

NCBM OUTREACH



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The WBUAP Quadrennium Plan of Action 2009–2012

*By Ivan Ho Tuck Choy
Secretary-general
World Blind Union Asia-Pacific*

As some of you may remember, WBUAP officially came into existence in 2000. It took place in Melbourne, Australia when some countries from the Asian Blind Union joined the countries in the East Asia Pacific Region to form the WBUAP.

Leaders have come and gone and, after every four-year term, we have to start everything from scratch. In simple words, there is no structure for continuity. In view of this, the Vice President of WBUAP, Dato' S. Kulasegaran, presented the Quadrennium Plan of Action (QPA) at the joint Board and Policy Council Meeting in November 2008. The QPA was accepted for implementation.

Basically, the QPA aims to achieve three objectives:

- (a) Strengthening of the weaker organisations so that they can better serve their blind members through information exchange, encouragement and support.
- (b) Setting up of national task forces in countries that have not already done so in order to lobby their governments to implement the WBU-ICEVI Initiative, "education for all vision-impaired children" by 2015.

- (c) Strengthening of WBUAP itself by establishing more permanent structures and by encouraging the more developed organisations to assume greater responsibility in making this organisation a stronger and more resilient regional body that can speak and act on issues affecting blind people, thereby contributing towards the building of a strong and respectable World Blind Union (WBU).

1. APPOINTING A LIAISON OFFICER

In order to respond speedily to correspondence and to take effective action on decisions made by WBUAP, every affiliate is urged to appoint a Liaison Officer (or Coordinator) to deal directly with the WBUAP Secretariat. In some countries the appointed delegates to WBU are so busy that they have no time to communicate or act on the requests of WBUAP.

2. PARTNERING WITH ANOTHER ORGANISATION

The more developed organisations are encouraged to partner with one or two weaker ones in order to give them special attention by way of following up on their progress, sharing ideas and expertise, and assisting them in all possible

ways.

3. STRENGTHENING THE FUND-RAISING CAPACITY OF ORGANISATIONS

As money is the lifeline of any organisation, WBUAP should give special attention to this aspect of work, particularly in the south-east sub-region where the countries are poorly funded. Thus, fund-raising workshops will be conducted in order to provide training for the weak organisations in writing project papers and on various methods of raising funds.

4. PROGRAMME EXCHANGE

WBUAP will encourage its better established affiliates to make available opportunities for blind people to attend courses run by recognised training centres in rehabilitation, vocational training, computer literacy and other blindness-specific skills. In order for the exchange programme to materialise, efforts should be made in securing scholarships for them (including travel expenses for certain cases).

5. EDUCATION FOR ALL VISION-IMPAIRED CHILDREN

Effort will be made to follow up on the work of national task forces where they exist and assistance will be given to those countries where they have not yet been set up. Organisations of the blind will be persuaded to form partnerships with one another in advancing

the WBUAP-ICEVI initiative so that all blind and vision-impaired children will have access to education by the year 2015.

6. ASSISTING WEAKER ORGANISATIONS WITH BASIC ITEMS

Every effort should be made by WBUAP to help blind children in the weaker organisations with basic items such as Braille paper, Braille writing slates, white canes and recreational game sets. This is to be done in consultation with the organisations involved so that only the relevant items are sent.

7. SETTING UP COMMITTEES TO IMPLEMENT THE PRIORITIES OF WBUAP

(a) The Resource Generation Committee

Under the chairmanship of the Treasurer, this committee will find ways of raising funds in order to strengthen the financial position of WBUAP so that it will be able to carry out its activities effectively.

(b) Committee on ICT and Assistive Technologies

Under the chairmanship of Senator Monthian Buntan, ICT information will be made available to the affiliates and training programmes will be developed for this region.

(c) The Employment and Economic Empowerment Committee

The chairman has yet to be nominated but this committee will look into the employment issues facing blind people, encourage the blind to take up economic ventures and business enterprises, and help them gain access to or develop micro-credit schemes. This committee will also look into the feasibility of organisations of the blind operating cooperatives and undertaking bulk purchases of Braille items to reduce costs.

8. STRENGTHENING THE WBUAP SECRETARIAT AND SETTING UP AN ACCESSIBLE WEBSITE

WBUAP will work towards having a Secretariat with paid staff so that it can act as the central coordinating base for WBUAP. To enable WBUAP to disseminate information efficiently and effectively, a website will be set up with links to national organisations. At present the WBUAP Secretariat is located in the premises of the National Council for the Blind in Malaysia.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

1. TRAINING IN TANDEM CYCLING

The National Sports Council would like to train tandem cycling athletes in preparation for participation in national and international events. Interested blind persons should contact En. Muhamad Fairuz at tel: 03-22722677 or handphone 019-2727283.

2. POWER LIFTING

A power lifting coach, Mr Ng, has been recruited for the MAB gym. He will provide training exercises from Monday to Friday 7:00 am to 11:00 am and 3:00 pm to 7:00 pm. The objective also is to prepare blind persons for participation in national and international events.

Please contact En. Mohd. Fairuz at tel : 22722677 ext. 136 or handphone 019-2727283.

3. MAB CANTEEN

With effect from February 2009, the MAB has started supplying food to the staff, volunteers and blind persons who visit MAB. The canteen is open from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm.

Ala carte orders and catering service are also available. However, pre-order arrangements must be made with the canteen.

A TORCH CALLED SOTHY

Editor's Note: M. Thavasoathy is totally blind and he retired from his teaching post at the SMK Taman Petaling in 2008. Over the past seven years from 2002 to 2008, he was featured in "The Star" at least three times. Here is what the newspaper has to say about the successful life and career of a blind man whom they describe as "a torch called Sothy":

"From within the lamp of wisdom will come a light to dispel darkness from their lives" – Bhagavad Gita.

When you look on the bright side of life, amazing things happen. – That's the motto of Mr Thavasoathy Pillai. One of the first blind students to study in a regular school, Thavasoathy went on to represent Selangor in the long jump five times. He graduated with honours and did his Master's degree on a full government scholarship in Australia.

He went on to teach history in a normal school. His entire class did him proud when all of them got A1s in that subject. He was voted Tokoh Guru.

He has two children who are doing medicine. (The Star, 7 November 2007)

MAKING HISTORY BUFFS OF HIS STUDENTS

He may be blind but he has no

need of a walking-stick for he knows every nook and corner of the school, having taught there for 23 years. M. Thavasoathy, 50, is totally at home in the school where he is treated like any other member of staff.

"I don't use a walking cane as I know the school so well. However, my students will sometimes come to the staff room to take me to class if it involves going to the higher floors."

Thavasoathy continues, "But I walk very fast and sometimes my students have trouble keeping up with me."

Thavasoathy teaches history and English at the SMK Perempuan Taman Petaling in Selangor. His former student, Sukuna Krishnan, will attest to what Sothy has said about himself. "Mr Thavasoathy, who taught me history in Form Four, walked so fast that I had to run to keep up with him or I would ask him to slow down. We would usually help him with the stairs. I have always been very impressed with how well he knows the way. One day I dropped him off at home after a meeting with the Ex-students Association – he told me I could turn into another road as it was a shortcut even though I had not told him where we were," recalls Sukuna, who is the Association's Secretary.

Most of Thavasoathy's students are impressed with his knowledge of history and how he seems to have all the facts at his finger-tips. This

history teacher turned a disliked subject into a favourite for many students.

Says former student, Alice Lim : “He made history come alive for me as he was very enthusiastic when he taught. I used to think it was such a boring subject and never did very well in it. But he managed to change my opinion of the subject and I actually did quite well in my SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia) because of his teaching.”

Alice says the students got used to not having eye contact after a while and were impressed with how fast he could read out his notes in Braille.

“Mr. Thavasoathy has very good hearing, too,” Alice continued. “He would know whenever one of us was playing with the pen or not paying attention. If we became too quiet, he would say, ‘Guys, are you still there?’”

Currently teaching history to students in Forms One and Two, Thavasoathy explains that he does not have a problem when it comes to marking. “My late father used to help me by either reading aloud any extra texts or marking the exercises as I told him what was right and wrong. Now my children help by being my readers.”

“When it comes to examinations, I would ask for help from the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB). The volunteers will come over to my home at night to help me with either the marking or in reading out the answers to the questions given in the examination.”

“It is easier now that I am teaching Forms One and Two as the questions have multiple choice answers. But whenever there is a need, I would ask the students to read their essays out aloud and I would point out where they are wrong. It is an advantage for them and me as they learn of any mistakes on the spot while I have less of a burden in marking.”

Thavasoathy, who completed his Master’s in Special Education at the University of Tasmania in Australia in 1992, says that teaching blind students is easier since everything is in Braille. “Sometimes people think we are dependent because we need someone to be our reader. It is easier for blind teachers teaching in a blind school. It is much more challenging teaching in a normal school but I have enjoyed it all these years.”

Teaching itself is not a problem as all the books are available in Braille. The Education Ministry assumes the responsibility of producing the Braille books for blind students. Thus, we teachers get to use the same books too.”

“Any additional reading would not be in Braille but this is also not a problem. My family members can help me by reading them aloud so I can convert any notes into Braille.”

A teacher who has worked with Thavasoathy for many years says she treats him just like any other member of the staff. “He is a senior teacher and has been at the school for a long time. We don’t do anything special or go out of our way for him. As far as teaching is concerned, he is

another one of us.”

Like the other teachers, Thavasoathy has been involved in various co-curricular activities such as the Foreign Language Club, English Language Society and the Tamil Language Society. Currently, he is in charge of the Ex-students’ Association. However, having taught history and English for so many years, Thavasoathy is now ready for challenges.

“Although I may be blind, this has not stopped me from wanting new challenges like anyone else. I wouldn’t mind being principal of a school or working in the different sections of the Education Ministry,” he says.

In fact, he attended a one-year course for principals with 25 other teachers at Institut Aminuddin Baki in the Genting Highlands in 2001. “I understand that we have to wait for vacancies and cannot expect to be promoted to the post of principal immediately. Still, I hope to hear some good news from the Ministry soon.”

“A blind person should be given the opportunity to prove that he can be successful. I have been asked questions like how I would sign cheques since I cannot see. I explain that a school is not run by one person alone. It is managed by a group of people. The principal would have a senior assistant to help him. So the signing of cheques shouldn’t be a problem. If you see everything as being a problem, then there will always be a problem.”

A TORCH CALLED THAVA

M. Thavasothy's life has been one of having to cope with a disability. Last Friday, the 56-year old teacher, blind since birth, had to cope with tears when hundreds of students bade him farewell. It was his last day at the SMK Taman Petaling where he had begun his teaching career, the only vocation he had known and loved over the course of 28 years.

Tears flowed as he addressed colleagues and about 900 pupils. For Nur Fatin Fatimah Ahmad Ruzi, a Form Five pupil, Thavasothy will always be remembered as the teacher with the soft approach.

"I didn't study under him but I sought his advice several times. He has a heart of gold. Those he taught were indeed a privileged lot," she said.

"This is hard for me. These people and this school are my life. I can't accept that I'm leaving the school," said Thavasothy.

"I have been with the school all along and through its ups and downs. To say goodbye is the hardest thing. I started teaching when I was 29. I started late because I received my early education a bit late since my parents didn't know there were schools for special students like me. Then I went to the Princess Elizabeth School for the Blind in Johor Bahru before I was transferred to another normal school when I was in Standard Two, because the teachers recommended I could cope.

Thavasothy was indeed up to the challenge. He obtained a Degree in Arts and a Diploma in Education from Universiti Malaya before

pursuing a Master's in Education at the University of Tasmania in Australia.

When he was sent to an all-girls school as teacher, he said, "Actually, I was quite terrified. The first thing I asked the headmistress was whether there were other male teachers in the school and was told there was one. The headmistress was extremely kind. She accepted me with an open heart and open mind. I was really touched because not many people can be like that," added the father of two, who had appeared in a Deepavali Petronas television advertisement last year.

Thavasothy recalled that when he started teaching, his father used to fetch him to and from school. Then his father fell ill and that stopped.

Fortunately, the school gardener also operated a school-bus and that remained his mode of transport for some time. He found his way back home by taking lifts from teachers or using the taxis.

On how he dealt with his blindness while teaching, Thavasothy replied, "I focused a lot on oral teaching. If there was something that needed to be written, one of the pupils would help. It was not only interesting but a challenge as well."

Some of his pupils have become teachers, lawyers, doctors and engineers. To crown it all, he was awarded the Excellence Award by the Education Ministry in 1997, recognised as the Universiti Malaya Tokoh Alumni in 2006, and named as Tokoh Guru Peringkat egeri Selangor in 2007.

"My parents and family were my pillars of strength. My father rejected a lot of job offers from the private sector so that he could spend more time with me. He read to me because we didn't have Braille textbooks then."

The headmistress, Normah Karim, said that the school would be losing one of its most dedicated teachers.

Also present at the farewell gathering were several former pupils. One of them, Quality Manager, Shiu May Kuen, 42, said, "I have always kept touch with him because I'm involved in the school alumni. My daughter was also his pupil."

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MAB

Te: 03-2272 2673

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SUPPORT OUR CAUSE

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) provides a vital link between the organisations serving the blind in this country by acting as the national coordinating body. Through NCBM, the organisations for and of the blind have a channel to discuss and formulate national policies and plans and to pioneer new programmes for the benefit of the blind.

Your financial support will, therefore, go a long way in helping to bring about new developments and progress for the blind. All contributions are deeply appreciated.

Donations should be made in the name of the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia. Address:

94B Jalan Tun Sambanthan
Brickfields
50470 KUALA LUMPUR
Tel : 03-2272 4959
Fax: 03-2272 4960

SPECIAL ANNOUNCE- MENT

Readers are reminded that their contribution of articles, suggestions and jokes are most welcome for inclusion in "The NCBM Outreach". However, please note that it would be very helpful to the Editor if such contributions could be submitted either on diskette or on single-sided Braille pages to facilitate editing.

For details of payments, please see the last page.

Choose your
pleasures for
yourself, and do not
let them be imposed
upon you.

Lord Chesterfield

It's easy to make

a buck. It's a lot

tougher to make a

difference.

Tom Brokaw, US

Newsreader

NEWS FROM THE MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

VARIETY TALENTIME

This event was organised by the Elderly Blind Club on January 3rd 2009 at the Kompleks MAB. About 20 blind persons took part in the talent-time.

The champion was Yoo Yong San with RM250 while the runners-up were Lee Teong Yew and Lim Ah Pen with RM200 and RM150 respectively. Consolation prizes of RM30 each went to Lee Yoke Lin, Stephen Chong, Gary Lee and Shahrin Buang.

33RD ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE MALAYSIAN COUNCIL FOR REHABILITATION

At the 33rd AGM of MCR which was held on 17 January 2009, elections to the Executive Board were conducted. Four disabled persons were elected as board members (including Mah Hassan bin Haji Omar who is blind). Godfrey Ooi (also blind) was elected as one of the two Vice Presidents of MCR.

Thus, for the first time, there are five disabled persons serving on the Executive Board of MCR which consists of fifteen elected members.

INDOOR GAMES COMPETITION

This competition was organised by the MAB Elderly Blind Club on 13 December 2008 in Kompleks MAB. All blind persons aged 16 and above were invited to take part in the event and about 50 persons responded.

Cash prizes offered were RM30, RM25 and RM20 for congkak and dominoes; RM50, RM40 and RM30 for draughts and othello; and RM80, RM60 and RM40 for scrabbles and chess.

The results were as follows:

Congkak – Shahrin Buang, Nor Elya Abu Bakar, Shamsuri Hitam

Dominoes – Mohd. Harun, Zainal Abidin, Ku Rafeah

Draughts – Ahmad Abdullah, Sagayanathan Rayapan, Lele Suryarni

Othello – Abian Jambot, Ang Kong Seng, Chan Mai Lan

Scrabbles – Anthony Looi, Razimah Mat Yasin, Wong Kwee Heong

Chess – Idris Saman, Isak bin Ngau, Raimah bt. Mat Lazim

MAB CYBER CLUB

The cyber club held its Annual General Meeting on Saturday, 21 March 2009. Yam Tong Woo was elected as the Chairman of the club for the next two years. Yam lost his sight last year while on business in China after suffering from food poisoning. He replaces Dr Tan Tok Shiong who was the first Chairman of the Club from 2007 to 2009.

HOPEFUL PROMISE FROM DEWAN BANDARAYA KUALA LUMPUR

The Director of Social and Community Development, DBKL, met with representatives from MAB, SBM, NCBM and PERTIS on 26 February 2009 in Kompleks MAB. He said that he was making the rounds with as many disabled organisations and groups as possible to hear their problems and difficulties; DBKL was coming down to the people instead of the people going to DBKL and this was on the directive of the new Selangor State Government.

The issues raised included the difficulty in obtaining the business licence, policy relaxation to make it easier for unmarried disabled persons to obtain housing, vending kiosks and spaces for the disabled to carry out small commercial enterprises, relocation of signboards in Brickfields that pose a

hazard to blind commuters, and laying down of tactile guides on the new path to KL Sentral to facilitate travel by disabled commuters in the Brickfields area.

The Director gave a promise that all these matters will be looked into.

REMEMBER KATHAN PILLAI

Kathan Pillai had been the Chairman of the MAB Elderly Blind Club for more than eight years. He passed away on 27 January 2009 and we would like to remember him in the epitaph that follows:

EPITAPH FOR KATHAN PILLAI

We note with deep sympathy and much sadness the passing away of Mr Kathan Pillai on Tuesday, 27 January 2009. During his tenure of service as the first elected Chairman of the MAB Elderly Blind Club from 2001 to 2009, he had set a very good example as a hardworking and dedicated leader of the elderly blind.

He oversaw the development of the Club from its humble beginnings to a membership of more than 200 strong. He fervently supported the activities of the Club which included social gatherings, educational talks, excursions, indoor games and music sessions. Indeed, he will be remembered for having initiated many new ideas such as book-shelves for Braille materials, birthday celebrations and the lucky draw, popularising

of the lotto game, home visits to members, and proposal for the musical band of senior citizens which ultimately led to the starting of the harmonica programme. In spite of his old age, he himself displayed great enthusiasm and zest for life; even at the age of 88, he was still playing the harmonica, honing his skills at the computer and internet, and taking part in some of the events of the Club.

He always made it a point to be present for committee meetings and at major functions in order to advise and inspire members. He would often put his own hands to various tasks at the elderly blind centre such as the arrangement of chairs and furniture, repair of equipment, tidying up of the premises, and so on in order to ensure that everything was tip-top and running smoothly at the Centre.

As someone had said at his funeral service, "Mr Pillai had lived his life as a good and exemplary man."

Truly, Mr Kathan Pillai will long remain in the fond memory of MAB, the elderly blind and all others who had known or worked closely with him for the good of society. We pray and thank God for the life of Kathan Pillai and pray that he will continue to be richly blessed in the life hereafter.

MAB EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMME

Two kinds of schemes are available to the blind under this programme, ie. the Tun Hussein Onn Memorial Scholarship Fund and the MAB Golden Jubilee Educational Loan

Scheme. Concerning the former, Herwan bin Amat was the fourth blind student to be awarded the scholarship to study counselling at Universiti Malaya from 2004 to 2008.

The fifth student to have been awarded the scholarship is Sek Kit Xuan who was the best blind student for SPM 2006 with seven As. She is studying bio-medical science at Inti College in Nilai, Negeri Sembilan. The Institute of Engineers has kindly agreed to continue providing the sponsorship of RM6,000 per year. The first three beneficiaries of the scholarship fund were Shafiee bin Md Isa, Wong Huey Siew and Joseph bin Mongijal.

BLIND RESEARCHERS

In 2007, researchers grants of RM1,000 each were given to two blind students at Universiti Malaya – they were Lim Tien Hong and Iran Shah bin Ramatullah. Lim chose the topic on "Successful Careers Among Graduates from IPTA and IPTS – a comparative output of students in Public and Private Institutions" while Iran's topic was "The Study of a Novel by a Blind Writer Entitled Lambaian Kinabalu". Both students were given the opportunity to explain the findings of their research in front of a panel set up by MAB and chaired by En. Hadi bin Abdullah, member of the MAB Council.

Another blind student, Amy Lim Mei Huey, was also invited to explain her research paper which she did in 2006 entitled "Burnout Among Workers in Organisations Serving the Blind".

Another research recipient, Ghazali Tocheh, was given a grant of RM2,000 in 2007 to do a study on successful careers in work for the blind for the publication of a book. Unfortunately, although the book had been completed, he was in the process of negotiating with the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka to publish the book when he unexpectedly passed away in January 2009 at the age of 57.

CAPACITY-BUILDING SKILLS FOR THE BLIND

Through this scheme, blind persons are encouraged to take up skills that would help to enhance their quality of life. Towards this end, MAB started collaborating with Yamaha Bangsar to make music courses available to the blind. Last year in 2008, the three beneficiaries were Solan Balakrishnan of Sekolah Jalan Batu Primary School for the drumming course while Husaini Samsudin and Lucas Dominic of the Gurney Training Centre took up the classical guitar.

In 2009, four more blind persons have registered with Yamaha Bangsar for the acoustic guitar course. They are Khairul Azmi bin Mohd Saat of GTC plus Anna Loo, Lim Ah Pen and Mohd Zaki bin Ismail (all three of them engaging in the massage trade).

MAB provided a grant of RM1,000 each for all seven persons. The balance is subsidised by Yamaha.

MEVIC MUSIC PROGRAMME

This programme was started in

2005 as a collaboration project between MAB and Play By Ear Sdn Bhd. under the MEVIC Sponsorship Scheme. Originally, the objective of the MEVIC Scheme was to make music courses available to blind children under the Music Education for Visually Impaired Children (or MEVIC) programme. Now, however, the scheme has been extended to blind adults as well.

For 2009, two blind students will be continuing with the programme. Tan Mike Foong will be doing the Level 3 Course for piano. He is in Standard Six in the Kuala Kubu Baru Integrated Programme.

Chea Min Enn, Standard Four pupil of Sekolah Jalan Batu is taking up the Level 2 Course for piano.

The new students for 2009 are Nicholas Ludersamy (deaf-blind) for the Level 1 Course on keyboard, Ben Alim bin Baron and Rodie Jainahum (masseurs) plus Shamuni Manokaran (MAB Executive Trainee) for the Level 1 keyboard course.

The Elderly Blind Club is making available the piano at their Centre in Kompleks MAB to enable the music students to carry out their practices.

It is difficult to say
what is impossible,
for the dream of
yesterday is the hope
of today and the
reality of tomorrow.

Robert H. Goddard

NEWS FROM ST. NICHOLAS HOME

REMEMBERING BENJAMIN AMPULARDON BIN UNGKIL

One of the old boys of St. Nicholas School for the Blind, Penang passed away in March 2009. The epitaph for Benjamin appeared in the St. Nicholas Bulletin, Issue No. 2, 2009. Here it is:

EPITAPH FOR BENJAMIN AMPULARDON

Benjamin Ampulardon bin Ungkil passed away on Sunday, 1 March 2009 at the age of 58 due to renal failure. He will always be remembered by St. Nicholas and among all his friends and acquaintances as “the gifted guitarist”.

Indeed, his talents as pianist, organist and guitarist became obvious when he was a young student at St. Nicholas School for the Blind in the 1960s. He formed the first band of blind musicians in Penang in 1964. They became well known as “the ever popular ‘Junior Jets’” from Penang to Taiping after their first appearance on Radio Malaysia (as it was then known) with the popular hit, Midnight in Malaya.

In Kuala Lumpur, he served as the first leader of the MAB band (set up by the Malaysian Association for the Blind) in the 1970s which performed for many schools and clubs as far as Johor and Kelantan.

He was also a leading musician for certain church musical groups. He had also played in a number of pubs and joints in Penang and KL, including the Cotton Club and Shabas Club.

He was also the almost indispensable guitarist for the Happy Carollers, a group of blind persons which brought Christmas cheer to many families and friends all over the Klang Valley.

Truly, Benjamin’s talents and contributions are deeply appreciated by all who knew or had associated with him. We thank God for the life of Benjamin and prayed that he may have continued and abundant blessings in the life hereafter.

Amen.

Women are making
it very clear that
they do not want
to choose between
succeeding at home
or succeeding at
work. They want to
succeed in life.

Dato’ Seri

Sharizat Abdul

Jalil, Minister of

Women, Family

and Community

Development

BLIND MASSAGE ENTERPRISES

*By Godfrey Ooi Goat See
Deputy Executive Director
Malaysian Association for the Blind*

A meeting with the blind massage enterprise owners was convened by MAB Executive Director, En George Thomas, on Thursday, 5 March 2009 at the Block B meeting-room of Kompleks MAB. The meeting was attended by nearly 20 blind owners of massage enterprises in the Brickfields area.

OBJECTIVE OF MEETING

En George explained that the objective of the meeting was to put together the issues faced by blind massage enterprise owners in Brickfields so that recommendations can be made to the Dewan Bandaraya Kuala Lumpur (DBKL). After the matter has been settled with DBKL, MAB intends to work with blind massage owners in other districts and states in order to help them solve their problems as well.

En George explained that the new Datuk Bandar of Kuala Lumpur was actually very sympathetic with regards to the plight of the blind masseurs and had directed the Director of Social and Community Development, DBKL, to look into the matter. Consequently, the Director held a dialogue with MAB and other organisations serving the blind quite recently and some of the difficulties faced by blind massage enterprises were raised.

It was highlighted that in recent years, DBKL had been closing down private massage enterprises run by the sighted. Ironically, this turned out to be bad news for the blind instead of proving to be an advantage to them. This was because the new regulation was actually introduced in order to favour or support the hotel and spa industry. To restrict the small private enterprises, new regulations were imposed on commercial enterprises such as payment of the licence deposit, increased rate of payment per metre of floor space, and so on. Unfortunately, these regulations were also applied to the blind massage enterprises which are mainly small commercial ventures.

Thus, the purpose of MAB meeting with the blind massage owners was to identify the issues faced by them and to suggest solutions which would be forwarded to DBKL for consideration and action.

ISSUES RAISED

1. Fire Escape

The licence has not been issued to one of the blind massage enterprises because there is no staircase at the back of the shoplot for the purpose of fire escape. However, according to the owner of the enterprise located at Jalan

Padang Belia in Brickfields, all the shoplots in that location had no staircase at the back. This was because all these shoplots had in fact been granted certificates of approval by DBKL many years ago when the requirement of a fire escape was not being enforced at the time.

Moreover, according to the owner, their enterprise was located on the first floor and it should be quite easy for those within to jump to safety should an emergency occur. Nevertheless, in order to enhance safety, they were planning to install several fire extinguishers at strategic positions in case a fire should break out.

2. Glass Panels and Curtains

One of the new regulations introduced was that the walls of massage rooms should be replaced by glass panels and the doors replaced by curtains. As a result, a number of blind massage enterprises did not have their licences renewed because glass panels and curtains were not installed or put in place.

The blind massage owners explained that if they were to comply with these conditions, their business would definitely suffer. Customers would be reluctant to come because they would lose their privacy while massaging. They needed such privacy as it was necessary for them to remove

most of their clothing in order to receive the full benefits of a proper massage.

Secondly, there was the matter of security. With the door instead of a curtain, customers felt safer and more secure while undergoing massage treatment in the room because they had no fear of someone breaking into the room suddenly. Furthermore, customers would have more confidence leaving behind their personal belongings in the room while they visited the toilet or went out for some brief errands.

En Lee Sheng Chow, one of the blind massage owners, said that probably the new DBKL officers were unaware of the fact that when he was the first blind person to ask for the business licence, DBKL had agreed to relax the ruling on glass panels and curtains with regards to blind massage provided that they kept to the condition of women for women and men for men. Nevertheless, lady customers could have the privilege of requesting for male masseurs. This provision was meant after all to provide protection for female masseurs.

3. Deposit Payment

The payment of a RM10,000 deposit had been introduced by DBKL in recent years. To address this issue, the blind masseurs requested for a dialogue with DBKL last year in 2008 under the chairmanship of the MAB President, Senator Datuk Dr Ismail Salleh. As a result, DBKL had agreed to reduce the deposit to RM2,000. Despite this, many blind massage owners had not

paid up the deposit; they had the feeling that once the deposit was paid, they would never be able to recover the money even though it was called a deposit. Moreover, many of the blind massage enterprises had been started long before the deposit was introduced so that it did not seem fair that they should now make this payment. Since they did not pay, these enterprises did not have their licences renewed. They are hopeful that DBKL would ultimately consider waiving this deposit completely.

4. Summons for Compound Payment

Compound payment up to a maximum of RM2,000 can be imposed by DBKL for not renewing the business licence. Consequently, many of the blind massage enterprises had been issued with the summons for compound payment. They are of the view that it is unfair for this payment to have been imposed on them as they were not in a position to renew their licences. They are hopeful that this payment too will be waived by DBKL.

5. Rate of Payment

Some years ago, the rate of payment per square metre used to be only RM12. Also, the rate was meant to be applicable only to the floor space in the massage rooms rather than for the whole of the premises. Recently, nonetheless, the rate has been increased to RM50 per square metre and, in some cases, DBKL had applied the ruling to the whole premises instead of just the massage rooms.

The request of the blind massage owners is that the rate be reduced by 70% (which would be about RM14 per square metre). They also appeal for the rate to be confined to the massage rooms and not to be imposed on the whole of the premises. Otherwise the blind massage enterprises would not be able to survive at all.

6. Sign-board

The blind massage owners often face difficulties in having their sign-boards approved. If approved, they have to pay quite a hefty sum for permission to put up the sign-board. They would, therefore, like to request for more flexibility to be exercised when approving their sign-boards and that they be granted 50% exemption on the payment.

7. Custom Tax

According to one of the massage owners, custom tax had been imposed on his business. He said that this was unfair since this 5% tax was meant to be levied on companies which made a profit gain of RM500,000 or more. He said that the authorities had urged him to fill in and sign the custom tax form.

Some of the other massage owners were of the view that he had nothing to worry about because his business was only a small concern. He could, in fact, ignore the reminder to pay when it came. Nevertheless, it was agreed that this matter should be clarified with the Finance Ministry.

8. Medical Checkup

Finally, the massage owners wanted to know whether there would be a charge if they were to send their masseurs for medical checkup at the MAB clinic.

The Executive Director confirmed that there would be no charge and said that MAB would, in fact, be very happy for blind persons to make use of the MAB clinic.

ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN

1. The blind massage owners are to submit copies of their licences and plans of their premises to the Job Placement Unit within one day.
2. A letter together with the documents submitted by the blind massage owners will be forwarded by MAB to the Director-general of DBKL for consideration and action. A meeting will also be requested with DBKL for the results.
3. If there are no positive results, the MAB Executive Director will have another meeting with the blind massage owners concerning other possible alternative strategies to be taken.

CONCLUSION

The Executive Director of MAB will do his utmost in appealing to DBKL and other relevant authorities to extend protection to the massage industry of the blind by relaxing certain regulations which affect them. He believes that DBKL understands the situation being faced by the blind

massage owners. If the obstacles and difficulties are not removed, then many of the blind will have no choice but to close down their businesses and return to the streets as beggars or to sell tissue-paper. In view of this, DBKL is likely to consider their requests favourably.

Don't simply retire

from something;

have something to

retire to

Harry Emerson, US

Clergyman

Never let a small

problem, even if it

looks simple, grow

big until it cannot be

fixed.

No matter how

difficult a challenge,

it can be overcome if

people are prepared

to collaborate.

Dr Moshe

Rubinstein, Guru of

Strategy

INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

PART II

By Senator Datuk Dr Ismail bin Mohd. Salleh
President
Malaysian Association for the Blind

Editor's Note: The first part of this article appeared in the January – March 2009 issue of "The NCBM Outreach". Having briefly touched on the role of the Special Education Division in bringing about Inclusive Education programmes in Malaysia and on the importance of the New Education Policy (2001-2010), Dr Ismail now shows the important influence that the policy on "Education for All" will have on Inclusive Education in our country. Dr. Ismail continues:

2. EDUCATION FOR ALL

In 1990 the world celebrated the Year of the Child and emphasis was placed on the theme, "Education for All". In accordance with the 1990 Declaration on the Rights of the Child, it was emphasised that important consideration should be given to "education for all children", including disabled children. Every child should be guaranteed the right to education because this is the ultimate key to future economic and social independence later on in life, especially for the disabled person. Thus, in signing the ICEVI Declaration, the signatories all agreed that 2015 should be the target year for making education available to everyone.

Therefore, achieving target 2015, i.e. providing education for all, is

the ultimate goal to be achieved by all countries in the world. Realising these goals as set up in the Declaration of ICEVI means that all countries will be moving forward to achieve EFA by 2015.

Important components underlying these goals are as follows:

- Mobilising support by advocating for equal access and full participation in education;
- Promoting and assisting in building up local capacity and skills to develop appropriate curricula;
- Providing training;
- Identifying and supplying equipment and materials to the visually impaired;
- Undertaking collaborative efforts with the NGO's and government agencies to achieve and maintain standards of education;
- Influencing policy decisions in the respective countries;
- Promoting and learning from innovative models and practices already in place;
- Establishing appropriate communication networks.

Incidentally, all these goals are actually in keeping with many of the elements that are considered to be important in the system of Inclusive Education for the disabled. Thus, promoting the policy of "Education for All" would provide significant support for the development of the system of Inclusive Education in Malaysia.

So what are the challenges in meeting the goals of "Education for All"? In particular, the challenges to be considered include public awareness, access to amenities and facilities and the mobilisation of resources.

2.1 PUBLIC AWARENESS

In order for public awareness programmes to be carried out effectively, the following factors are:

(a) Dissemination of Information

There must be effective dissemination of information through the mass media, including the radio, television and the print media. In this way, information will be able to reach everyone, especially those in the rural areas and remote parts of the country.

(b) Compulsory Registration

Needless to say, the government is in a powerful position and can, therefore, play an influential role in ensuring that education reaches everyone. The government can do this through compulsory registration of visually impaired children. If this policy is backed up by positive incentives and measures, it will surely attract the attention of the public; parents in particular will be interested in such information if there are rewards to be gained for registering.

(c) Legislation

Another powerful instrument in the hands of the government that can lead to the creation of public awareness is legislation pertaining to disability issues. With the enactment of relevant laws, the public will be forced to pay attention to the needs of the disabled. Ultimately, this will lead to greater public awareness on the importance of education for the disabled.

2.2 ACCESS

In this aspect, the challenges include:

(a) Overcoming Ignorance and Discrimination

Many school authorities are unwilling to open up their doors to the disabled, including the blind. Likewise, many institutions of higher learning are not willing to accept blind students. Very often this is due to the misunderstanding with regards to the ability of the blind to cope in a normal

environment. They also fear that too much expense would have to be incurred to enable the blind students to cope. They fail to understand that ultimately it would be much more expensive to have to maintain a blind adult who has no knowledge and skills because they will not be able to make any meaningful contributions to society. Instead they will be dependent on others and their lives will be wasted away as unproductive citizens.

(b) Access to Information

Many blind children lose the opportunity for education simply because their parents, the school authorities, and even the government are unaware that Braille is a very powerful alternative literacy skill that can open the doors to life for the blind. Particularly in the poor and rural areas, people are not aware that cheap and low-tech Braille devices can be made available and can be used as tools to introduce educational opportunities to the blind. In general, there is the lack of awareness that functional literacy in Braille for the blind is just as important as literacy for the sighted which requires merely pen and ink.

Furthermore, in spite of the advancements in technology and the rapid development of the knowledge economy, there is the lack of awareness that similar advancements are being made in the blindness field. Adapted computer gadgets are making it increasingly easier and more convenient to disseminate Braille information and other forms of reading material. The problem of

bulky Braille materials has been overcome with the possibility of storing information on diskette and other electronic formats which can be easily sent through the internet or email without the need of expensive transport. These materials can then be converted into Braille in order to produce reading materials and documents for the blind.

In spite of all these advantages, nonetheless, there is still a lack of information and reading materials for the blind in Braille. This is because many well-intentioned people, both in the blindness field and among the higher authorities, do not recognise Braille as an important literacy tool which is necessary in helping the blind to develop reading and writing skills. Many are of the view that the best solution to the challenges posed by Braille is to have it replaced by audio materials.

The message must be brought home clear and loud that audio materials can only supplement Braille but not supplant it as a learning tool for the blind. The future of the blind will be much brighter if we can overcome the challenge of having Braille recognised as an important educational tool for the blind.

(c) Access to Rehabilitation and Training

Besides Braille, there is also the lack of awareness that the blind can achieve high standards in education and go on to succeed in many areas of life if they have access to rehabilitation and training programmes. In particular, the blind need to be able

to use the white cane effectively for cane travel so that they can be mobile and independent and they will be able to cope in any normal environment in which the sighted operate. They will be able to travel to school and they can be mobile within the school environment.

The authorities need to be convinced that rehabilitation skills such as Braille and cane techniques are essential for the blind. With these techniques and skills, the blind will be able to function effectively not only in school but also in college and university and ultimately in employment.

In addition to using the white cane, the blind need to be equipped with the living skills. This will enable them to cope with the daily routine of life and enable them to be socially independent later on in life. It is imperative that both the alternative skills of Braille and cane travel and the living skills be made an important part of the school curriculum for the blind.

3.3 MOBILISATION OF RESOURCES

Closely connected with the issues mentioned above is the lack of resources.

(a) Shortage of Schools

In the WBUAP survey of 2002, it was noted that at least 12,000 blind persons had been registered with the National Welfare Department in Malaysia. The number has increased to 15,000 by the end of December 2004 and to more than 18,000 by the end of 2007. In spite of this relatively

small figure, nonetheless, the total number of blind children in school for the year of 2002 was only 697 or about 5.8% of the registered blind population in that year.

This small percentage could be attributed to the shortage of schools for the blind. According to the survey, there are only five special primary schools, one special secondary school as well as eleven primary and twelve secondary integrated programmes for the blind. Clearly, many more education programmes need to be opened up to the blind.

(b) Information Services

In Malaysia there are only three Braille libraries and only two of them are involved in Braille production. There are also about 100 Braille embossers being used in the country. Despite this, the blind students are still faced with the lack of Braille textbooks.

(c) Vocational Training

Again, according to the WBUAP survey, only 1669 blind persons were in employment in the year of 2002 in Malaysia even though 12,000 blind persons had been registered with the National Welfare Department. Clearly, therefore, there is a lack of vocational training facilities for the blind. Indeed, much more resources need to be allocated to ensure that a much bigger percentage of the blind population have the opportunity to receive vocational training and ultimately to gain employment.

Currently, there are only two vocational training institutions

and two basic agricultural training centres for the blind in the country. Altogether these four institutions are able to provide vocational training opportunities for only about 50 to 100 blind persons each year.

Truly, there are so many challenges to be surmounted and the task of reaching the goal of “Education for All” appears to be a daunting one. In spite of this, nonetheless, I believe that with our determination together with proper planning and concerted effort, we can forge ahead and we can be among the winners in the race to meet the goals of “Education for All” by 2015.

(to be continued)

The further I look
into the past, the
clearer I can see into
the future

Dr Collin Abraham,

Writer of the Book

“The Finest Hour”

SPECIAL EDUCATION DIVISION SHOULD TAKE THE LEAD

By Thavasothy Pillai

The Special Education Division (Bahagian Pendidikan Khas - BPK) of the Ministry of Education is intended to provide services and assistance to the disabled. And yet I cannot help but observe that this important setup in the government has given little consideration in terms of providing employment opportunities to the disabled, especially in the key positions of the administration.

How can the BPK fully understand the challenges faced by the disabled of Malaysia when none of their staff face daily life with a disability? If the special division itself shows no confidence in the abilities of the disabled, then how can it be an inspiration to other employers who are expected to employ disabled persons?

When denying positions to the disabled, the BPK is quick to point out the obstacles that would hinder the disabled worker from doing an effective job. However, is the BPK not aware that the disabled are able to overcome all kinds of obstacles? For instance, if they cannot drive, they could use the public transport. Anyway, many employers seldom think twice about providing a driver to an employee who is perfectly able to drive himself; yet the BPK appears to be using the excuse of limited mobility in order to employ a disabled person.

Special education officials have travelled overseas for seminars and conferences and would have surely seen how the disabled in other countries are being empowered by adaptive technology and positive policies. I think it is high time that our officials also put into practice all the information they have gathered and the knowledge they have learnt for the benefit of the disabled in this country. The BPK should be providing employment opportunities to the disabled both at the state and federal level, particularly in the important positions of the administration.

The BPK should set a good example so that they can be emulated by the other government departments and even the private sector.

In all recorded
history there has not
been one economist
who has had to worry
about where the next
meal would come
from.

Peter Drucker

OUTREACH CARE, TACTILE SKILLS AND EMBOSSED MATERIALS FOR THE BLIND

Part II

By Moktar Soon

Editor's Note: This article first appeared in the January–March 2009 issue of "The NCBM Outreach". Having briefly explained about the work of the MAB Outreach Care group, En Moktar now puts forward his views regarding the importance of tactile skills and embossed materials, especially for blind children in the early years of their education.

Here is what he says:

In 2007 I was involved in the Braille reading programme for blind children; it was one of the activities of the Saturday morning programme at Kompleks MAB and the parents would send their children from various parts of the Klang Valley for the activity. In the process of teaching the blind children some tactile skills, I became strongly aware that there was the need for a systematic programme in education in order to help the blind develop their tactile abilities to a much greater extent; and I am of the view that this should be done right from the early years of childhood. In fact, it should begin from the level of pre-school and primary education. However, this programme should also be introduced to the rehabilitation and vocational training services for the adult blind.

I would, therefore, like to propose that a proper plan be put in place in our country; the aim is to bring about the development of expertise and adequate infrastructure by planning a systematic programme in the teaching of tactile skills to the blind and in the production of tactile and embossed materials for the purpose.

RATIONALE FOR MY PROPOSAL

1. In Education

While it is true that in the past tactile and embossed materials were already in use for the blind in education, such resources were very limited. In spite of this, nonetheless, these materials did play quite a significant role in meeting the educational needs of the blind for maps in geography as well as diagrams, charts and models in maths and science. Important as they were, however, tactile materials were rather scarce resources because they were costly in terms of time and money to produce.

Nowadays, with rapid advancements in technology, there are much easier and less time-consuming methods of producing tactile materials. While some of the machines for such production may still be quite expensive, I believe some of the

tools available in the market are quite affordable.

Moreover, there is an increasing awareness today that learning and acquiring information by touch is a very important skill for the blind. It is now realised that in order to enable a blind person to gain maximum advantage from this skill, his/her sensitivity to touch must be developed from an early age.

In America, for example, blind children have been given exposure to tactile materials in their early years to a significant extent. As a result, the country has been able to produce blind scientists who are able to make meaningful contributions to science. In doing biological research, for instance, these blind scientists are able to discern the fine lines on a leaf or even a sea-shell for the purpose of scientific studies, thereby making very useful contributions to science.

2. In Rehabilitation

There is an increasing awareness that maps, diagrams and models are very useful not only for education but also for the purpose of rehabilitation. For example, maps not only enable the blind to understand their world and local surroundings from a geographical perspective; They can also serve

as important aids for the blind in the orientation and mobility programme. In particular, mobility maps are now considered as an essential tool for the deaf-blind in helping them to identify cues and in orientating themselves to their environment. For the blind in general, mobility maps could be very useful in enabling them to know the location of areas or housing estates, to understand how the areas are situated to each other, and to work out their travel routes either on foot, by bus, train or by taxi.

3. Developing Expertise and Infrastructure

Indeed, there is an urgent need to bring about the development of proper expertise and adequate infrastructure for teaching tactile skills to the blind and in the production of tactile and embossed materials for their use.

For the immediate term, we should be sending personnel every year to undergo short-term courses in teaching tactile skills and in producing such materials. I believe such a programme is available in the Philippines. However, other possible avenues should also be explored. The objective, of course, is to start building up a pool of expertise for our country.

In the longer term, we need to work with the Special Education Department in the training of teachers who can help the blind to begin developing their tactile skills, particularly in primary education. These teachers may need to be sent to an overseas country such as the U.S.A. in order

to be equipped with such skills both for the purpose of teaching and for the purpose of producing the materials in ample quantity.

Ultimately, a systematic plan needs to be formulated for our country. Through this plan, programmes could be initiated throughout Malaysia which would make available skilled personnel to impart the necessary knowledge and skills to the blind in education, rehabilitation and vocational training and to produce suitable materials for them. This is essential if we are to be able to prepare our blind students and trainees for the great challenges of tomorrow in the new age of advanced and rapid developments and science and technology.

(to be continued)

Silent gratitude isn't
very much use to
anyone.

Gertrude Stein

THE CASH-TEST CARD

By Ramdas Nair

Editor's Note: Ramdas Nair joined the Malaysian Association for the Blind in 2008 as the officer on assets and property. Subsequently, with the retirement of Theresia Nathan as the former Public Relations and Fund-raising Officer, En Ramdas was given the added responsibility of acting in that position.

En Ramdas was present for the meeting with the HSBC on 8 September 2008 concerning the matter of the cash-test card. The following is his report on the discussion that took place:

On 8 September 2008, Wong Mey Shyuan and Melissa Wong from the HongKong and Shanghai Banking Corporation met with representatives from MAB at Kompleks MAB. The HSBC had been assigned by Bank Negara to review the cash-test card of which they had produced 5,000 pieces in 1997 through a company in Austria.

It was noted that as there was about 20,000 blind persons who had been registered with Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM) in 2008, it was felt that 10,000 new cash-test cards would be a suitable quantity to be reproduced.

According to HSBC, there was the intention to reintroduce the RM2 and RM20 denominations,

thereby bringing about a total of six denominations of the ringgit currency to be in circulation in Malaysia. The RM5 and RM20 notes will be made of polymer while the RM1 note will be converted to coin.

It was agreed that three main issues should be borne in mind when producing the cash-test card.

1. COLOUR CONTRAST

For a brighter colour contrast on the cash-test card, a black or dark blue colour background would help to bring out the lettering in white.

2. DURABLE MARKINGS

The current markings and wording printed on the old cash-test card will fade after frequent usage or when it came into contact with wet or oily hands. Longer-lasting markings should be embossed on the card instead of merely being printed on it.

3. CARD THICKNESS

The old card is too thick and, therefore, rather too bulky to carry in the purse or wallet of the user. It was suggested that it would be a good idea if the thickness of the card could be reduced without compromising on the durability of the dots and the joint on the card.

In addition to the above comments, MAB also proposed the following changes to be incorporated into the new design:

- (a) Remove the Braille on the right-hand side of the card as these markings are too close together and create confusion for the user.
- (b) The wording should be larger for easy reading by low-vision users, e.g. the numbers of 2, 5, 10, etc.
- (c) Markings on the left-hand side of the card to indicate the denominations of notes should be consistent. In the old card, the markings change from a dot to a straight line. Instead, it was suggested to use one dot to indicate RM1, two dots to indicate RM2, three dots for RM5, four dots for RM10, five dots for RM20, six dots for RM50 and seven dots for RM100.
- (d) A signature frame should be incorporated at the back of the new card in order to facilitate the signing of cheques by blind users.
- (e) The Braille on top of the card should be retained to indicate that it is a cash-test card, especially for the blind. All parties were open to the possibility of renaming the cash-test card to the ringgit-test card.
- (f) The printed wording should also be retained so that the card could be easily identified by the sighted public.
- (g) HSBC will check on the copyright concerning the existing cash-test card in terms of the design and name.

Indeed, the discussion proved to be very beneficial and productive. It is hoped that Bank Negara may be able to come up with the ringgit-test card some time in the future.

We would like to place on record our sincere and most grateful thanks to Ms Wong Mey Shyuan and Ms Melissa Wong from HSBC. We would also like to express deep appreciation for the contribution of ideas and suggestions made by the representative from MAB – they were En Godfrey Ooi, En Mohd. Fairuz bin Abdullah, En Barnabas Lee, En Silatul Rahim bin Derahman, Puan Jacquere Emanuel, and Puan Nurfarah Jori bt. Abdullah.

IF YOU KNOW
OF ANY BLIND
PERSON NEEDING
REGISTRATION FOR
EDUCATION OR
REHABILITATION,
PLEASE CONTACT US
IMMEDIATELY

NCBM

Te: 03-2272 4959

MAB

Te; 03-2272 2673

03-2272 2677

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: STEP-AND-HEAR

*By Moses Choo Siew Cheong
Assistant Executive Director
National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*



Are you one of those who travel by public transport daily? Do you face the problem of knowing when the correct bus has arrived? Have you been very dependent on members of the public to prompt you when your bus approaches the bus-stop?

Well, your problems may soon be over if our transportation companies agree to adopt a product that has recently been introduced into the market. The new device is known as step-hear.

The step-hear system is made up of two parts - the base unit, which can be installed at a point where it will trigger an announcement in a mobile unit called the Activator which is held by someone who needs to trigger the announcement. At the same time, the activator can be made to vibrate so that its user will know that a vehicle with the base unit known as the base station is nearby. When the base station is at close proximity with the activator (perhaps about ten meters away), it will be triggered to play the announcement.

Let us suppose that one of our bus companies decides to have this system installed. The following scenario would take place.

1. All the buses belonging to this company will each have a Step-hear base station installed in them.
2. A recording will be made giving the number of the bus and perhaps the route of the bus. The announcement will be no longer than 1 minute.
3. All blind persons needing to use this service would own the activator (which is no bigger than a handphone).
4. When the bus with a base unit comes within about ten meters of an activator, the following will take place:

- (a) The base unit will indicate to the bus driver that there is someone with an activator in the vicinity.
- (b) The Activator being held by a blind person will vibrate, thereby indicating that the bus is in close proximity.
- (c) The Activator will then trigger the base unit to play the pre-recorded announcement.

Thus, the end result will be that blind and visually impaired persons no longer need to rely

so heavily on strangers at the bus-stop. Low-vision persons, in particular, will not find it necessary to poke their heads into a bus to clarify the number or route of the bus. This means that the frustration of having to miss a bus will be greatly reduced.

In fact, the Step-hear system may be adapted for other uses. For instance, it could be used in the labelling of rooms within a huge Complex, a University or college, an office,

And so on.

The price of a base unit is about US\$130 while the price of an Activator is about US\$22. Discounts may be obtained for bulk purchases.

POLICY ON 1% EMPLOYMENT FOR THE DISABLED

Editor's Note: This is a translation of the Third Service Circular for 2008 received from the Civil Service Department of the Malaysian Government. The circular reads as follows:

OBJECTIVE

1. The objective of the circular is to clarify the procedure, role of the agency and monitoring of the policy on 1% employment for the disabled in the Civil Service.

BACKGROUND

2. This policy has been spelt out in the Tenth Service Circular of 1988 (PP10/1988). The objective of the policy is to help the disabled who have qualifications and/or skills to obtain job opportunities in the Civil Service. Thus, in line with the efforts to raise the development of human capital and to bring about a caring society in Malaysia, the Government is updating the policy in order to achieve the 1% quota.

DEFINITION



3. Based on the Disability Act 2007, the disabled include

those with long-term ailments physically, mentally, intellectually or socially.

The Department Head is the officer in charge of a department or a Civil Service.

The appointed authority (PBM) is an agency vested with the power to appoint a person to serve in the agency.

Relevant alterations refer to the adaptations and adjustments that are necessary and appropriate without causing undue burden with the view to enabling the disabled to enjoy quality life in society.

RECRUITMENT POLICY

4. The policy of 1% quota in employment for the disabled requires the recruitment of disabled persons to fill at least 1% of the positions among the officers in an agency or Civil Service.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

5. The disabled can apply directly for a position through the appointed authority at the federal, state, local or institutional level. However, he must meet with all the conditions in the scheme.

6. The disabled may also apply with the help of the Welfare Department (JKM). This means

that the disabled must be registered with JKM.

7. Application can also be made through the online system.

8. As a guideline to the government agencies, the disability categories are provided in Appendix 'A' which is subject to changes made by JKM from time to time.

RECRUITMENT PROCEDURE

9. To interview the disabled person, the agency could appoint a panel of interviewers, one of whom would be the Welfare Officer or other officer experienced in dealing with the disabled.

10. Appointment of a disabled person should be in accordance with the scheme concerned. The disabled could be appointed on a permanent or contract basis or according to whatever method in operation at the time.

ROLE OF JKM

11. The role of JKM is as follows:

(i) Registration of disabled job seekers for the Civil Service.

(ii) Channelling the information regarding disabled job seeker to the relevant agency.

(iii) To hold discussions with the disabled from time to time regarding issues and challenges faced by them in employment.

(iv) To work out a job coaching method to help the disabled and agencies concerned in coping with the challenges.

(v) To ensure that the Department Head produces a report concerning the number of disabled persons serving in the agencies every six months according to the format as provided in Appendix 'B', thereby keeping tab of the policy on 1% employment for the disabled in the Civil Service.

ROLE OF THE DEPARTMENT HEAD

12. The role of the Department Head is as follows:

(i) Inform JKM and PBM regarding job vacancies for the disabled in appropriate agencies.

(ii) Carry out the rehabilitation programme in the work-place to enable the disabled person to adapt to the work environment so that he will be a happy and productive worker. The objective is also to bring about mutual understanding between the disabled person, employer and colleagues.

(iii) To ensure that the disabled person is able to perform his duties effectively by making available the necessary adapted facilities.

(iv) To ensure that reports concerning the disabled worker is produced for the reference of JKM.

MONITORING

13. Every agency is responsible for ensuring that the recruitment of disabled persons for employment in the Civil Service is implemented in order to meet the 1% quota. JKM will monitor the implementation and success of the policy.

DATE OF ENFORCEMENT

14. The date of enforcement of this Circular takes effect from the day of its implementation.

CANCELLATION

15. With the enforcement of the policy as stated in this Circular, PP10/1988 is henceforth cancelled.

You can't help
someone get up a hill
without getting closer
to the top yourself.

H. Norman

Schwarzkopf

The artist doesn't
have time to listen
to the critics. The
ones who want to
be writers read the
reviews, the ones
who want to write
don't have the time
to read reviews.

William Faulkner

POLISI 1% PEKERJAAN UNTUK ORANG KURANG UPAYA

TUJUAN

1. Pekeliling Perkhidmatan ini bertujuan menjelaskan prosedur, peranan agensi dan pemantauan pelaksanaan dasar satu peratus peluang pekerjaan dalam perkhidmatan awam kepada Orang Kurang Upaya (OKU).

LATAR BELAKANG

2. Dasar memperuntukkan satu peratus peluang pekerjaan dalam perkhidmatan awam kepada OKU telah dijelaskan dalam Pekeliling Perkhidmatan Bilangan 10 Tahun 1988 (PP 10/1988). Tujuan pelaksanaan dasar ini ialah untuk membantu OKU yang memiliki kelayakan dan/ atau kemahiran diberi peluang menjawat jawatan dalam perkhidmatan awam. Walau bagaimanapun, selaras dengan usaha untuk mempertingkatkan pembangunan modal insan dan menjadikan rakyat Malaysia sebagai masyarakat penyayang, Kerajaan telah bersetuju supaya pekeling perkhidmatan berkenaan diperkemaskan dan pengambilan OKU pada kadar sekurang-kurangnya satu peratus dalam perkhidmatan awam tercapai.

DEFINISI

3. Bagi tujuan Pekeliling Perkhidmatan ini:

Orang Kurang Upaya (OKU)

berdasarkan Akta Orang Kurang Upaya 2007 termasuklah mereka yang mempunyai kekurangan jangka panjang dari segi fizikal, mental, intelektual atau deria yang apabila berinteraksi dengan pelbagai halangan boleh menyekat penyertaan penuh dan berkesan mereka dalam masyarakat;

Ketua Jabatan bermaksud seseorang pegawai yang mengetuai sesuatu jabatan atau Ketua Perkhidmatan, mengikut mana-mana yang berkenaan;

Pihak Berkuasa Melantik (PBM) bermaksud pihak berkuasa melantik bagi sesebuah agensi yang diberi kuasa untuk melantik seseorang berkhidmat dengannya. Ini termasuklah Ketua Jabatan atau Ketua Perkhidmatan yang diwakilkan kuasa oleh PBM; menyesuaikan Munasabah bermaksud pengubahsuaian dan pelarasan yang perlu dan sesuai tanpa mengenakan bebanan tidak seimbang atau tidak wajar, jika diperlukan dalam hal tertentu, untuk memastikan OKU menikmati atau menjalani kehidupan yang berkualiti dan sejahtera atas asas kesetaraan dengan orang upaya.

DASAR PENGAMBILAN

4. Dasar pengambilan satu peratus OKU menetapkan setiap agensi dan Pihak Berkuasa Melantik (PBM) hendaklah membuat pengambilan OKU sekurang-

kurangnya satu peratus daripada jumlah pegawai dalam agensi tersebut tertakluk

kepada permohonan oleh OKU dan kesesuaian bidang tugas serta kemudahan.

PROSEDUR PERMOHONAN JAWATAN

5. OKU boleh memohon terus untuk mengisi jawatan kepada PBM sama ada di peringkat Persekutuan, Negeri, Pihak Berkuasa Berkanun dan Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan. Bagi tujuan permohonan tersebut, OKU perlu memenuhi syarat-syarat seperti yang dinyatakan dalam skim perkhidmatan yang sedang berkuat kuasa.

6. OKU jugaboleh mengemukakan permohonan kepada PBM dengan mendapat khidmat nasihat daripada Jabatan Kebajikan Masyarakat (JKM). Bagi maksud ini, OKU hendaklah berdaftar dengan JKM.

7. Permohonan jawatan oleh OKU boleh dibuat melalui sistem online, borang permohonan atau kaedah-kaedah lain yang ditetapkan oleh PBM.

8. Sebagai garis panduan kepada agensi dan PBM, kategori ketidakupayaan adalah seperti di Lampiran A tertakluk kepada perubahan yang dibuat oleh JKM dari semasa ke semasa.

PROSEDUR PENGAMBILAN

9. Bagi menemu duga OKU, PBM atau agensi (sekiranya diwakilkan kuasa pelantikan), jika perlu boleh melantik panel penemu duga yang salah seorang ahli panel adalah Pegawai Kebajikan Masyarakat atau mana-mana pegawai yang berpengalaman dalam pengurusan OKU.

10. Pelantikan OKU hendaklah mengikut syarat skim perkhidmatan berkenaan. OKU boleh dilantik secara tetap, kontrak atau apa-apa kaedah pelantikan yang berkuat kuasa.

PERANAN JKM

11. JKM berperanan:

- (i) menjalankan usaha-usaha pendaftaran pencari kerja OKU untuk berkhidmat dalam perkhidmatan awam;
- (ii) menyalurkan maklumat pendaftaran pekerjaan OKU kepada PBM dan agensi berkenaan bagi membantu urusan permohonan jawatan;
- (iii) mengadakan program secara berkala dengan golongan OKU bagi mendengar dan membincangkan isu dan cabaran yang dihadapi oleh mereka khususnya dalam bidang pekerjaan;
- (iv) mewujudkan pendekatan 'job coaching' bagi membantu OKU dan agensi dalam membuat penyesuaian kepada persekitaran kerja dan bidang kerja; dan
- (v) memastikan Ketua Jabatan mengemukakan laporan

mengenai bilangan OKU yang berkhidmat di agensi masing-masing setiap enam (6) bulan mengikut format di Lampiran B bagi memantau pelaksanaan dasar pengambilan satu peratus peluang pekerjaan dalam perkhidmatan awam kepada OKU.

PERANAN KETUA JABATAN

12. Ketua Jabatan berperanan :

- (i) memaklumkan kepada JKM dan PBM mengenai kekosongan jawatan di agensi masing-masing yang sesuai untuk diisi oleh OKU;
- (ii) melaksanakan program orientasi di tempat kerja bagi membantu OKU menyesuaikan diri kepada persekitaran di tempat kerja dengan mengambil kira keupayaan OKU supaya mereka dapat bekerja dalam keadaan selesa dan produktif. Program ini juga bertujuan mewujudkan hubungan saling memahami antara OKU dengan majikan dan rakan-rakan sekerja agar mereka dapat membantu OKU bekerja secara berterusan di samping meningkatkan kualiti perkhidmatan;
- (iii) memastikan OKU mendapat keselesaan dalam menjalankan tugas serta kesesuaian penggunaan kemudahan dengan mengambil tindakan ke arah menyediakan penyesuaian yang munasabah; dan
- (iv) memastikan laporan yang diperlukan oleh JKM

mengenai OKU dikemukakan pada masa yang ditetapkan.

PEMANTAUAN

13. Setiap agensi adalah bertanggungjawab memastikan bahawa pengambilan OKU dalam jawatan-jawatan dalam perkhidmatan awam dilaksanakan secara berterusan sehingga bilangan mereka yang berkhidmat di agensi berkenaan mencapai sekurang-kurangnya satu peratus. JKM akan memantau pelaksanaan dan pencapaian dasar ini di agensi berkenaan dan perkhidmatan awam keseluruhannya dari semasa ke semasa.

TARIKH KUAT KUASA

14. Pekeliling Perkhidmatan ini berkuat kuasa mulai tarikh ianya dikeluarkan.

PEMBATALAN

15. Dengan berkuat kuasanya Pekeliling Perkhidmatan ini, PP 10/1988 adalah dibatalkan.

PEMAKAIAN

16. Tertakluk kepada penerimaannya oleh Pihak Berkuasa masing-masing, Pekeliling Perkhidmatan ini terpakai kepada Perkhidmatan Awam Negeri, Pihak Berkuasa Berkanun dan Pihak Berkuasa Tempatan. Walau bagaimanapun, Pihak Berkuasa berkenaan disarankan untuk sama-sama menjayakan dasar ini.

ONLY THE TOUGH GET THROUGH

By Mohd Badrun bin Mohd Arshad

Editor's Note: Mohd Badrun bin Mohd Arshad holds a Bachelor of Economics (Hons.) degree and a Master of Management degree from the International Islamic University. He struggled hard as a low-vision person to achieve success not only in education but also in his career.

He relates his experience in life as follows:

I am a low-vision person and currently employed as a Training and Quality Systems Executive at Bina Puri Holdings Bhd., a dynamic construction company. At first the company gave me a very limited job scope. As time went on, however, my job scope was expanded to include training, quality systems and corporate communication. In fact, I had the opportunity to be M.C. for many of the company's corporate events. Before such events, I had to memorise the scripts and the most challenging task was to memorise the salutations.

Besides my professional job, I also run a very unique e-business – this business came to me by accident in the year 2004. Now the business has become famous through its meta-tag of “Debat Agung”.

However, I must emphasise that I was not born with a silver spoon in my mouth. In fact, I used to cry alone, thinking of my future when

I was at school. At the time, I had no confidence in myself and I felt that it was difficult to survive in this world.

After my graduation from the International Islamic University in 2003, I still had no idea what I was going to do. Nevertheless, exploiting my status as the best student in my science school in 1995 and with my Bachelor of Economics degree, I sent applications to nearly 250 companies. I did not receive any positive replies.

So I decided to change my strategy. Instead of applying for a job vacancy, I requested for a job placement as a disabled person. This new strategy paid off as Bina Puri eventually agreed to give me a trial working period.

As disabled persons, we have to persevere. We have to challenge ourselves to survive in the world of the non-disabled. “only the tough get through” is my belief.

Nowadays, however, with the help of technology, everybody can succeed. What you need is creativity. This is how I have been able to take on e-commerce without needing to go anywhere. By just working at home and without any website, my niche business is operating under a famous virtual meta-tag of “Debat Agung”. My e-commerce business is able to capture the nationwide market and nobody knows that I am disabled.

I am now married to an Indian Muslim woman and we have two lovely sons. Well, I found my wife through the borderless world of the internet. Now I am truly mobile because my wife is willing to drive me anywhere without complaint!

My advice to all disabled persons is this: Do not surrender or lose hope to the world of challenges facing you without putting in any effort. This must be coupled with plenty of prayers to God to help you through your difficulties.

With a little creativity plus good life strategies and a lot of effort, for sure your life will change.

You can't help
someone get up a hill
without getting closer
to the top yourself.

H. Norman

Schwarzkopf

A POINT TO PONDER: NO HARM LAUGHING ALL THE WAY

By Wong Kow

I like to tell and share jokes; however, I am afraid that when I do tell one, nobody will laugh. Embarrassing, isn't it?

There was once when a Japanese company director came to Malaysia to visit his staff and gave a long speech at a very grand annual dinner. He spoke in Japanese while the appointed local interpreter translated his speech into English. As the Japanese director had a great sense of humour, he embellished his speech with some funny jokes. Unfortunately, one laughed because the interpreter was not able to turn those funny Japanese jokes into English or Bahasa Malaysia.

The director felt disappointed when he found that his jokes did not elicit any response from the audience. Frantically, he spent the next ten minutes telling as many funny jokes as he could. For a while the interpreter thought hard how he could find a way out and then, suddenly, he had the answer. He took less than a minute to complete the ten-minute session of jokes and the result turned out fantastically well - peels of laughter broke the silence and this was followed by a thunderous applause.

The director was greatly amused and congratulated the interpreter

for his wonderful translation. He gave the interpreter a warm pat on the hand and remarked, "Thank you for the beautiful way in which you summarised my ten-minute jokes into one minute and for the tremendous response from the audience."

The interpreter reacted with a broad smile and returned his thanks to the director for his kind understanding. In actual fact, why did the entire staff laugh and applaud so loudly? Well, this was how the interpreter completed the last part of the translation:

"The director's jokes are not funny at all. I really don't know how to translate them. Nevertheless, after I finish my translation, please laugh as loudly as possible as your response will make the director very happy. When he is happy and in a good mood, you will all get better increments and more attractive bonuses."

Of course, the Japanese director had no inkling at all of what had been said because he did not have the slightest knowledge of the English language.

THE ATM CARD

By Daud M. Amin

Way back in the 1970s, the HongKong and Shanghai Bank was so eager to provide ATM card facilities to all its customers. So I submitted my application and, within one week, I received my card through the post. Initially, the ATM machine was very user-friendly to the blind with its synthetic voice prompting you every step of the way. However, this was discontinued several months later for security reasons.

Some years later, an HSBC employee spotted me handling the ATM machine and he informed his officer accordingly. The next time when I tried to use the machine, it was programmed to swallow my card. On enquiry, I was told that a blind person was not allowed to use the ATM machine. I decided not to take the matter lying down.

I consulted a lawyer and we both went to see the bank manager. After some discussion, my privilege to use the ATM card was restored.

In 2005, the problem surfaced once again when I wanted to change for a card with a safety chip. The officer was reluctant to grant my request and started singing the same old tune. After listening to all her excuses, I raised two pertinent questions in a loud and firm voice within earshot of other customers – how many sighted and how many blind persons have been robbed after using the

bank's machine? Why did your bank not object when I deposited RM60,000 some weeks ago?

My ATM card was renewed within five minutes.

I have failed many times, and that's why I am a success.

Michael Jordan

The chief lesson I have learned in a long life is that the only way to make a man trustworthy is to trust him; and the surest way to make him untrustworthy is to distrust him and show your distrust.

Henry L. Stimson

IF YOU KNOW OF ANY BLIND PERSON NEEDING REGISTRATION FOR EDUCATION OR REHABILITATION, PLEASE CONTACT US IMMEDIATELY

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