

Conversation with Ditol Myllemngap and His Nephew 12-12-25

On the evening of Dec. 12, the Partner Church Circle had delightful and informative Zoom call with Ditol Myllemngap, Secretary of UUCF's Partner congregation in the Khasi Hills of northeast India, and Headmaster of the Puriang Unitarian School.

Tailoring Class: We commented on the quality of the end-of-year creations by the tailoring class students. [see photos: https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1NO3XTSSLrI-RMNOGreysT6HBZ_oWlaM?usp=drive_link] Ditol responded that the tailoring class, now in its second year, is going very well. It meets every Saturday for students in 6th through 12th grades from Puriang and surrounding villages who wish to come. They have to provide their own cloth and other material; the school provides the teacher and three sewing machines. The teacher has told Ditol that more machines are needed so the students have more opportunity to sew. We discussed the possibility of charging a fee, at least for students from outside of Puriang. Ditol said he will be meeting with the tailoring class parents on Thursday and is planning to let them know that once their students have received their tailoring certificate (after two years), they would be able to set up a business in a market. Given this commercial possibility, he will raise the question of charging a small fee to help support and build the tailoring program.

Furniture-making Class: Given the success of the tailoring and music classes, Ditol would like to establish another skills class teaching carpentry and furniture-making. These are skills that students can use to make a living. In order to do so, he needs to find a craftsman willing to teach the course; procure the needed equipment; and build another classroom. He believes the local legislator will help obtain the necessary funding. We concurred with the importance of skills training and suggested that a business management component might be helpful.

New Classrooms: The two new classrooms on the land purchased near the school should be completed by the beginning of the new school year in mid-February. [see photos: https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Oj2UqNKlmTRgD-mXApSxhOfKvI0Xgwf6/view?usp=drive_link] One will be used for the existing skills training classes; the other as a computer lab and for the "SMART" class. The SMART class is a tablet-based curriculum covering many subjects created and sponsored by the Bowland Charitable Trust of the British Unitarians. The class for all Puriang high school students is offered on Thursdays and in Khasi Unitarian schools on other days. Each year the Trust sends two or three young British teachers to assist in teaching the curriculum.

Upcoming Events:

- Dec. 17 – beginning of the winter break
- Jan. 12 – beginning of 10th grade standardized test class
- Jan. 10 – Unitarian Union of Northeast India (UUNEI) Women's Conference
- Jan. 17 – UUNEI Youth Conference
- Jan. 30 – Joint Conference between the UUNEI and the separate group of Unitarians in Chennai (in southeast India) Ten people from Puriang, including Ditol, will be part of the 120
- Feb. 16 – Beginning of 2026 schoolyear
- Mar. 1 -- UUNEI Annual Conference (GA)

Exchange with Ditol's Nephew: Our substantive discussions were charmingly interrupted by the appearance of Ditol's 9-year-old nephew, Markarios. Markarios will be starting 4th grade. He speaks English well, likes drawing and math, and wants to become a doctor. He asked each of us our ages and about our families, and said emphatically that we should visit him in Puriang. Dick described the annual Santa visit to his and Sharon's Falls Church neighborhood. Ditol asked for a written description that he could share.

Next Call: Mid-January