhi, but he never lost a reporter's wanderlust. A generous and insightful mentor, he always encouraged younger colleagues to head out to remote locations — the more far-flung, the better — to search for untold stories and unexplored angles.

Ranjan was blessed with that quality that is so hard to define, but impossible to miss — a natural, easy-going, irresistible 'cool' that made people gravitate towards him. But he was never flippant when it came to work, and not only did he not suffer fools, he left them in no doubt about what he thought of them. People who tried to bluff their way past him quickly learned the hard way that it was better to do their homework thoroughly.