

**Headmaster Report from
Moravian Institute in Rajpur, India**

Prepared for Canadian Sponsors

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A. Moravian Institute: Rajpur

1. Moravian Institute: Rajpur has been isolated and under lockdown since 13th March, especially after two Forest Officer trainees in Dehradun returned from a study tour to Europe and were found positive for Covid-19 on their return. As the months have progressed the virus has continued to spread because of insufficient testing, tracing and isolation. Here is a brief history of our lockdown, etc.

4th March - Class 11 final exams were completed, followed by annual break. Most Class 11 boarders left.

7th March - Class 9 final exams were completed, followed by annual break. Most Class 9 boarders left.

14th March - Lessons were cancelled for class 8 downwards (along with other schools in Uttarakhand) up to 31st March. Boarders remaining were not allowed to leave campus and under strict Hygiene Protocol. Visitors from outside were discouraged except for essential work. All persons were required to wash and disinfect their hands and to cover their mouth and face. Boarders' parents / guardians began to withdraw their children in increasing numbers.

19th March - CISCE postponed remaining external exams for Classes 12 and 10 until further notice. Eleven more boarders left, numbers went down from 36 to 25 - these being children whose homes are too far (and risky) to travel to. All teachers from outside have remained at home. Hostel and Support Staff from outside were sent on leave from 20th to 31st March. Hostel rations inventory showed that we had already stocked rations for over 1 month, which would now be sufficient for 3+ months due to lower numbers. Changes in duties of Campus Staff were put in place, with new timetables, including games and recreation for pupils, and extra campus security and hygiene.

20th March - 8 pm Prime Minister announced national "people's lockdown" from midnight the same day for 5 days.

Sunday 22nd - Full day national lockdown.

Tuesday 24th - Headcount showed we had 81 persons on campus consisting of school level pupils, college students, Campus staff and family members. 8 pm - Prime Minister announced a national mandatory lockdown from midnight for

3 weeks up to **Tuesday 14th April**. *This was the first of 5 lockdowns up to now (October).*

Campus staff were able to get groceries, medicines and other essential supplies. Vehicles on Campus were made available to take sick people to the hospital. Hostel Staff and pupils assembled daily to pray for themselves, their families and others in India and around the world. *This has continued over the months.*

2. On 13th April, anticipating an extension of the lockdown, we introduced even stricter isolation within Moravian Institute (MI) between buildings and houses on campus. We arranged a greengrocer to come to MI gate twice a week, so that staff or families would not need to go out to shop for vegetables/fruits. However, emergency travel for medical treatment was still available. **On 14th April**, the Prime Minister announced an extension to the Lockdown for another 19 days through to **Sunday 3rd May**, although a few relaxations were given to some parts of Uttarakhand. *Now we are under Unlock No.5, and many people have become careless, indifferent or fatalistic.*

3. On 20th April we began Online Lessons for our school pupils. It was a big challenge, but we arranged training of our teachers in the use of video conferencing platforms. Mr Simeon Kamei (our ICT and network administrator) has been our main trainer. Not knowing that a pandemic would cripple our traditional methods of teaching-learning, In March 2019 we had already started discussing ways of changing our methods and using technology and Internet based resources. In December 2019 we already began getting resources ready for the changes we felt were necessary. When the pandemic struck, we were already half-prepared, and we simply had to accelerate our preparation, organisation and delivery. I joined the other academic administrators in teaching online. The Online lessons have been well received, although quite a few children are in homes without enough funds for a smartpone (let alone a tablet/computer/laptop). A significant

number of boarders went back to their homes in the high mountains where there is no mobile/cell phone network (let alone Internet wifi). They are lagging behind the others, and we are trying to bring them back to the Institute campus, if their families allow it. In our neighbourhood, it seems that word has spread about the good quality of our Online Lessons and a number of new pupils have joined us. Moravian Institute was able to register free of charge with Google for their **G-Suite for Education**. This suite has helped us a lot. The teachers have been working very hard indeed, and were given a "summer" break from lessons 1st-15th July. *They are in the midst of 2nd Term Assessments in October, using G-Suite for Education for testing pupils and not just teaching.*

4. On 13th May six (6) of our Ladakhi boarding boys in Classes 8, 9 and 11 left for their homes in Ladakh., with escort arranged by the Ladakh Union Territory Administration. They travelled for 3 days by bus via Jammu and Srinagar for Kargil and Leh. On 15th May we heard that a bus had been involved in an accident along the route, but were relieved that it was not the bus in which boys were travelling. They did get stuck in Zoji-la Pass due to heavy snowfall, but reached home safely eventually.

5. On 22nd May our affiliating and external examination board (CISCE) announced 1st-15th July as dates the remaining external exams for Classes 12 and 10, but after cases in the Bombay High Court, on **25th June in the Supreme Court**, the exams were cancelled, only due to the tremendous transmission of the Covid-19 outbreak in many parts of the country.

6. Since April, some people had been agitating for the cancellation of fees that parents pay to private schools. At the same time, the same people had been demanding that private schools pay full salaries to their staff. The private schools argued that they need to charge tuition fees in order to pay salaries. This matter was decided largely in favour of the schools in eight different High Courts, and in Uttarakhand implemented by the State Government on **22nd June**, but some lawyers took the case to the **Supreme**

Court. Moravian Institute was affected by this dispute because part of our revenue income derives from Day Pupils' fees, and our ability to pay full salaries depends on fees. The contribution of our sponsors is very important to our finances, especially to support our boarders (even though most of them are not on campus right now). However, there is variation in the rates of contribution, and overall, these contributions are not sufficient to cover the full costs. The Supreme Court heard the case on **10th July**, and ruled in favour of the schools as directed by the high courts. *However, it continues to be difficult for us to collect fees from Day Pupils, and right now we are facing a major cash flow problem. We are not sure if the Uttarakhand High Court will not direct schools to reduce fees. In addition, the central government got Parliament to pass amendments to the Foreign Currency Regulation Act on 23rd September. This Act governs how charities in India can get funds from overseas, etc. The laws were made much stricter all of a sudden, and we have had to scramble to get expert legal advice and comply.*

7. On 6th October, Moravian Institute hosted eight (8) candidates from 5 other schools for a **Class 12 External Examination** of CISCE (our affiliating/ accrediting body) in Delhi. We were able to conduct the examination successfully and with all safety precautions in place - by disinfecting the building and the exam hall, sanitising all the furniture, entry and exit of candidates at 5-minute intervals, maintaining 5 metres (well over the minimum 2 metres) distance between candidates' tables, handwashing and using hand sanitiser, everyone wearing masks at all times, paper handlers wearing gloves, etc, etc. It was quite a challenge for everyone, especially the exam candidates. We hope they did well.

8. In May our **16 College Students on campus** did a free online course offered by Tata Consultancy Services. In July they did three more courses each offered by various universities in the UK and the US through Coursera. Four

students had gone to Chennai and Bangalore for a 5-month Discipleship Training School. They were able to return to Dehradun on 7th June after the lockdown was partially lifted. Another Nursing student from Bangalore was able to return on 9th June. All had to quarantine for at least 2 weeks before being allowed to interact with others.

9. We also have 9 (nine) **alumni** training as nurses: Two in Bangalore: Chum Kumari and Turlen Lugun. Seven in Dehradun: Purnima Bhandari, Reema Rana, Priyanka Rana, Sakshi Lal, Aman Juyal, Langulong Rongmei and Anthony Massey. *Six (6) have just started training as nurses in Dehradun this month [October]: Parul Semwal, Shivani Sharma, Shilpa Kumari, Anjali Singh, Gairei Rongmei, and Sohiam Rongmei. Another 5 (five) have got admission into other bachelor's degree courses.*

B. Moravian Institute Binnakandi Campus (Cachar, Assam)

Everyone is safe. Most pupils do not have smartphones. Some are out of mobile phone range. A few pupils in the village visit the school campus or teachers' homes for lessons. Our former headmaster and alumnus Br Amon Gengmei, eldest brother of current Headmaster (Br Titus) is working in Assam Govt Education Department. Br Amon tested positive for Covid-19 in September, and everyone had to go into quarantine. He has now recovered.

C. Moravian Institute Chiktan Campus (Kargil, Ladakh)

Everyone is safe. Some Shia Muslims from Ladakh contracted the virus when they went on pilgrimage to Iran. They got treatment in Rajasthan or Ladakh in March-April. Some were from the Chiktan area (where our campus is situated) and the whole area was in quarantine for a long time. Kargil district had 500 cases by the end of July. Some pupils do not have smartphones and/or are out of mobile phone range. But about 20 out of 89 have been attending Online lessons. From August some pupils of Classes 6-8 have been visiting the campus on alternate days for in-person lessons with our 2 teachers from Manipur (Mr Nganaomi and Mr Mahrinii) residing in Chiktan. Our headmaster Mr Vijayakumar, wife Mrs Savitha, and daughter had to go to Bangalore in June for Mrs Savitha's urgent medical treatment. They are now in Chennai, conducting lessons online.

D. Moravian Institute alumni who are health professionals, and mostly on the "front-line", for whom we request prayer are:

Doctors

1. Yohan Wangchuk Katpa
2. Stanzin
3. Suman Tamang (Nepal)
4. Jeanthai Gengmei (*dentist, gave birth to her second daughter on 19th May*)

Medical Lab technologists

1. Abhishek Patras
2. Ningthou Rongmei (serving as paramedic in MI Rajpur)

Pharmacists

1. Padma Wangdus Gyapa
2. Liza Kamei

Nurses

1. Karuna Tamang (Nepal)
2. Christina Deldan Angmo
3. Namrata Sohal
4. Jengmailiu (Sunita) Rongmei
5. Salome Rongmei
6. Julia Panmei (*got married to Ashween John in Delhi on 7th Sept.*)
7. Sonam Chhodon (*gave birth to her first child, a boy in mid-August*)
8. Rachel Ruangmei
9. Ankita McGregor
10. Ayushi Juyal
11. Meenakshi

12. Lumagiliu Kamei (*contracted Covid-19 in early June, along with her infant son [Jaden] and husband [Gaigui, also alumnus]. They recovered in a few weeks. I had baptised Jaden in December in Delhi.*)
13. Priyanka Rongmei
14. Reeta Singh Panwar
15. Sylvia Panmei
16. Luniam Guamei
17. Ruth Kalsang
18. Archana Singh
19. Christina Lazar Ekka (*married to alumnus Kevin Ekka; gave birth to her first child, a girl, on 3rd October*)
20. Kiran Thapa
21. Kelsang Lhamo
22. Ngawang Choney
23. Tsering Tashi
24. Yarmichon Raleng
25. Sandra Gengmei
26. Kassang Dolma
27. Riya Luke
28. Upasana Daliya
29. Janet Subba

E. Rajpur Moravian Congregation (RMC)

1. In-person services have been cancelled since Palm Sunday. Since December 2018 the congregation has been served by Br Bir Bahadur Rana (alumnus and student minister). The congregation committee recorded worship songs and Br Bir Bahadur Rana's sermon, and shared these on WhatsApp every Saturday evening for each family to play the next day. **Since Sunday 13th September** onwards, the congregation has been **meeting virtually** on Zoom. This has enhanced the sense of fellowship. Only the sermon is pre-recorded and uploaded on to the congregation's Youtube page. 8th-9th July we participated in the Unity Prayer Watch.

2. One of our adherents from Korea had to travel to Korea under difficult circumstances. Her three sons stayed behind for their final Class 12 examinations. When the exams were cancelled they too managed to fly to Korea, where they are likely to be conscripted.

3. A number of congregation members are also members of HCF (**Himalayan Christian Fellowship**). On 3rd August HCF member, Pastor Hari Bahadur, serving in Rohru, HP, near Tyuni of western Uttarakhand, passed away suddenly, leaving behind his wife and young children.

4. On 4th August evening RMC member **Br Suresh Chand Dongriyal** was hit by a speeding car in Rajpur and suffered multiple fractures of the ribs and right leg (requiring steel rods). He is recovering slowly.

5. Br Bir Bahadur Rana and I had started a Bible study series for **Catechism** with Sr Rahel Simon, Br Josiah Rongmei and Sr Simran Sardana. This concluded in September and we began a new series on 30th Sept. with Br Dishant and Sr Gauri Sardana in Ambala.

F. A number of people we know have been bereaved. Others got Covid-19 or are recovering.

1. In April, one of our Board members, **Mr Robin Amos**, was bereaved. His brother-in-law died of a heart attack aged 48 in Delhi, leaving behind his two children. His wife had already died before. The family could not attend the funeral because of lockdown.

2. **Br Nagendra Pradhan** and **Br Shanti Pradhan**, Moravian pastors in Kathmandu, Nepal, were bereaved when their mother died on 20th/21st April in Darjeeling District of kidney failure. They could not attend the funeral because of the sealed international border between Nepal and India.

3. On 21st May the mother of our (MI Rajpur) Middle School Coordinator (**Mrs Rahel Gupta**) passed away in her home in Dehradun, due to complications arising from diabetes. Only 20 close family members were allowed to attend the funeral. During the funeral, Rahel's husband (**Mr Praveen Gupta**, Vice Principal) got the news that his father's first cousin had had heart complications and had also passed away. It was a double blow for Mr Praveen Gupta but he bore all this very well, and has been a tower of strength for both families, while continuing to work very hard to support all our teachers with their lessons.

4. On 22nd June, one of our former teachers, **Mrs Romila Kanhai**, who had retired in 2004, passed away at

her home in Dehradun due to complications from diabetes.

5. On 26th June, our Tibetan language teacher **Mrs Tsering Dolma Dwarka** heard that her father had passed away about a month before in his hometown of Lhasa in Tibet.

6. Sr Amenla of Delhi Moravian Fellowship lost her job at the beginning of the lockdown. Her brother in Nagaland passed away after a long illness. She travelled by train on 6th July but had to quarantine for 2 weeks. She is now back in Delhi.

7. On 31st July alumni **Gaigui and Gaichung's grandmother** passed away in Assam. Br Nathaniel Gengmei (alumnus and student minister) conducted the funeral service.

8. On 4th August alumnus **Silas Kahmei's grandmother** passed away in Assam.

9. On 14th August the father of **Mr. Ajoy Charles** (Moravian Institute Ex-Teacher) passed away.

10. In mid-August a Christian soldier (JCO **Bir Bal Ekka**) from Jharkhand State died of Covid-19 in Ladakh, leaving behind a wife and 3 children. Br. Dimchui (alumnus and student minister) conducted the funeral service (on Saturday 15th) and Sr Naomi and Br David Sonam assisted.

11. On 22nd August one of our (MI Rajpur) teachers, **Mrs Anita Gaur**, lost her father due to heart problems.

No hospital would admit him for fear of the virus, and he died at home.

12. On 6th August the mother of one of our former teachers, **Mr Rajkumar** passed away after a short illness.

13. On 24th August **Mr. Ajeet Anson died Covid-19**. He and his wife, Mrs Indra Anson were visiting their daughter (Jyoti) for her birthday in Delhi. Jyoti's husband, **Prashant** (she is still in the hospital and son **Vatsal** were found positive for Covid-19, but recovered at home, while **Mrs Indra Anson** recovered in the hospital after treatment. **Mr Anson was a Pastor in Kanpur**. Their son-in-law, Prashant, is Sr Madhu Simon's younger brother. Br Robert and Sr Madhu Simon's daughter (Kshipra) and

son (Kaustubh) and cousin (Ashok) had to quarantine, but were negative. Sr Madhu Simon is Principal of Moravian Mission School, Leh.

14. I have a friend in Teachbeyond in Canada called **Howard Dueck**. He was diagnosed with cancer in August. He is undergoing chemotherapy.

15. Br Levi Ruangmei (alumnus and student minister in Delhi) got married in January. His wife, **Sr Lutiliu**, works as a nurse in Assam. On Sept 6th Sr Lutiliu tested Covid-19 positive. She has recovered now.

16. My friends and successors in Gateway India are Raj and Renee Godi. On 15th September **Raj Godi's brother** in Andhra Pradesh tested positive for Covid-19. He has since recovered.

17. In September **Amon Gengmei** (alumnus, ex-Headmaster of MI Binnakandi, and eldest brother of current Headmaster, Titus Gengmei) working in Assam Govt Education Department, tested Covid-19 positive in Binnakandi. He has now recovered.

18. Sept 18th - Simeon Kamei's cousin **Sr Sangbuan**, in Imphal, Manipur, tested Covid-19 positive. She has now recovered.

19. Sept 22nd - **Rahul Chhetri** - Class 12 Day Pupil at Moravian Institute, living near Kothal Gate **died of Rabies**. It seems he was bitten by a puppy about 6 months ago, and did not take it seriously. A few weeks ago he began to feel unwell, and they took him to the hospital, and he told his parents about the dog bite. But it was too late and he could not recover in spite of medical treatment.

20. Sept 28th - **Br. Yacob Batapa**, senior member of the Leh Moravian Congregation, passed away at his home in Leh, Ladakh, after a short illness. Br Samson Thangpa (alumnus and minister at Khalatse) and Dimchui (alumnus and student minister at Leh) conducted the funeral.

21. On 6th October **Rev. P. J. Singh**, pastor of the Morrison Memorial (Church of North India) Church in Dehradun, was admitted to hospital in Dehradun for Covid-19 treatment. He is under plasma therapy.

G. Moravian Church work

1. As you know, after retiring in December 2018, from serving as minister in Rajpur, BMB asked me to continue providing **sacramental cover** for Rajpur and Delhi (since October 2018), which I was very glad to do. But this has of course come to a halt because of the coronavirus.

2. Since March the **Interim Church Board** consisting of Sr Lasang Lama (Delhi), Br Titus Gengmei (Assam), Br Samson Thangpa (Ladakh), Br Simon Shankar and Br Narendra Maharjan (Nepal) and myself have been active in online meetings every week to draft a **Book of Order for South Asia** as a Mission Province of the Moravian Church.

H. Community transmission in India

1. Covid-19 is spreading day by day to alarming proportions, including in Delhi, Dehradun, Assam and Ladakh, even though the rate of increase has declined somewhat this month. In September, India became No.2 in the world, behind only the USA. By the grace of God the fatality rate is lower than some other countries. However, hospital (and bed, ICU, and ventilator) capacity is limited. Most patients are being sent home to isolate and recover. At Moravian Institute: Rajpur, even though some people on campus feel confined, we are trying to take the necessary precautions as strictly as possible. Fortunately, we have a large enough campus with plenty of space and fresh air, with facilities for games and sports. Even with 80+ people, the campus feels rather empty sometimes.

2. A lot of poor people in India, especially migrant labourers and pavement dwellers, continue to have severe problems due to loss of employment and lack of shelter and food. Most went home from cities, across state boundaries, even on foot. Some of them were unable to practise physical distancing due to panic, and have spread Covid-19 without intending to.

I. Family news

1. My first cousin, **Idzes Kundan** is a civil servant in Mumbai. She and her husband **Niket** (a senior police officer in Mumbai), were busy organising the transportation of migrant labourers from Mumbai to their homes in other parts of India. In mid-May Idzes and Niket got infected with Covid-19. She was in intensive care for some time. By the grace of God they recovered.

2. Idzes's sister-in-law **Yangchen** is a doctor in Ladakh. Unfortunately, in mid-June she caught the virus while attending to patients and passed it on to her husband (my other cousin) **Dorjay**. Again, by the grace of God, both of them recovered.

3. Last Tuesday 13th, Susan's niece, **Ziwa, elder son (Noah), husband (Zangpo) and Zangpo's niece (Mabel)**, tested positive for Covid-19. All are members of Shey Moravian Church. It seems Br Zangpo and

Mabel caught the virus in the Ladakh Lieutenant Governor's office. Other family members and relatives are in quarantine.

4. My mother Ama Zhidey and other family members in Rajpur are keeping safe. Susan's mother, my sister Naomi and her daughter Sharon from Ladakh spent the winter with us. Susan's mother is still with us, although Naomi and Sharon returned to Leh in a van 8th-10th July when the lockdown was lifted. Charisma is with Susan and me, looking for jobs - made scarcer because of the pandemic. Our son, Shalomel, his wife and their 2 boys are under lockdown in Kalamazoo in Michigan, and safe.

5. My mother's twin younger sisters, Chamzes and Sungzin, are living in Rajpur. **Auntie Chamzes** is not keeping well as she has Parkinson's along with diabetes, etc. Her children from Ladakh and Delhi came here last week and are spending time with her.