

## **RAJNI NIJHAWAN CHARITABLE TRUST**

### **Visit to VAANI Sadhan Centre, Siliguri** **28<sup>th</sup> June, 2017 at 11.00 am**

On 1<sup>st</sup> June, 2017, a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) was executed between VAANI Deaf Children's Foundation and Rajni Nijhawan Charitable Trust (RNCT) to work in collaboration to run a Sadhan Centre for deaf children and their parents in Siliguri. VAANI would provide the infrastructure, Teachers, Community Mobilisers and conduct the training classes and RNCT would provide a part of the funding operations to assist VAANI to run the Centre.

In order to get a first-hand view of the work being done at this Sadhan Centre, Trustees of RNCT were invited to visit the Centre. This being the first visit by RNCT, the delegation from RNCT was led by Mr. J.C. Nijhawan, Managing Trustee (RNCT) , and, he was accompanied by Mr. Rajiv K. Puri ( Trustee) and Mrs. Malini Puri and Mr. Ian Howard ( Trustee) and Mrs. Marianne Howard. The Members of RNCT were accompanied to the Sadhan Centre by the following personnel from VAANI , namely, Mrs. Ajita Gohain, Deputy Director- Programme, Mrs. Inky Sen, Deputy Head-Training and Mr. Tony Datta Ray, Project Coordinator Siliguri VAANI.

Mrs. Gohain explained to the Members of the Trust that the Sadhan Centre had started in rented premises in Dabgram, Siliguri in February, 2016. At present, there were over 50 deaf children enrolled coming from Siliguri, Jalpaiguri and Kishanganj areas with their parents. Two trained Teachers (trained by VAANI) along with two Community Mobilisers were present to cater to the needs of the children and parents who attended the Sadhan.

Upon arrival at the Centre the Trustees were pleased and humbled to see the large turnout of both children and parents who had all come from far off distances to meet the new Partners. Mrs. Gohain and Mrs. Sen presented the RNCT Members to the Teachers and Staff located at the Sadhan and also introduced various parents and children who were present. The children presented Mr. Nijhawan, Mrs. Puri and Mrs. Howard with small gifts as a token of welcome to the Sadhan.

Mr. Tony Datta Ray then made a speech in Bengali, introducing the Members of the Trust and informing the people present that the Trust was responsible for the assisting with the funding of the work at the Sadhan. Thereafter, Mr. Ray invited parents who were in the audience to say a few words about their experience in attending the Sadhan with their deaf children and whether they felt that their children had gained anything from the teaching methods adopted by the School.

Two or three parents stood up and gave their views, which, in general, were all very favourable. They stated that they had noticed an improvement in their children's ability to communicate more effectively with them and other children who were similarly affected. Because the parents, too, were leaning the communication skills, they were able to communicate better at home with their children and were finding it easier to understand their child's difficulties. One of the parents also requested the Management to look in to the possibility of opening a similar Sadhan in Kishanganj. There were over eighty deaf children in and around Kishanganj. A lot of children could not afford the bus fares to come to attend classes in Siliguri. If a Sadhan came up in that area, many more students and parents could avail of the benefits of this training. This idea was appreciated by the Trustees. The general consensus was that it would be best to see how the Sadhan in Siliguri performed before venturing in to any new area.

As the students and parents had to attend classes, the Trustees were taken to a separate room where the Staff from VAANI invited them to partake of the refreshments of tea and biscuits.

While tea was being served, Representatives from VAANI took the trouble to show and explain to the Trustees, the various books and records that were maintained by the Sadhan for each child that was selected for admission to the training facilities at the Centre.

The Trustees were very impressed with the professional way in which the Sadhan was being run and Mr. Nijhawan informed Mrs Gohain that he was confident that this Centre would definitely help the children and parents enrolled in the long run. Also, Mr. Nijhawan was hopeful that more visits by RNCT members to the Sadhan in Siliguri would take place in the near future with the induction of Mrs. Preeti Puri, wife of another Trustee- Mr. Ratindra K. Puri.

The visit concluded with the Trustees returning to Siliguri.