

## Emergency Appeal for Leh, Ladakh

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Following on from the dreadful floods in Pakistan the monsoon rain hit North India in the early hours of Friday morning. I have managed to make contact with Br Thsespal Kundan, in Rajpur, and over the weekend he has been able to contact his relatives in Leh. Communication with Leh is difficult as the floods and mud slides which followed the torrential downpour have taken out power lines, land telephone wires and the satellite tower was also swept away. The British Mission Board will be sending emergency funds immediately so that our brothers and sisters in Leh can help those who have been affected by the floods and any would like to make a contribution it will enable more aid to be given.

The following is information taken from Br Kundan's e-mail:

*"Two reporters from a TV channel got to Leh (probably on the plane) which managed to land at the airport today after it was cleared of mud and sludge. It took a full 24 hours to clear the airport of sludge before it was fit for planes to land.*

*The news on TV told us of a cloudburst and very heavy rain over Leh and its surrounding villages (including Shey) on Thursday night. But the upper parts of Leh, including the main bazaar and the church and school are safe. We believe the church in Shey is also safe, although we have not heard from Dechen chamga. We have not heard of any church member being injured or missing. This is by the grace of the Lord Jesus. We understand Khalatse did not suffer the cloudburst.*

*It seems that the cloudburst happened just after midnight on Thursday while people were asleep. The rain resulted in floods in Nyemo, Phyang, Leh, Saboo, Choglamsar and Shey. The water ran down the hillsides along unexpected channels, creating slush and mud as it went along. The flow gathered momentum and strength as it flowed and washed away cars, buses, trucks, trees, boulders along its path. The mud bricks of the houses in the way of course easily dissolved into mud, even stone houses could not resist the flow very much. As a result most houses in the way collapsed on top of the people sleeping inside, trapping them inside, so that they drowned or suffocated in the sludge, and got carried away in the mud slide.*

*In Leh town the water and sludge got concentrated near the old bus stand (close to the large concrete town gate), from where it flowed down to the new bus stand burying many people in its wake, then flowing further down damaging the radio and TV station, the civil SNM hospital, the petrol station, and all the shops along the road, covering part of the airport. Many bodies have been extracted by excavators from this area. 120 are confirmed dead because their bodies have been brought to the civil (SNM) hospital. About 1500 are estimated to be injured. Most of the injured in and near Leh (including patients from SNM hospital) are being treated in the Army hospital (on the western side of town) because SNM hospital is damaged.*

*The volume of water and sludge in Saboo was so great that it flowed down to Choglamsar via the ITBP camp in the large plain in between, past Choglamsar bazaar and down to the Indus, not far from Choglamsar bridge. About 20+ soldiers (probably ITBP) are missing, quite apart from over 500 civilians.*

*In Saboo itself, the water went past Uncle Odpal and Auntie Martha's house (which my grandfather built about 60 years ago). It washed away the car and garage of my mother's first cousin, but did not touch the main house. Some neighbours just across a narrow alley got washed away and the bodies have not been found yet. The sludge then went further down behind the house of Uncle Elihud George and washed away a resort that his son Peter and a partner from Rajasthan had built. We heard that someone tried to go from Leh to Saboo but could not because of the water and mud in between.*

*In Shey, there used to be a primary school called "Druk Padma" made famous recently by Bollywood star Aamir Khan for being included in his film "3 Idiots". The school was washed away, although all the children are safe (being day pupils, we suppose).*

*We have not been able to get news about Phyang and Nyemo because communication lines are down. The BSNL tower got knocked down in the mudslide. Airtel cell phones in Leh town are working, but people's phone batteries are getting discharged and difficult to charge due to shortage of electricity.*

*Of course, there was so much water everywhere that many small bridges and roads have been washed away or damaged in a radius of about 20 km of Leh. Many fields in this area are in a bad shape. Crops of standing grain, waiting for harvesting in a few weeks' time, have been destroyed by the muddy water and sludge. Many people whose houses are near streams have moved out to higher places on the hillsides.*

*The injured are in a state of shock. Others are desperate to find their family and friends, but hope is receding because it is already 48 hours since the flood started. Some of the Ladakhi children in the institute are worried, but we do not have definite information about their families. Mercifully, many of them are not from Leh or the affected villages.*

*We request your prayers for the injured and bereaved and those who have lost their homes and livelihood.*

*Thsespal (and Susan)*

*The latest reports: As far as we can tell no one from the Church has been killed and none that we know of have been injured.*

**Please keep all those affected by this flood disaster in your prayers. I will update the information as we receive it.**

Yours in Christ,

Rev R Hopcroft  
Chairman British Mission Board