

NCBM OUTREACH



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IF YOU KNOW
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PLEASE CONTACT US
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

SPECIAL AWARD FOR ACTIVE BLIND READERS

The MAB library will be selecting five active blind readers each month starting from 1, June, 2009. This is just one of the measures taken to encourage and increase the number of blind readers.

In addition, staff of the MAB library will from June 1st onwards be working on shift hours. This means that the library will now be open from 8 am to 5:30 pm, including lunch hour from 1:00 to 2:00 pm.

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

UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

Part I

By Nicholas Lam



Editor's Note: *Nicholas Lam (totally blind) has worked for St. Nicholas Home for four decades. He would like to share with us his personal experiences and unforgettable memories through a series of short articles. Here is the first of his articles.*

THE BEGINNING

Looking back, when I became blind some four decades ago, I thank God I was given the opportunity to receive an education; it enabled me to acquire skills that would last me a lifetime and it also gave me unforgettable memories.

I contracted meningitis at the age of eight just as I was going on to standard two. The fever damaged my iris and optic nerve. When I returned to school after my illness, I had difficulty seeing the blackboard and floaters appeared in front of my eyes in the form of black dots. Thus, I had to leave school.

To protect me from the dangers of playing on the streets, my mother decided to send me to stay with my aunt in a Chinese kampong

called Wah Loong. This turned out to be a very good experience for me. I learned to feed chickens, draw water from a well, and look after a flock of pigeons (which often became tasty morsels for our meals). In particular, baby pigeon cooked in herbs were supposed to be good for my eyes.

In the meantime, my concerned mother consulted all kinds of gods and mediums in order to find a cure for my eyes. Prayer papers were burned and mixed in water for me to drink. Sometimes holy water was given to me and I had to run it on my eyes three times a day. While hoping for divine intervention, my mother also took me to see specialists in Ipoh and Kuala Lumpur. Nothing seemed to work and eventually cataracts began to set in.

One day, a distant relative from Penang paid a visit to my aunt. She suggested that I go and see a specialist who was supposed to be the best in the country, Dr. Wong Poh Lam. Thus, I underwent surgery in early 1959 but it was unsuccessful. Fortunately, Dr. Wong knew of St. Nicholas Home and wrote a letter of introduction and recommendation.

We visited the Home and met Miss Kelly together with Audrey Lam as the interpreter. I did not know their names then, of course; neither do I recollect what was said in the interview. It seems there was a problem in admitting

me to the Home because I was overaged. We were advised to go back to Kampar to have me registered with the State Social Welfare Department. The Welfare Officer was very friendly and he said that there should be no problem getting me admitted.

Soon a letter came to call me for an interview. I was asked to say the alphabet and then to count the number of rungs on the ladder of a toy fire-engine. Somehow I passed and was told that I could start on July 1st 1959. I would be given a trial period of one month. Thus began my life as a blind person and my intimate association with St. Nicholas Home.

It was a bright sunny morning when we arrived at Jalan Bagan Jermal. The bus had dropped us off at the stop after St. Nicholas. So we had to walk back for quite a distance. On the way, I saw many houses with rambutan trees full of the red hairy fruit. I had never seen so many rambutans in one place. Later, I discovered that St. Nicholas had even more rambutan trees and of different varieties too.

You may not believe it – I was put in the kindergarten class at the age of ten. I could not speak English and so I used Cantonese to communicate with everyone – I particularly remember speaking with Muniandy and Ah Guan.

I was fascinated with the idea of

having so many toys. I never had any real toys before. My favourite was the merry-go-round. There were three iron horses affixed to a central pole. All one had to do was to step on the pedal and the horses would go round and round. One day Miss Kelly saw me playing with the horses and said that I was too big for them. I thought I was just a skinny little kid.

One month went by very quickly and I was promoted to standard one. I was very fortunate to have Miss Ruth Mohan as my teacher. She gave me special tuition in English and Braille in the afternoons. I learned quickly and later she presented me with my very first Braille book, "The Little Red Hen". I kept the book for a very long time but I think it got lost when my parents moved house.

After five months I was promoted to standard two. Miss Mohan remained as my teacher and she continued to give me lessons in English and Braille contractions.

New toys were also provided. What I loved best were the mechano sets made of metal and of wood. I enjoyed making some models of cars and trucks. Some were put on the long cupboard in the class-room as exhibits.

One day Miss Mohan presented me with my first skipping rope and I skipped my way to standard three.

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:

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50470 KUALA LUMPUR
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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.

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INCLUSIVE EDUCATION

PART III

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

Editor's Note: The second part of this article appeared in the April – June 2009 issue of "The NCBM Outreach". So far Dr Ismail Salleh has touched on the role of the Special Education Division in bringing about inclusive education programmes for the disabled in Malaysia. He has also shown how the New Education Policy (2001-2010) initiated by the Malaysian Government and the programme of "Education for All" introduced by the International Council on Education for the Visually Impaired (ICEVI) are able to influence the development of inclusive education for the disabled in the country.

In third part of this article, Dr Ismail Salleh indicates what is the way forward in order to reach all disabled children in the country through inclusive education. Thus, he continues:

3. THE WAY FORWARD

In order to meet the challenges of "education for all" by the year of 2015, the following measures must be taken.

3.1 Building Up a Statistical Database

The issue of compulsory

registration has been raised time and time again without any positive results so far – but we should not give up making this recommendation to the government once more. As the current registration of the disabled is on a voluntary basis, a huge gap remains with regards to the number of estimated blind persons in the country compared to the number of blind persons registered with the Welfare Department. This is also true with respect to the official statistics concerning the number of blind persons in other countries in the East Asian region.

It is important to build up a statistical database on the disabled (including the blind). This data should be made available to the public for the purpose of planning and implementation of services and programmes. Positive incentives should be introduced so that the idea of compulsory registration can be implemented successfully.

3.2 Opportunities for Education

Given the limited number of places available to blind children in the residential schools and integrated programmes, the government should make available more resources so that more opportunities for

education will be provided for the blind. All the various kinds of education programmes have their respective roles to play in meeting the needs of the blind for education. Thus, all the different education systems currently in practice in the country should be allowed to exist. This will enable parents and blind students to have choices with regards to the kind of education that best suits their needs. This means that adequate attention should be given to all the programmes in terms of resource allocation for development of facilities and the promotion of personnel.

With regards to integrated education, we are happy to note that a number of them are still surviving since their introduction in the 1960s in Malaysia. This was despite the attempt to close down most of the programmes in the 1990s for the reason of needing to ease management. In fact, some of the integrated programmes have been able to produce some of the best blind students over the years.

However, to ensure that the integrated programmes can be more effective in meeting the needs of the blind for education, greater effort should be made in providing hostel accommodation, well equipped resource centres, and qualified resource teachers.

At the same time, a good support system should be developed that would include parent support groups, capacity-building or skill enhancement programmes, and so on.

3.3 Inclusive Education

In the new philosophy of education for the blind, the integrated programmes should ultimately give way to the inclusive education programmes. Inclusion means many things but an important element in the new system is the adopting of the community approach, i.e. getting the community to understand the importance of education for the blind and to enable them to participate in the process of educating the blind. The community means not only the teachers, school administrators and sighted students but also the parents, villagers and townsfolk.

3.4 Community-based Rehabilitation

There is currently a wide network of CBR programmes established throughout Malaysia, the majority of them initiated by the government and quite a number of them started by the NGO's. Serious consideration should be given to the idea of using these CBR centres more effectively as local and regional community centres. They should be better equipped and staffed so that they can act as educational and vocational training centres for the blind and other disabled persons.

The concept of including the community, i.e. involving

community workers and volunteers in the education and vocational training programmes, can be put into practice through these programmes. For example, community workers should be trained as itinerant resource teachers, thereby promoting the concept of inclusive education through the CBR centres. The effects will be far-reaching and will probably speed up the process of providing "education for all" through inclusive education.

3.5 Proper Rehabilitation and Vocational Training

More challenging rehabilitation and vocational training programmes are needed to prepare the blind for the increasingly demanding job market. To enable the blind to live an independent life and to cope effectively with all kinds of situations when they enter the world of work, they need to have proper training and opportunities. This means not only providing them with vocational training but they should also undergo an intensive rehabilitation programme. In rehabilitation, the blind should be equipped with the alternative techniques (particularly Braille and the use of the white cane) and the living skills (especially cooking and sewing). They should also be given the opportunity to have leadership experiences by organising certain activities and to join adventurous recreational programmes that would test their mettle such as rock climbing, camping and jungle tracking.

This means that highly motivated staff are essential for a successful vocational and rehabilitation

training programme. While good qualifications may be necessary, they will serve little purpose if the staff are not well motivated to impart the knowledge and skills.

An important factor concerning staff motivation is the need for recognised certification from the relevant authorities. Yet another important factor is the need to pay well motivated and properly qualified staff with commensurate salaries. Indeed, qualified and motivated personnel are essential because they will have the capacity and the capabilities to help in developing more challenging and even innovative curricula and in maintaining high standards among the blind. They will be able to construct proper tests and examinations so that the blind students and trainees will be properly evaluated.

3.6 Infrastructure and Facilities

Besides providing adequate resources, efforts should be made to ensure that such equipment, facilities and infrastructure are adapted or modified so that they will be rendered accessible or useable by the blind. Facilities and resources include specialist and resource teachers, adaptive computers, Braille textbooks, tactile aids, appropriate teacher-pupil ratio, library and Braille production unit, rehabilitation and counselling service, and barrier-free streets and buildings. All these contribute towards the idea of providing a conducive environment for the blind to undergo the process of education, rehabilitation and vocational training.

3.7 Research and Development

Many government agencies and NGOs do not appreciate the important role that can be played by research and development in bringing about change and progress. Besides being a tool of evaluation, R & D can also provide opportunities for exchange of ideas and sharing of experiences.

The National Federation of the Blind in America is a striking example and probably the only organisation serving the blind to have embarked upon the ambitious project of developing a world-class research and training institute. This is because they are aware of the tremendous benefits that R & D can bring through new discoveries and ideas made possible through the analysis and exchange of information.

We should all learn from NFB and emulate their good example. I fervently hope that some initiatives will be taken to make a start in the direction that is being led by NFB.

3.8 Budget Allocations from the Government

There is certainly a need for the government to consider a more generous budget allocation to support the education and training of the blind. More funds should be made available not only for government agencies but also for the NGOs which run significant education and training programmes.

If the voluntary sector is expected to expand and provide a comprehensive network of services

for the blind, complete reliance on the private sector will yield only a limited amount of funds and resources sufficient merely to maintain existing services and programmes. The government, on the other hand, is after all the chief controller of financial resources and programmes through the collection of all kinds of taxes. Thus, the government is in a position to make more resources available to the blind by providing more generous budgets and grants for the NGOs.

3.9 Partnerships

This is also another important factor to be considered in implementing effective plans, be it for education or for other services. Effective partnerships are essential not only between the blind and the sighted but also between the government agencies and the NGOs as well as between the workers in the blindness field and in the community at large.

The blind and the sighted must be able to work together as equal partners at all levels of society. This means making available opportunities for the blind to be partners with the sighted in the decision-making process through meaningful (not merely nominal or tokenistic) representation and participation in various bodies and committees.

The blind should also have the opportunities to be considered for employment and for promotions at all levels and in all departments if they are properly trained and qualified. This, of course, calls for the existing structural and social barriers to be replaced by new

policies and dynamic programmes in order for the change to take place.

In Malaysia, for example, the Welfare Department has set the good example of employing both blind and disabled persons at various levels as telephone operators and welfare officers. The Ministry of Human Resources has also promised to emulate the example of the Welfare Department by providing opportunities for the disabled in their special job placement unit.

In the case of the Special Education Division, there is still resistance against employing disabled persons as officers even if they have the requisite qualifications. We are hopeful that a more positive policy will be introduced in the not too distant future. We truly look forward to the day when there will be qualified disabled officers working alongside their non-disabled partners in the Special Education Division.

3.10 Legislation

Ultimately, effective legislation is required in order to lay down a framework of guidelines, incentives or prohibitions with the aim of protecting the blind and other disabled persons from discriminatory practices. There is, of course, direct and indirect discrimination against the blind in all areas of public life, including education, vocational training and employment. Thus, the enactment of standards through legislation is important; without laying down such processes, nobody will be encouraged to refer to the proposed complaints bureau for the disabled

or to the court. With the existence of disability legislation, it will be possible to establish the human rights commission for the disabled which could play a significant role in considering the standards and processes of settlement.

In our country, the Malaysians with disabilities act was drafted in 2002. In this connection, we would like to applaud the government for having finally got the act adopted by parliament early this year in 2008. I believe that with the enforcement of this act, the way to the future will be much brighter for all disabled persons in Malaysia, including the blind.

4. CONCLUSION

To conclude, we are very happy to note that the government of Malaysia is on the right path towards achieving target 2015 - the goal of "Education For All" – with its formulation and implementation of the new education policy for the period from 2001 to 2010. Indeed, the government has taken a tremendous leap forward by adopting this new paradigm shift for education in the country which we believe will have positive effects for all sectors of the community, including the disabled.

The four important aspects outlined in the government education policy are accessibility, equity, quality, plus efficiency and effectiveness. Highlighting these four general principles in the new education policy is certainly timely and relevant not only for the non-disabled community but for the blind and

disabled persons as well. Indeed, they have everything to do with the idea of inclusive education which I have tried to espouse in my presentation.

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

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

NEWS FROM THE MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

MENTAL ARITHMETIC PILOT PROJECT

This collaborative project was carried out by MAB, the SK Jalan Batu, and UC Mas during the first six months of 2008. The purpose of this project was to introduce the abacus and mental arithmetic to the blind children at Sekolah Kebangsaan Jalan Batu in Kuala Lumpur. It was hoped that with the success of this pilot project, the Special Education Section of the Ministry of Education would consider introducing this scheme to all education programmes for blind children throughout Malaysia.

According to Chris Chew, the marketing director of UC Mas, this project had been successfully implemented among blind schoolchildren in Mumbai, India in 2006. The Indian government is considering the idea of introducing the abacus and mental arithmetic to all blind children in the country.

UC Mas has also successfully propagated the idea in many other countries, especially in the Middle East. They include Egypt, Jordan and Sudan. UC Mas is now active in Vietnam with its projects.

Traditionally, it has been assumed that blind children are poor in mathematics because they are weak in their visualisation skills. UC Mas would like to prove that this need not be the case any longer.

With proper training and practice in using the abacus, blind children can ultimately do just as well as sighted children in visualising and mastering mathematics.

The three blind students from SK Jalan Batu were Nur Afiqah bt Kamaruddin, Chea Min Enn, and Solan Balakrishnan, all of them in standard five. The three teachers involved in training the students were Aziz bin Salleh, Hjh Zailina bt Sahat, and Eddie Idris bin Din. In undertaking this pilot project, both the teachers and students had accepted the challenge to prove the traditional assumptions regarding blind children and mathematics can be overcome. This project may be a small beginning but it is the hope of all three partners – MAB, UC Mas and SK Jalan Batu – that similar projects could be implemented in other education programmes for the blind.

Present at the closing ceremony on 28 March 2009 was the Deputy Director of Special Education. The ceremony was also attended by a number of members from the Outreach Care and volunteer group of MAB. The Outreach Care team had been working very closely with SK Jalan Batu last year in 2008 to promote various skills among the blind children there, particularly in indoor games such as dominoes, draughts and othello.

MAB extends very grateful and heartfelt thanks to UC Mas and SK

Jalan Batu for their collaborative efforts and support.

BOOKS FOR BLIND CHILDREN

The MAB library has received quite a number of children's books from Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris (or UPSI) in Tanjong Malim, Perak. The books are in Bahasa Malaysia with Braille and print on separate pages. (The twin vision books for blind children of America have Braille and print on the same page).

Such books are very useful to parents because they are able to read together with their blind children.

MAB CYBER CLUB

This club membership is open not only to the blind but also to the staff of MAB as well as the parents and children of the blind. The subscription fee is RM12 per year.

At the Annual General Meeting of the Cyber Club on Saturday, 21 March 2009 held in the MAB hall, Yam Tong Woo was elected as the second chairman of the Club. Indeed, everyone felt deeply inspired by this man who had taken the challenge of shouldering responsibility for the success of the Club over the next two years despite having lost his sight so

recently. He was having some business dealings in China last year (in 2008) when he suffered from food poisoning which led to his blindness.

The first chairman of the Cyber Club was Dr Tan Tok Shiong when the Club was inaugurated in 2007.

ENGLISH FOR EX-TRAINEES

The MAB Job Placement Unit has taken the initiative to organise English language classes for the blind who are either unemployed or in employment. The first class was held on Saturday, 14 March 2009 with nearly 20 participants. The classes are being conducted by Sunbeam, an experienced English teacher at the Brickfields College in Kuala Lumpur.

MAB GYMNASIUM

A full-time power-lifting coach, Mr Eng Chow Seng, has been appointed to train the blind at the gymnasium since 2 March 2009. So far five blind persons have joined the training programme to prepare for national and international competitions.

In addition, Mr Eng is also involved in providing coaching for other blind gym users in fitness exercises. With the engagement of the new coach, the number of gym users has increased quite a bit.

EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND IN THE K.L. STAR RAIL CO.

On 7 April 2009, representatives from the MAB Job Placement Unit met with En. Zaki bin Mohamed, the Corporate Affairs Manager and En. Sulaiman bin Kamal at the Headquarters of KL Star Rail (formerly Monorail). The main objective of the meeting was to identify suitable jobs that could be undertaken by the blind at the Star Rail Co.

Subsequently, the MAB officers visited the Star Rail work-site on 16 April and suitable jobs for the blind were identified as follows:

1. Customer Service Ticketing Crew

Job duties include selling tickets, providing information to passengers, and reporting to the supervisor on the ticket sales of each day at the end of each shift.

Working hours are in two shifts from 5:30 am to 3:00 pm and from 2:30 pm to 12:30 am.

Workers need to use the ticket machine to insert blank tickets to produce specific ticket values for passengers' requirements. Training for one week and three months' probation are required.

The basic salary is RM977 per month plus a shift allowance of RM10 and an overtime allowance of RM8. A laundry fee of RM30 per month will also be provided on confirmation.

Benefits include a pass of RM100 per month and 18 days annual ave.

2. Security Officer

Job duties include assisting disabled persons to purchase tickets, accompanying disabled persons to the platform, and informing security officers in other stations to help disabled persons at the disembarkation point.

Working hours are from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm and from 3:00 pm to 11:00 pm.

The basic salary is RM1,150 per month plus a shift allowance of RM10, double pay for public holidays, and triple pay for overtime on public holidays.

3. Pet Officer

Working duties include feeding and watering the pets, changing the soiled paper with waste, notifying the supervisor if the pets are ill, and travelling between five stations to carry out the same tasks (at Tun Sambanthan, Hang Tuah, Bukit Bintang, Titiwangsa and Bukit Nenas).

Working hours are from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

EDUCATIONAL ISSUES RAISED WITH THE SPECIAL EDUCATION DIVISION

On 19 February 2009, representatives from the MAB Job Placement Unit met with the director of the Special Education Division of the Ministry of Education. Issues raised included the following:

1. Placement of blind teachers in schools for persons with learning disabilities

There should be a more effective system to identify blind teachers who should be channelled to the schools which can make use of their skills.

2. Data-book on Teacher Placements

This book, which is being produced annually, should be made available to MAB in order to facilitate the process of providing them assistance through the MAB Job Placement Unit.

3. Assistant Teachers in Government Schools

Opportunities should be provided for low vision persons to be employed as assistant teachers.

4. KPLI Training

Many blind persons have found difficulty in being accepted for KPLI training even after having attended at least three interviews. The regulations should be relaxed to make it easier for the blind to gain access to teacher training (as was done in 1998 when the doors were flung wide open to the blind for teacher training in colleges and universities).

5. Special allowance for Teachers

Currently, this allowance is given only to teachers in education programmes for the blind. It should be extended to blind teachers teaching in schools for sighted children and in the religious schools.

WORLD BLIND BOWLS 2009 – MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA

The lawn bowl team from Malaysia (consisting of six blind players) managed to grab two gold medals for the Women's and Men's B1 Singles, one silver medal for the B1 Mixed Pairs, and one bronze for the B2 Mixed Pairs. This is a great success when compared with the previous blind bowls championship in which only two bronze medals were brought back to Malaysia. We would like to congratulate both the teams as well as the team manager, Pn. Sumitha Ramasamy, and the other directors whose efforts had helped to ensure the achievement and success of the Malaysian team.

COLLABORATION PROJECT IN TAMAN HARAPAN IN TEMERLOH, PAHANG

The Service Civil International (SCI) carried out a gotong-royong project at the Taman Harapan Agricultural Training Centre of MAB from 1 - 3 May 2009. They spent two and a half days helping to put up some new fencing for the vegetable patch. One of the members brought along her young son with his two elder sisters to take part in the project. With

much gusto and great energy, he lay down gravel and pebbles for a path leading to the garden which he appropriately named after him as Andrew's Path.

On Saturday, the second day of the project, some members of the MAB Outreach Care group joined the SCI members at the Centre. Harun helped to conduct the ping pong competition with Vivian Ng, a volunteer, as his linesman. Shirene Tan, together with another volunteer, Amanda, conducted the dominoes competition while Nicholas Lam and Godfrey Ooi taught other trainees of the Centre and interested SCI members how to play othello and draughts.

In the afternoon everyone joined in the sing-along session. The trainees had the opportunity to display their vocal and musical talents. One of the trainees was a favourite hit as he provided his rendition of songs in Tamil and Bahasa Malaysia and played along with his guitar.

We extend heartfelt thanks to SCI and the Outreach Care group for the successful collaboration project.

YOU ARE BLIND – CAN YOU GO TO PULAU KETAM?

By Eddy Chong Ted Hin

Editor's Note: Eddy Chong graduated from Universiti Malaya with a diploma in engineering in 1987 and obtained further professional qualifications in 2000. While working as an engineer, Eddy had an attack of dengue fever which caused him to lose much of his sight and hearing ability about twelve years ago in 1997.

Eddy became a member of the Outreach Care Committee and the deaf-blind group in the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) in 2004. Last year in 2008 he organised a trip to Pulau Ketam (Crab Island) for three deaf-blind persons together with some other blind and sighted volunteers.

For many, the trip would have meant nothing at all. However, for the deaf-blind, it was a rare experience to visit an island one had heard so much about but never had the chance to taste its fresh salty sea-breezes and sample its delicious seafood.

With the experience gained, Eddy had plans to organise a bigger programme for another group of blind persons. He hoped to bring more blind people to the island which would include a visit to the famous fish farm.

Eddy Chong describes his planning experience in the following article:

When I told some sighted friends that I would be making a recce trip to Pulau Ketam in order to organise a visiting programme for a group of blind persons, they expressed a lot of doubt and tried to discourage me. They said that there was nothing to see there, it was dangerous and a waste of time. I tried to tell them that I had already organised one trip for some deaf-blind persons but they ignored my explanations.

Anyway, I went ahead with my plans. On 11 February 2009, I made the recce trip with two blind friends and two sighted volunteers. After breakfasting at MacDonald's in KL Sentral, we boarded the 10 am KTM train to Port Klang. We crossed the sea on a ferry and arrived at the island round about noon.

We went straight to the Sea Lion hotel (the only hotel on the island) and asked the manager, Mr Cheah, about the trip to the fish farm. His immediate response was, "Why you want to go there? You just sit here and enjoy yourself." On our insistence to know how to get to the farm, he directed us to the company, Pacific Tours, which was just about three minutes' walk from the hotel.

At the company we were told that we could take a junk or tongkang to the farm and the ticket per head was RM12. Before making the trip at 2 pm, however, we

decided to have our lunch at Lee Wah restaurant – the seafood was delicious! We even had a little time for shopping before making our way back to Pacific Tours and then to the pier.

The one-hour trip round the island seemed like just a few minutes as we enjoyed the zestful winds buffeting our hair and our faces. At last we reached the fish farm and disembarked from the tongkang. To our surprise, the farm was on a floating platform in the middle of the sea; as the platform moved gently from side to side, I was reminded of the song, "I feel the earth move under my feet".

The owners of the farm greeted us warmly and showed us to some seats. From the briefing, we learned that it would cost about RM1 million to start up such a farm. The fish being reared were telapia and garupa and they could grow to more than three feet long and could be as heavy as five kilogrammes. The fish were enclosed in nets which were at least ten feet deep, ten feet long and ten feet wide. The fish were sold live to customers from Hong Kong who would make the one-month journey by sea – two weeks to Malaysia and two weeks back to Hong Kong. Malaysian customers would not offer such good prices for the fish.

Small dead fish brought from the main island were then fed to the

telapia and garupa – you could hear them greedily slurping up their “prey”. We squatted down carefully to feel the nylon nets which were holding the fish. The owner said that “friends” from the wild open sea would often visit the nets, poking their heads in to kiss their cousins who were enclosed within.

Visitors and tourists could stay overnight in the chalets where they could do fishing in the deep sea by just throwing their fishing nets and lines over the banister. They had to pay RM60 for one night’s stay but they had to bring their own fishing gear. To get to the chalets, we had to walk across a two-foot wide bridge. Some of us were brave enough to take the walk of about five feet distance to cross over to the chalets, praying that we would not fall into the nets on either side.

According to the owner, they were planning to construct another fish farm with a much wider bridge of at least eight feet so that it would be much safer to walk across. This would also cost about RM1 million and would be ready in two years’ time. Each of the nets enclosing the fish would cost about RM1,000 each and there were about one hundred of such nets.

On the way back to the tongkang, we heard some men speaking in Bahasa Malaysia. We enquired what they were doing and they replied that they were mending some crab nets. There were two kinds of nets – the closed nets which could catch two crabs or so and the open nets which could catch five crabs or more. We asked whether the blind could go crab-

catching and they said it would be very difficult because they had to go to the marshes and the mangroves had many overhanging branches. Then, when one of us started speaking in Hokkien, they began conversing with us in the same dialect and we discovered that they were, in fact, Hokkien rather than Malay fishermen.

Back at the hotel on Pulau Ketam, we refreshed ourselves with thirst-quenching ice drinks. We then found out about the rooms available for rental. Each room with four beds would cost RM100 per night. However, the hotel package would cost about RM95 per head (inclusive of room for four, three meals and the trip to the fish farm).

Before going home, we did a little more shopping. Someone from our team discovered some lovely vegetarian “pow”!

I told my sighted friends about the successful trip. They were truly amazed that blind people like me could be so daring to take such risks. “You really went to Pulau Ketam? How can you move about – you have to take the train, the boat, cross the sea – it’s so dangerous!”

I replied that one blind lady in the recce team to Pulau Ketam, Lim Siew Chong, was so happy that she sang all the way in the tongkang ride to the fish farm. When I asked her how she was enjoying herself, she said it was real fun. “Even though I cannot see the beauty, I can enjoy the experience in a tongkang and I love to feel the strong wind blowing!” She said.

I am not sure if my sighted friends

believed what I told them but they said this: “Wah, you blind people must be very special people! We really respect you!”

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

OUTREACH CARE, TACTILE SKILLS AND EMBOSSED MATERIALS FOR THE BLIND

Part III

By Moktar Soon

Editor's Note: The second part of this article appeared in the April – June 2009 issue of "The NCBM Outreach". Having put forward his views on the importance of tactile skills and embossed materials for the blind, En. Moktar would now like to present a method of teaching which could be used to help blind children in particular to develop the sense of touch more effectively through systematic learning. This programme could also be adapted to suit the needs of the adult blind undergoing the rehabilitation course.

Here is what he says:

I was very happy when the MAB Outreach Care Committee came up with the idea of the Saturday morning programme for blind children in 2007 at the Kompleks MAB. My assignment was to help the blind children acquire proper techniques in Braille reading and to prepare them for participation in a Braille reading competition.

In the process of teaching, it suddenly dawned upon me that these blind children were, in fact, rather poor in their pre-reading skills. I had a very strong feeling that they should be given some guidance in the acquisition of pre-reading skills in a systematic manner. This would enable the

blind children to realise that Braille and embossed materials were important not only for their education but also to help them have a much better appreciation of their environment through the sense of touch.

OBJECTIVES

Thus, I drew up a pre-reading skills programme for the blind children with the following objectives in mind:

1. To help the blind children develop their sense of touch more effectively through systematic learning.
2. To equip them with techniques in using the sense of touch to identify objects by size, shape and texture.
3. To enable them to have a better comprehension of such concepts as dimensions, orientation and positioning in relation to objects.

STAGES OF DEVELOPMENT

The children can go through the programme in gradual stages of development as follows:

1. Identifying Objects According to Shape, Size, Texture and Dimensions

In the first stage, objects of various shapes, sizes, textures and dimensions will be provided. The objects could include models of animals, fruits, crockery, mahjong cubes, rice grains, and different kinds of balls used in games such as ping pong, basketball and tennis. Exercises will be given in recognising the properties of these objects.

2. Creativity and Play

The next stage is to provide exercises which will encourage the blind children to use their imagination to create things and articles by moulding plasticine, cutting and folding paper, and so on. Games could also be used in order to maintain their interest.

3. Identifying Natural and Artificial Objects

Variation can now be introduced by providing the opportunity for the children to identify different types of objects in the environment outside the building such as in the garden and along the roadside. Objects could include trees, leaves, flowers, the fence, lamp-posts, bus-stops, cars and their number-plates, and

so on. Let them take note of the different shapes, sizes, textures and dimensions. This could then be followed by a discussion back in the class-room.

4. Identifying and Matching Labels

Braille and embossed materials will now be introduced at this stage. They will be given the opportunity to identify objects in a room and to take note where or how things are placed in the room. They will then read a floor plan of the room in order to identify and compare embossed objects in the plan with real objects in the room. Then they will practise identifying labels on cards and then match them with or stick them onto the relevant objects.

5. Trailing a Straight Line

This will give them the opportunity to identify different kinds of lines in order to discriminate between gross and fine lines. They could vary from lines of six dots to single dotted lines which will include line breaks, short lines and long lines. Games and activities could be introduced, e.g. making the sound of a car-horn when they come to the end of a line.

The exercises will also include the use of horizontal lines of a's, c's, x's and other letters of the alphabet. Vertical lines of l's and other letters of the alphabet could be introduced as well.

6. Diagrams and Charts

They should now be ready to feel,

touch or read diagrams, charts and other embossed graphic materials. This means that they should now be able to identify two-dimensional objects on paper.

7. Introducing the Alphabet through Dot Formations

In this lesson, we start introducing the alphabet through dot formations. We begin with one-letter combinations, e.g. l plus dot 4 – p; l plus dot 5 – r; l plus dot 6 – v. K plus dot 4 – m.

We could then go on to two-letter combinations, three-letter combinations, and so on.

8. Introducing Reading

All the previous skills taught would help to set the stage when the blind children would be ready to be introduced to reading. Songs could be used to stimulate their interest in the Braille alphabet. Twin-vision books could then be introduced to get the blind children interested in ideas through stories and pictures. We could start with books which have one word and one picture only. Then we gradually go on to books with two words and two pictures and eventually to books with simple stories illustrated by pictures. It is also important for the blind children to practise turning the page.

What are twin-vision books? These books would have the words in Braille with embossed pictures on one page while the words and pictures in print would be on the other page. This would make it easy for blind children to

read with their teachers or parents and vice versa. Currently, such books are not available locally but they could be purchased from the USA, the National Federation of the Blind, in particular, is actively promoting such reading materials.

9. Introducing Braille Writing

Having developed some ability in reading, the blind children are now ready to be introduced to Braille writing. It would be advisable to begin with the Braille slate. In fact, I believe this skill is essential. In my view, the Braille slate for blind children is comparable to the pen for sighted children. Like the pen, the Braille slate is comparatively inexpensive, it is so portable, it can be used anywhere, and there is no fear of batteries running flat. Children should be given the opportunity to master this skill before going on to the Perkins Brailler at the upper primary school level.

10. Introducing the Library

Blind children should eventually be introduced to the library. Various schemes and programmes should be planned in order to make the library attractive and interesting. These could include competitions in Braille-reading, story-telling, and tactile indoor games, book discussion clubs, book awards, exploratory excursions to back up information read in the books, and so on.

All the various book formats should be available in the library, including Braille, large print, audio and electronic books. The

library should be able to provide or to produce embossed materials, including maps and objects of all kinds.

Activity rooms should be provided so that the library would be a place that is filled with life and energy. These could include rooms for reading, indoor games, map-reading, research and so on. In this way, not only the blind but the community at large as well would find the library to be interesting and beneficial to everyone.

Indeed, it is my fervent hope that what I have proposed may become a reality in Malaysia some time in the future.

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

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: THE KNFB-READER MOBILE

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

If you are in a hotel room and you want to know what TV channels are available, you cannot make use of the printed material. However, the KnfbReader Mobile makes this possible. Once you have found the printed sheet of paper, turn on your Nokia N82 cell phone by pressing a button on the top of the phone. The Nokia music will let you know the phone is active. Then press a button just to the left and a bit above the five-way scroll-box on the phone. You will hear the message, "Hello. I am the KnfbReader Mobile."

Truly, reading software is now available in a small cell phone. Ray Kurzweil, the world-acclaimed inventor, made a promise six years ago that by 2008 the blind would be enjoying reading portability which could be contained in the shirt pocket, and now it is here – the KnfbReader Mobile.

Do you remember the very first reading machine back in 1976? That machine took up two tables and cost about US\$50,000. It was Ray Kurzweil who invented that machine as a result of a conversation he had on an airplane with a blind person who told him that, although he could accomplish many tasks independently, it would be nice if he could read printed material on his own.

Years went by after the invention of the Kurzweil reader. Many of

us will remember the Arkenstone and Arkenclone machines, the VEERA, and other systems that enabled the blind to read the printed page. None of them, however, is portable.

Portability first became a reality in 2005 with the advent of the Kurzweil-National Federation of the Blind Reader. This consisted of a standard PDA with a digital camera attached to it. With this device, the blind could read mail, office memos, printed receipts, and even US currency. But this machine was still too bulky to put into a pocket comfortably.

Now the Knfb-Reader Mobile is a truly portable reading device combined with a cell phone. With the addition of a screen-reading software such as MobileSpeak or Talks, it is now possible to access the other functions of the phone, including making and receiving phone calls and managing personal information such as names and phone numbers of contacts and appointments in the calendar.

The phone also offers an accessible GPS programme, an Adobe PDF reading programme, a voice recorder, a music player and much more. Wonderful as it is, nonetheless, the Nokia N82 offers access to AT&T or T-Mobile only. It will not work with Verizon, Sprint, US Cellular, or other non-GSM networks.

The Nokia N82 is about the size of a Milky Way candy bar, and unlike too many other cell phones, its keypad is very easy to feel. The buttons have just the right amount of space between them and are raised enough so that they can be located easily by touch. Moreover, the phone has two gigabytes of memory.

Above the keypad is a square box, which is called the five-way scroll-box. This box contains up, down, left, right, and enter buttons. To the left of the box is a button that activates different functions, depending on what area of the button you press. Pressing the top of this square button will activate the KnfbReader Mobile. Pressing the very small button on the extreme left edge of the phone will activate the phone's Send feature. Pressing the bottom edge of the button will bring up the phone's main menu. To the right of the five-way scroll-box is the End Call button, the top edge of which can be pressed to exit the Knfb-Reader mobile.

If you turn the phone around so that the back of it is facing you, you will find a slide switch that moves from left to right. When this switch is moved to the left, the camera lens is closed; when it is moved to the right, the lens is open, and you can take a picture.

You can customise the reader by changing the many user settings available. For example, by pressing the number 7 key on the keypad, you can enter the audio settings and change the rate, pitch, and volume of the speech as well as changing to any installed voice. If you have some vision, you can adjust the size of the print on the

screen by pressing the number 9 key and choosing between small, medium, and large. There is also a setting here for turning the display off.

The clarity of speech from this little device and the accuracy of the optical character recognition are very impressive. Nonetheless, as with any scanning and reading software, you do not always get 100 percent accuracy, but in many instances it is very close. Reading catalogues or magazines with a lot of coloured text can sometimes be a challenge and may slow down the recognition process.

How does this device compare with Kurzweil 100 and Openbook, the two desktop solutions that are in wide use today? With all three systems you can scan and read documents. All three systems will let you save your scanned documents, but Openbook and Kurzweil 1000 allow you to save your documents in many different file formats. The huge difference, however, is portability. With both Kurzweil and Openbook, you must have a computer and scanner which are not really portable. With the KnfbReader Mobile, you have a system that truly can be carried in a pocket.

It would be very helpful if this device could include several new features in future models such as the following:

1. It should have more than one file format for saving documents.
2. The ability to send a file to yourself or someone else by email would be very useful.

3. The ability to use a Braille display would enable the deaf-blind to enjoy reading portability.

All in all, this is an excellent piece of technology to most blind people whether at home or at work. It can be used for seminars and conferences and especially by college students who need to read handouts distributed by the lecturer. If the recommended features are included, the KnfbReader Mobile will be able to meet the needs of almost every blind person, even the deaf-blind.

For more information, please contact KnfbReader Technologies at website <http://www.knfbreader.com/products-mobile.php> or call (877) 5471500

The price is only US\$2,195 which includes reading software and the Nokia N82 phone (excluding the calling plan or the Talks or MobileSpeak software).

WHAT I HAVE LEARNT ABOUT MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGY

By Barnabas Lee Ah Guan



Editor's Note: Barnabas Lee is a low-vision person who had been employed as telephone operator for many years in the private sector – first in East Asiatic in Penang and later in Malayan Tobacco Co. in Kuala Lumpur. In the late 1990s, he was retrenched from MTC and had the opportunity to continue his career as telephonist in the Malaysian Association for the Blind. After a few years, he was successful in obtaining a promotion to become low-vision assistant in charge of the MAB low-vision service.

However, Barnabas loves to spend much of his time and money on books regarding management and leadership matters. In the following article, he would like to share with readers some of his reflections on management and strategy. Here it is:

In my job as Low-vision Assistant at the Malaysian Association for

the Blind, I do not have any staff working directly under me; I only work with volunteers whenever I can get such assistance (which is often not easy to obtain). Otherwise I try to tap assistance from other staff who I think would be willing to give me some help. Quite often I have to find ways of solving my problems by simply being innovative. For instance, now that I have acquired some computer skills, I have taught myself to use the email to select or retrieve documents for administrative purposes or for reference.

I have also observed that those who exercise good management and leadership practices are usually people who are decisive and well organised. They do not hop here, there and everywhere, leaving work undone or in half measures. If there is a job to be done, they will focus full attention upon the task in hand until it is completed to the satisfaction of all, but for himself in particular.

And time – this element is of crucial importance to anyone who is carrying out a duty or responsibility – great effort must be made to work within the time frame given. In fact, one must ensure that the results produced within the time frame are relevant and effective. Once the time frame is passed, the results may be rendered useless or ineffective.

Indeed, even before I joined MAB, I had been able to observe and learn much about management and leadership in the corporate sector where I was working. In order to illustrate what I am trying to say, allow me to share with you at least four stories concerning the actions and decisions undertaken by certain managers when tackling a problem or in times of crisis. These events took place while I was working at the Malayan Tobacco Co.

In the first story, I remember very well how the manager-in-charge (who was a Malay man) spoke up strongly against the establishment of Merdeka University and Chinese education. At the time, the cigarette, Benson & Hedges, was the chief product of the Malayan Tobacco Co. and it was the market leader.

When the Chinese educationists heard about the instigations being made by this manager-in-charge, they sent campaigners going round the coffee-shops to discourage people from smoking Banson & Hedges. At the same time, they put in great effort to promote Dunhill as a better alternative. Hence, Benson & Hedges started declining very fast and it soon lost about 80% of the market. As a consequence, the manager-in-charge was relieved of his post.

The second story was about Gordon Watson who was Chief

Executive Officer (or CEO) when the anti-smoking campaign was at its height. Everyone was talking about the dangers of smoking and, as a result, cigarette sales dropped drastically. Many workers were thinking of leaving the company for greener pastures.

Watson, however, did not regard this as being the end of the road. Instead, he took up the challenge and went to The Board with this message:

“Ladies and gentlemen,

“I know that cigarette sales are starting to decline. Don’t worry – I have a solution – let’s go to China which has a one billion population. If we can get three to four hundred million people smoking, imagine the benefits and profits the company will gain.”

It worked – they used the marketable brand name of Hilton to penetrate the China market; they made many inroads, and the results were spectacular! The company rewarded Watson with three months’ bonus and many other perks.

My third story goes back to the old days in Britain where the British were very conservative. Those in the upper hierarchy of a company were given many privileges – a personal assistant, one or more secretaries, a chauffeur, a private room for meals, and they went to the restaurant reserved for officers in the top echelons of the company. Of course, this mentality of management and this

method of doing things rubbed off easily on the countries where the British had great influence and where they had established commercial corporations such as in Malaysia.

Nevertheless, when Alex Seward came over to Malaysia from Britain to take charge of the Malayan Tobacco Co. as CEO, he decided to remove many privileges from the executive class. In other words, he introduced some new measures and his purpose was to flatten the company hierarchy. Now the executives had to drive their own vehicles for which they were given a petrol allowance. No more special rooms were reserved for them and they had to eat in the cafeteria with all the other employees. At first there was some dissatisfaction among the executives but they soon got used to the idea.

Finally, my fourth story is about Raymon Accorda when he was CEO of the Malayan Tobacco Co. He was a firm believer that policies and decisions formulated in the board room should be made known to the employees of the company.

On one occasion, he was having a meeting with the union of employees and the focus of discussion was on the collective agreement between the union and the management. He admitted that it was true that in the agreement, the developed nations had greater advantage over the developing nations. After some deliberation, he invited the employees to share their views.

To the surprise of everyone, one of the workers (an uneducated

Chinese machine operator) stood up and said in his broken English, “I am married and I am growing old and I started with very low wages in the company. So when I retire, I will find it hard to manage my life because I have an extended family which depends on my earnings. Therefore, I would like to appeal to the management to consider giving us a better deal, something like what they have in the west.” His speech drew applause from his colleagues.

Accorda was impressed and he wanted to bring up this matter to the Board in England. However, he had to grapple with two alternatives – if he brought up this issue with the parent company, they would surely accuse him of siding with the workers rather than the management and he would probably lose his job. On the other hand, he could just do nothing; but then, he had a burning desire to help the local people in Malaysia.

Thus, before going to England, he visited many of the employees to ascertain for himself the situation they were facing with their extended families. Convinced that the workers were in need of assistance to survive after retirement, he called for a final meeting with the workers in order to put forward an idea for their consideration – would they support his proposal to The Board if he was able to push through at least 50 to 60% of their demands. He explained that their support was essential to enable him to win the case. All the employees agreed to the proposal.

Thus armed, he flew to England to bring the matter to The Board.

However, The Board's response was to relieve him of his duties, their reason being that his proposal would incur extra costs for the company. For Accorda, this turned out to be a blessing because when he got back to Latin America, he was offered a better deal with another company which became a very successful competitor to the Malayan Tobacco Co. Later, Accorda was given a posting in Japan and he did very well there.

By narrating these stories, I am trying to illustrate the point I had made earlier – management and strategy are not merely cold facts and figures. To be an effective manager and strategist, the person needs to have intuitive knowledge, intelligence, courage, human understanding and all-out dedication to the task in hand. Likewise, these are also the important ingredients for an organisation which truly seeks to realise its vision and mission for the intended target group such as the blind.

Silent gratitude isn't
very much use to
anyone.

Gertrude Stein

A POINT TO PONDER: WHO IS WINNER?

By Wong Kow

I casually picked up "The NCBM Outreach" of July – September 2007 and flipped through some previous published articles. One article in particular entitled "Special Education on Higher Education for the Blind" by Mr Godfrey Ooi captured my attention. He made reference to a memorandum directed to the Ministry of Higher Education requesting for a special department on higher education for the blind.

Among other crucial points, the memorandum raised the important issue of course options for the blind. "..... restricting the blind to one main university severely limits the course options. Different universities provide different courses and not all these courses are available at Universiti Malaya. In actual fact, the blind do have varied interests and inclinations just like their sighted peers"

Looking back over the last half century or so, many blind persons have been able to achieve in higher education and often through their own initiative despite the prevailing misconceptions, difficulties and unfavourable circumstances. A few have even obtained the PhD. and have become key personnel in certain fields. Some of them have become successful business entrepreneurs. Ultimately, whether a person is disabled or not, it is his or her own determination that would make

the difference between success and failure in life.

At this juncture, allow me to bring you to the famous children's fable of "The Rabbit and the Tortoise". Of course, we all know that the tortoise won the race in spite of being slow and steady while the rabbit lost because of his over-confidence which made him decide to take a nap mid-way into the race.

Well, my version of the story does not end there. The rabbit would not admit defeat and he challenges the tortoise to a second race. This time the rabbit was well prepared; He ran full-speed ahead and, of course, won the race.

The tortoise went home to examine thoroughly the reasons why he lost the race. He was very upset when he realised that he had short legs plus a heavy shell that hampered all his movements. However, after resting for a few days, his mind began to clear and the tortoise began to believe that nature must have a purpose for each and every one of his creatures.

All of a sudden, the tortoise seemed to have gained complete confidence in winning the race with the rabbit. The next day he challenged the rabbit to the third race. Then both agreed that the starting point would be on one side of the river-bank and the finishing point would be on the opposite

bank. When the race began, the rabbit ran a very long distance along the riverside before finding a bridge to cross the river and run back to the finishing point. He was greatly disappointed to find the tortoise already at the agreed destination. The entire race was an easy task for the tortoise because he only had to swim across the narrow stream.

Indeed, both of the creatures are handicapped in a certain way. Each has its own strengths and weaknesses. They need not necessarily be rivals; they could complement one another and thereby make life easier and safer in their environment.

Coincidentally, after their third race, they observed that a hunter was in the area. The rabbit quickly carried the tortoise to the nearest river-bank; the rabbit then sat on top of the tortoise who jumped into the river and brought the rabbit safely to the other side.

Whether disabled or not, we all have various potentials and abilities. Some may be able to achieve their higher goals in a short time because of a quick mind; others may be slow and steady in reaching their goals but they may be persistent and good planners. Ultimately, we need to develop friendly and cordial relations so that we can bring about collaboration and complement one another for success.

Just like the rabbit and the tortoise, the disabled and the general public, especially the government, should be able to complement one another in order to achieve a win-win situation. While the disabled are in need of assistance and

resources from society in order to progress, the disabled have their talents and abilities that can be tapped by society for the mutual benefit of all.

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

THE BIG DIFFERENCE

By Daud M. Amin

At the end of July 2007, I had the opportunity of going to Japan; the trip was sponsored by the Japan Nippon Foundation.

On arrival in Japan, I boarded a “limousine bus” for a one-and-a-half hour ride. I had to pay RM100 which was rather expensive. However, I found the ride most interesting.

As I climbed into the bus, there were two staff who made sure that our bags were properly tagged and placed together. I also observed that the bus did not have its engine running. When it was time to go, the staff would move our bags into the baggage compartment. When they were ready, they signalled to the bus driver that he could move. As soon as the bus engine was started, the two staff stood at attention and took a bow.

Five minutes later, the bus arrived at another terminal, which I later learned was terminal one. As we arrived, there was a group of people standing around and there was also a pile of bags neatly arranged in a row. Again there were two staff on duty. The moment the bus came to a stop, the driver turned off the engine. Both the staff who were standing with the row of bags took a bow. Immediately after, the two staff carefully placed all the bags into the baggage compartment, gave the signal for the engine to start, and again took a bow as we went off.

I was half asleep during the journey but I could not help noticing the gentle voice of a lady welcoming us aboard and explaining the roads and highways that we were travelling on. There was also a message appealing to us to switch off our handphones or put them on silent mode so that others would not be disturbed.

After about an hour, the bus came to a stop. Again there were the two staff taking their bow, opening the baggage compartment, taking out the bags and lining them up in a row on the ground. After about ten minutes, one of the staff came up the bus and announced on the microphone that two more persons had not claimed their bags. After checking all our tickets, it turned out that the bags belonged to me and to someone from Indonesia. Thus, I knew it was my turn to get off the bus.

This pleasant trip in Japan made me keenly aware of the vast contrast in Malaysia. Our bus drivers don’t stop their engines – they seemed to love the noise and hot air produced by the engine. Hearing their screams, you don’t even know if they are calling the passengers or challenging their competitors. As for the bags, they are your own responsibility.

On the bus there is no one to welcome visitors. KL Sentral is supposed to be our travel hub – therefore, the government needs to take control of all the buses plying this route. Perhaps our Prime

Minister should experience the trip in Japan in order to appreciate the difference between Japan and Malaysia.

It also seems to be the Malaysian way of life regarding the wrong use of handphones. Not only the constant ringing of handphones irritates other passengers but the shouting and screaming into the phones really jars our nerves! Our handphone users need to learn to be more considerate.

We are fast approaching 2020 when we are supposed to become a “developed nation”. I hope some important changes will take place before then.

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

H. Norman
Schwarzkopf

THE STRENGTH OF A MAN

The strength of a man
Isn't seen in the width of his
shoulders;
It is seen in the width of his arms
that circle you.

Isn't in the deep tone of his
voice;
But in the gentle words he
whispers.

Isn't seen in the many buddies he
has;
But how good a buddy he is with
his kids.

Isn't seen in how respected he is
at work;
But how respected he is at home.

Isn't seen in how hard he hits;
But how tenderly he touches.

Isn't seen in the hairs on his
chest;
But in his heart that lies within his
chest.

Isn't seen by how many women
he's loved;
But in how he can be true to one
woman.

Isn't seen in the weight he can
lift;
But in the burdens he can carry.

TIPS FOR A BETTER LIFE

1. Take a ten to thirty-minute walk every day; and while you walk, smile.
2. Sit in silence for about ten minutes each day.
3. Sleep for seven hours.
4. Live with the three e's – energy, enthusiasm and empathy.
5. Play more games.
6. Read more books than you did last year.
7. Make time to practise meditation and prayer – they provide us with the daily fuel for our busy lives.
8. Spend time with people over the age of seventy and under the age of six.
9. Dream more while you are awake.
10. Eat more fruits that grow on trees and plants and eat less foods manufactured in plants.
11. Drink plenty of water.
12. Try to make at least three people smile each day.
13. You don't have to win every argument – agree to disagree.
14. Make peace with your past so it will not spoil the present.
15. No one is in charge of your happiness except you.
16. What other people think of you is none of your business.
17. Stay in touch with friends.
18. No matter how you feel, get up, dress up and show up.
19. Each day give something good to others.
20. The best is yet to come!

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

NCBM

Te: 03-2272 4959

MAB

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NOTES

NOTES

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Readers are invited to write for our publication, "THE NCBM OUTREACH". For articles published, payments are as follows:-

1. Original articles on the achievements of blind people or of an inspirational nature (about 500 words) - RM75.00
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