

# NCBM OUTREACH



Issue No. 50

Permit No. PP.7594/7/2008

January – March 2007

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**President**  
Dato' S. Kulasegaran

**Editor**  
Godfrey Ooi Goat See  
B.A. (Hons.), Dip Ed.

**Produced by**  
THE NATIONAL  
COUNCIL FOR THE  
BLIND, MALAYSIA

94B Jalan Tun  
Sambanthan, Brickfields  
50470 KUALA LUMPUR

Tel : 03-22735508  
03-22724959  
Fax : 03-22724960

**E-Mail**  
ncftb@po.jaring.my

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**A quarterly  
publication of NCBM**

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## **EDITORIAL BOARD**

- Moses Choo
- Wong Kwee Heong
- Ivan Ho Tuck Choy

## **MESSAGE FROM THE MINISTER OF WOMEN, FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT, FOR THE CLOSING OF THE 12TH ICEVI WORLD CONFERENCE, ON JULY 21, 2006**

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

NCBM

Te: 03-2272 4959  
03-2272 1442

MAB

Te; 03-2272 2673  
03-2272 2677

I am very happy and honoured to have been invited to officiate at the closing of this auspicious event, i.e. the closing of the 12th ICEVI World Conference for rehabilitation experts and workers in the blindness field. I am sure you had a very fruitful conference as you engaged in interesting and mind-stimulating discussions and shared knowledge, experiences and challenges in your particular and specialised fields of education in order to gauge the extent of improvements and developments that have been brought to the blind and visually impaired through education.

Indeed, the road that ICEVI has built for itself over the past four years will be no easy highway but, as you have described appropriately, it will be just an approach ramp leading to the starting line for your race on the long road ahead of you. The global initiative that ICEVI has mapped out for target 2015 and your vision of “Education for All” are most commendable.

As you have rightly pointed out, merely focussing on the “supply side” of the equation will not

automatically solve the huge problem in front of us. This is because it is premised on two main assumptions – flawed demographic data and that all families and communities in the less developed countries put the same value on education as those in the better off parts of the world. Certainly, concerted efforts must be made to reach out to these families and communities; using positive role models from among the educated blind in this struggle is a great idea!

Indeed, the family, as the most basic building block of the community, is an integral and important unit of society. Reaching out to them and educating them to be aware of the potential of education and the benefits it can bring to their blind children is a very important strategy and essential part of the work. Without awareness and education among the families and the communities in which they live, all other plans and strategies will fail.

In Malaysia, we are very fortunate to have very effective mass media networks. In spite of this, nonetheless, many families are

still hiding their disabled children although we have made repeated calls for them to be registered voluntarily. As you have suggested, I believe the best approach would be to go into the communities, especially in the rural areas and deep interior regions, in order to convince the families and to help them to set up parent groups and support networks.

In the urban areas, one of the issues often raised has to do with the question of access to the built environment. In this connection, the city authorities have taken the initiative to introduce accessible features in certain areas of Kuala Lumpur such as Brickfields where many blind persons reside or work. The features include covered drains, wide pavements, tactile guides, gently sloping ramps and modified traffic lights.

Before concluding, I want to bring some good news. In view of the great effort that is being made by our Ministry, we are very hopeful that tabling of the Disability Act of Malaysia for approval by parliament will become a reality in the not too distant future. We are very grateful to the NGO's and self-help organisations of the disabled for having collaborated with the government agencies in drawing up the Act. Not only will this legislation protect the disabled from discrimination and malpractices but it will also enable them to enjoy their rights and exercise their responsibilities as equal and fully participating citizens of the country.

In closing, the Government of Malaysia would like to express its deep appreciation to ICEVI and to MAB for the effort and hard work

in organising and ensuring the success of this conference. I have no doubt that your long race ahead will have a significant impact upon many families and communities and will bring direct benefits to many blind and visually impaired children, particularly in the field of education.

Shabas and may God bless and guide you as you carry out your worthy project to reach out to all blind children in this world!

“We cannot despair  
of humanity, since  
we are ourselves  
human beings.”

**Albert Einstein**

“Character is like a  
tree and reputation  
like its shadow. The  
shadow is what we  
think of it; the tree is  
the real thing.”

**Abraham Lincoln**

# CLARICE MOIJI RECEIVES THE NCBM TUN HUSSEIN ONN AWARD 2006



*Editor's Note: The late Y.Bhg. Tun Hussein Onn was the former resident of NCBM. The NCBM Tun Hussein Onn Award had been instituted in order to honour and appreciate the invaluable contributions of our former president to the work of NCBM for the benefit of the blind and visually impaired.*

*Clarice Moiji was given the NCBM Tun Hussein Onn award 2006 at the Corus hotel in Kuala Lumpur on November 24, 2007 (Saturday). She received the award from Pn. Sri Suraya, one of the daughters of Y.Bhg. Tun Hussein Onn.*

*After receiving the award, the citation for Pn. Clarice Irene bt. Benedict Moiji was read by William G. Brohier, Chairman of the Panel of Judges. Here is the citation:*

## CITATION PUAN CLARICE IRINE BINTI BENEDICT MOIJI

A love affair is always interesting and heart warming, especially when one reads the familiar words, "and they lived happily

ever after!" To our charming Tun Hussein Onn Award recipient of last year, and far-flung member of our NCBM family from the "Land Below the Wind", I say, "Relax and fear not - I'm not going to reveal any vital secrets about you and your dear husband, Christopher Ligadu, or your four daughters and sole son and heir!

Tonight, we are gathered here to celebrate and congratulate you, **Puan Clarice Irine bte Benedict Moiji**, on this very happy and significant occasion of your being conferred the prestigious NCBM Tun Hussein Onn Award, 2006 as the 8th recipient since its creation in 1996. It is awarded to you in recognition of your contributions to "the growth of the organisation or the lives of visually-handicapped persons" (quoting from the Criteria for Selection).

In making this announcement as the Chairperson of the Panel of Judges, I must first thank and pay high tribute to three of the other four members who made up the Panel: Dr P O Thomas (Malaysian Association for the Blind), Mr Anthony Sia (Sabah Society for the Blind), and Dato' Dr Hsiung Kwo Yuen (Sarawak Society for the Blind). Most unfortunately, Mr. Peter Pandian (Society of the Blind in Malaysia), was unable to join us. I represented St Nicholas' Home. Had there been a 'hidden video camera' in MAB's Meeting room, I could prove to you that the final decision, though very

difficult, was 'unbrokered', cordial and totally unbiased, thanks to the integrity of the members because, as you will note, each one on the Panel was nominated by one of the five Member Organisations of NCBM and Puan Clarice, being a Sabahan, is very closely associated with one of them!

Based on the Criteria spelt out by the Exco of NCBM, the Panel's first task was to confirm that both Nominees were fully eligible for consideration. Therefore, the Panel then scrutinised and scored the merits of both candidates, on the basis of the Scoring System determined by NCBM. As indicated in para.2 above, it was unanimously agreed that, while both had made good and significant contributions, Puan Clarice was the more outstanding.

This brings me back to the beautiful love story to which I alluded in my introduction. It all began some 27 years ago in Kota Kinabalu during the International Year of the Disabled sometime in 1980. Obviously by Divine guidance, she attended the function more out of curiosity and not knowing what to expect! A flood of emotions overcame her at this first encounter with blind persons and others with a wide variety of disabilities! She was stunned, taken aback, sad; but, at the same time, she was surprised and impressed by their abilities and their determination to succeed, if given a chance.

In empathy, her heart went out to them, and there's been no turning back ever since:

From 1981 - 1989, Puan Clarice served as the Honorary Secretary of the Sabah Society for the Blind (SSB). During this period she not only carried out the work of an Hon. Secretary but also assisted in the day-to-day running of the Organisation on a purely voluntary basis. She was also responsible for re-organising the administrative set-up of the Society and implemented many positive procedures for its betterment.

She is also well known among those who are blind or have low vision for her genuine concern for their well-being, not only in her official capacity but also on a personal level in various ways.

In July 1992, because of her dedication and commitment to serving those who are visually impaired, she was elected as President of the SSB, a position she held for three consecutive 2-year terms. While she was in office, numerous fund raising activities were carried out to ensure that there were adequate funds for the running of the Society's programmes.

Puan Clarice was also instrumental in getting a grant from the Canadian Government of RM60,000.00 for the extension of the Handicraft Workshop in Wallace Sheltered Workshop, Tuaran.

During her term as President, she also saw the opening of the Society's branch office in the Keningau District to cater for blind and low vision persons residing in

the interior of Sabah.

In July 2002, Puan Clarice was elected as the Honorary Treasurer of the SSB. One of her challenging responsibilities was being appointed as the Fund Raising Chairman. Over the next four to five years she carried out many fund raising activities to improve the financial status of the Society. In October 2005, she organised a major fund raising event at the Shangri-La Tanjung Resort featuring the well known blind singer, Alfred Ho as the special Guest Artiste. The above dinner was graced by TYT the Governor of Sabah, who is also the Patron of the SSB. Also present at this function were the Deputy Chief Minister and the Minister of Social Development & Consumer Affairs as well as other State dignitaries.

In addition to her strong connection with the SSB, Puan Clarice also served on the National Council for the Blind Malaysia (NCBM), both as a Council Member and a Member of the Executive Committee. In 1995, she was elected as the Hon. Secretary of NCBM and served in this position for 3 years. During this period, she was responsible for the creation of a new position in NCBM i.e. that of Executive Director, which facilitated the development and growth of NCBM.

In 2004, Puan Clarice was elected the Vice President of NCBM and served in this position for 2 years, bringing her period of service to NCBM to 10 years - a significant contribution to the development of the national body and persons with visual impairment in general.

The list of services and accomplishments of this dynamic lady, who was born of humble beginnings in a small village in the District of Penampang, can go on and on! She has given to society most generously of her time, talents and 'treasures'. She has served her State in numerous capacities, and also Lions International as Zone Chairman, Club President, Treasurer, etc. during all of which she has always borne in mind the needs of the SSB!

The above record of distinguished service earned her the following awards:

- (i) The State Honour of Bintang Setia Kinabalu (B.S.K.) awarded to her by the Sabah State Government in 1991.
- (ii) The Melvin Jones Award for Distinguished Humanitarian Services presented by the Lions Club International in 1999.
- (iii) The Tokoh Sukarelawan Wanita awarded by the Ministry of Social Development and Consumer Affairs Sabah in 2002.
- (iv) Lions Club International Top President Award in 1994
- (v) Lions Club International Top Treasurer Award in 1995
- (vi) The Lions Club District Governor Excellence Award in 1994

The NCBM Tun Hussein Onn Award, 2006 is indeed a most fitting and worthy addition to her collection in recognition of her humanitarian services to her State

and Country!

As one of your fellow-recipients and first non-visually impaired person to be honoured with this prestigious Award some 9 years ago by non other than our dear friend and supporter, the late Datin Roqiyah Hanim, I know exactly how you feel! So, Puan Clarice, as your close colleague of over 25 years, and on behalf of the Panel of Judges, I congratulate you again and thank you. May God Bless you and your family as you continue to give of yourself in the interest of those who are disabled.

William G Brohier  
Chairperson, NCBM Panel of Judges

“Give me the  
luxuries of life and  
I will willingly  
do without the  
necessities.”

**Frank Lloyd**  
**Wright**

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### **1. PROF. DATUK DR. ISMAIL SALLEH IS APPOINTED SENATOR**

On December 18, 2007 (Tuesday), about 20 blind persons and staff from MAB were proud to witness the swearing-in ceremony for the appointment of Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail bin Mohd. Salleh as senator. This is the first time that a person from the ranks of the disabled and the blind in Malaysia has been appointed as Senator.

Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail Salleh has promised that as his first move, he will be calling a congress of disabled persons. The purpose will be to highlight the issues and challenges facing the disabled and to formulate policies for the consideration of parliament.

We take this opportunity to extend our heartiest congratulations to Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail Salleh.

### **2. CYBER CAFE FOR THE BLIND**

The cyber cafe at Kompleks MAB in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur is now open from 8.30 am to 7 pm on Monday to Friday (except during lunchtime from 1 to 2 pm). The new time schedule had been started since November 1, 2007.

### **3. ADAPTIVE EQUIPMENT LOAN SCHEME**

The forms for application of loan are now available from the ICT

Centre at Kompleks MAB. For more information, please contact Silatul Rahim bin Derahman at 22722677 ext. 144.

### **4. HANDICRAFT-WEAVING WITH PAPER CANE**

While on a visit to Bengkel Sri Sembilan in Negeri Sembilan in August 2007, the officers of the MAB Job Placement Unit discovered that beautiful handicrafts can be produced by using paper cane. The instructor would be willing to conduct training sessions for the blind at MAB.

At least 15 blind persons have registered with the Placement Unit and it is hoped to get the pilot project off the ground soon!

“The one thing in the  
world, of value, is  
the active soul.”

**Ralph Waldo**  
**Emerson**

## **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:

94-B Jalan Tun Sambanthan  
Brickfields  
50470 KUALA LUMPUR  
Tel: 03-22735508 / 22724959  
Fax: 03-22724960

## **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.

**"No legacy is so rich  
as honesty."**

**William  
Shakespeare**

**"A pessimist sees**

**the difficulty in**

**every opportunity;**

**an optimist sees the**

**opportunity in every**

**difficulty."**

**Sir Winston**

**Churchill**

# BLINDNESS-SPECIFIC SKILLS UPGRADING WORKSHOP



*Editor's Note: Views have been expressed by quite a number of blind persons regarding the need*

*to build up a pool of blindness specific skills personnel and volunteers. It was felt that having such a pool that could be readily drawn upon would be very useful in helping to meet the needs of the blind in certain critical situations such as orientation and mobility skills in a new working environment or in a new housing scheme. At the same time, new skills could be introduced such as Braille music notation.*

*In response, NCBM has come up with a proposal which had been drawn up by En. Ivan Ho as follows:*

## PROPOSAL FOR THE ORGANISING OF BLINDNESS-SPECIFIC SKILLS UPGRADING WORKSHOPS

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the inevitable occurrence of resignations and retirement of personnel with the necessary expertise in the rehabilitation

of vision impaired persons, programmes and services in this country have been badly affected, at times threatening the very existence of such essential services. Realising that rehabilitational services should not stagnate, but, should instead improve in quality, the Committee on Education and Welfare, when reviewing the recommendations of the Seminar on Educational Issues Concerning the Blind, set up a sub-committee to draw up a proposal to address this situation.

Whilst sending personnel overseas to acquire such blindness-specific skills would be most ideal, the cost factor would be extremely high, thus restricting the number of personnel that could be sent. The other option would be to organise Blindness-Specific Skills Upgrading Workshops with certified experts in their respective fields, from local or overseas bodies, to conduct them. Hopefully, this approach would have a two-pronged result, firstly, meeting the human resource requirements of Member Organisations, and secondly, giving credibility to the credentials of the instructors. In turn, this would give high recognition to the services being provided to the BVI in the country.

### 2. OBJECTIVES

The aim of organising these workshops include the following:

- 2.1 To train or upgrade the skills and techniques of instructors of Member Organisations, and interested bodies, with the latest trend and techniques in rehabilitation of the BVI.
- 2.2 To standardise the techniques used in the rehabilitation of the BVI in Malaysia.
- 2.3 To formulate guidelines for assessing the BVI trainees.
- 2.4 To help build a pool of manpower resources for the effective implementation of rehabilitation programmes.
- 2.5 To encourage and promote the sharing of expertise and resources of Member Organisations in rehabilitation.

### 3. SPECIAL BLINDNESS SKILLS

Initially, these workshops would concentrate on providing training on the six areas identified, but they would not necessarily be restricted to the skills as suggested below:

- 3.1 Orientation and Mobility Skills;
- 3.2 Daily Living Skills;
- 3.3 Braille Skills;
- 3.4 Social and Communications Skills;

- 3.5 Career Guidance Counselling;
- 3.6 Counselling of newly-blinded adults and parents with BVI children.

**4. PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS**

- 4.1 In order for the training/upgrading to be effective and meaningful, the duration of each workshop ideally should be for two weeks.
- 4.2 The venue of the workshops to be rotated among Member Organisations with the necessary infrastructures for economic reasons.
- 4.3 Expertise to be sourced from local and overseas sources where appropriate and necessary.
- 4.4 The target groups would be instructors from Member Organisations and interested bodies.

**5. FUNDING**

- 5.1 NCBM to be responsible for the payments of expertise, board and lodging.
- 5.2 Member Organisations to be responsible for the airfares of their staff. In the spirit of co-operation, further contributions from them to the success of these workshops would be welcomed.
- 5.3 Participants from interested bodies would have to pay registration fees.

5.4 Efforts would be made to seek for project sponsorships. However, in order for the planning of these workshops to proceed smoothly, allocations would first have to come from the NCBM Treasury.

**6. COMMITMENTS**

- 6.1 NCBM shall be permitted to call on this pool of expertise to train personnel from other Member Organisations when required in accordance with the objective to help develop and strengthen services of Member Organisations and interested bodies.
- 6.2 Member Organisations shall undertake not to transfer the trained personnel for at least two years after receiving the training.
- 6.3 The trainers would design the course contents and the questionnaire.

**7. BUDGET ESTIMATES**

Each workshop would last for 14 days and would consist of 20 persons - 15 participants, 3 instructors and 2 support staff.

- 7.1 Food and lodging: RM 100 x 14 x 20 - RM 28,000.
- 7.2 Airfares and allowances/fees for 3 instructors: RM 6,000 x 3 - RM 18,000.
- 7.3 Logistical support, such as local transport: RM 5,000.
- 7.4 Training materials: RM 2,000.

7.5 Incidentals: RM 3,000.

Grand Total: RM 56,000.

Prepared by the Sub-Committee appointed by the NCBM Committee on Education and Welfare

The person who  
 makes a success of  
 living is the one who  
 see his goal steadily  
 and aims for it  
 unswervingly. That is  
 dedication.

**Cecil B. DeMille**

**(1881 - 1959)**

# SPORTS AND GAMES FOR THE BLIND: ACHIEVING EQUALITY IN EDUCATION – NEW CHALLENGES AND STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE



*Editor's Note: This paper was presented at the ICEVI conference held in Kuala Lumpur from July 16 – 21, 2006. In the following article Radhakrishnan says:*

## INTRODUCTION

As indicated in the title of this paper, the three questions raised are just as important for the blind as for the sighted in the development of sports and games. How can we help the blind achieve equality in education? What are the new challenges for the educational curriculum? What strategies must be adopted in order to bring about change in sports and games for the blind?

### 1. ACHIEVING EQUALITY IN EDUCATION

If the blind are to achieve equality

in education, there must be a level playing field in which they can perform and compete with confidence and skill. Many do not realise that with proper planning and suitable facilities and equipment, this level playing field can be created and achieved for the blind and visually impaired in sports and games. Unfortunately, this field is often neglected in the education of blind children. Sports and games should be regarded as an important aspect of education. Denying the right of blind school students to participation in sports and games is, in fact, denying them the right to achieve equality in education.

In order to remedy this situation, we need to consider the challenges to be overcome and the strategies that must be adopted. In fact, they have very much to do with public attitudes and the formulation of appropriate policies.

### 2. CHALLENGES

The challenges that need to be tackled include the following:

#### 2.1 PROMOTING AWARENESS REGARDING SPORTS AND GAMES FOR THE BLIND

Firstly, general awareness of the need and the ability of the blind to

take part in sports and games must be created right from the level of the school to the university. An all-out campaign should be organised to bring about this public awareness. CD's and video-tapes must be produced and distributed to educational institutions throughout the land. They must also be broadcast and made known through the mass media. These documentaries should feature the blind and visually disabled in a variety of sports and games.

However, providing the CD's and video-tapes is not enough. We need to popularise the sports and games among the blind students themselves, especially when they are still in primary education. This means providing equipment for practices and competitions and making available expertise to conduct coaching clinics from school to university level. Effort must be made to organise many informal competitions which would lead to major state or national level competitions and tournaments for the blind.

#### 2.2 HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

To achieve our objective, human resource development is essential. This means that the following need to be considered:

## **SPORTS EXCELLENCE CENTRES**

Such centres need to be established in various parts of the country. These centres must have facilities that are suitable for the blind and visually disabled. Without such centres and facilities, development of the talents and skills of blind sportsmen and sportswomen could not take place effectively.

## **LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT**

This is surely a very important aspect of human resource development. In order to increase the number of qualified leaders (both paid and voluntary manpower), we must create effective partnerships. We should work closely with other sports bodies for ordinary sighted people for manpower training. These trained personnel should, in turn, be able to help in developing the talents and skills of the blind. Technical experts that are required include referees, umpires, judges, classifiers and coaches.

Those who aspire to become professional experts should be required to work towards attaining a certain level of professionalism with certification. Volunteers, on the other hand, would only be required to go through short-term coaching clinics but they should be given adequate remunerative allowances. Such distinction in training is essential if we are to deploy paid and voluntary manpower effectively.

It is important to note that the blind themselves should not be neglected in the training and development of leaders and managers in sports and games.

Scholarships should be provided to encourage the blind to take up professional training. They could then become the future leaders and managers in this field. However, they should be given the appropriate education to make them realise the importance of working in partnership with other groups and organisations rather than going it alone if they are to achieve their aims.

Retired sportsmen and women could also be encouraged to play certain leadership and management roles in the development of sports and games for the blind. In this way, their talents will not be wasted after retirement.

Therefore, it will be necessary to organise leadership courses and seminars for all potential leaders and managers, be it on the local, national, regional or international level.

## **RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

It is important to carry out research and development with the view to maintaining quality leadership. We must establish partnerships with the universities to conduct such activities. The objective is to develop scientific applications and approaches in the development of sports expertise, equipment, standards and even new games.

## **RECOGNITION OF SPORTS EXPERTISE FOR THE BLIND**

There is a need to lobby with the government to grant recognition to experts in sports and games

for the blind if they have proper qualifications and certification. This also means that the government must be willing to make available generous financial budget allocations on an annual basis in order to meet the expenses for the payment of experts and other activities related to sports for the blind. If the job prospects are bright, many among the youth will be encouraged to take up training in sports and games for the blind as a career path for their future.

## **3. STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE**

What then are the strategies to deal with the challenges I have mentioned?

### **3.1 ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Firstly, we need to establish linkages. The International Paralympic Council (IPC), for example, should be structured on the model of the International Olympic Committee which was established more than a century ago. This would help to facilitate the formulation of policies, development of sports and games, dissemination of information and strengthening of communications. This would also facilitate the implementation of agreements that have been signed between the IPC and the IOC for cooperation and collaboration in various activities.

Another example is encouraging cooperation and collaboration in integrated sports activities. By integration we mean following the model set for the olympics –

after the olympic sports come the paralympic games. This method could be adopted for games such as the table-tennis championships. Dealing with such events under one package could facilitate funding and bring about greater commitment in the development of sports for the blind.

### **3.2 REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ACTIVITIES**

In order for public awareness to be sustained, activities must be organised regularly not only nationally but on the regional level as well. Ultimately, the main key to the achievement and success of sports for the blind is to bring about public awareness on the global scale. The goal should be to ensure that sports and games for the blind are given due recognition on a world-wide basis.

This can be done by strengthening the existing regional structures. Currently, there are five main regions under the IPC and they are America, Africa, Asia, Europe and Oceania. Each of these regions must be encouraged and must be able to develop their own regional structures, i.e. it would be ideal for each region to act independently. This would enable the respective regions to develop and organise their own programmes and local expertise and resources. This would definitely help to cut costs considerably.

Nevertheless, the regions should also be able to import expertise and resources as and when necessary. Also, the better off regions should be willing to provide assistance to the poorer regions.

In order that each of the five regions can develop as autonomous regions, power must be decentralised to the regions. This would enable them to take effective actions on the regional level in developing sports and games for the blind.

### **CONCLUSION**

The school is where talents are shaped and produced because the young minds of students are fresh and their bodies are supple. Therefore, sports and games must begin early for the young blind children in school just as it is being done for sighted children. Not only will their health be taken care of but life will be so much more meaningful for them. It will give them much more confidence to socialise and make friends and they can contribute to nation-building through representation of the country in international sports.

Therefore, I want to conclude by emphasising that both recreational and elite sports should be made compulsory subjects; they must become an important part of the educational curriculum.

In the attitude of  
silence the soul finds  
the path in a clearer  
light, and what is  
elusive and deceptive  
resolves itself into  
crystal clearness.  
Our life is a long and  
arduous quest after  
Truth.

**Mahatma Gandhi**

**Indian leader**

**(1869 - 1948)**

# NEWS FROM THE MALAYSIAN

## EIGHT BLIND CLIMBERS MAKE IT INTO THE MALAYSIA BOOK OF RECORDS

The team of blind climbers (including two blind ladies) reached the summit of Gunung Tahan at 2.56 pm on August 31, 2007. They planted the Jalur Gemilang and celebrated their success by singing the national anthem as the Malaysian flag flew gracefully in the mountain breeze. It took them six days (August 26 – 31) traversing difficult jungle terrain, crossing at least ten rivers and climbing hill slopes in order to reach their goal more than 2,000 metres or over 7,000 feet above sea level.

The theme of the Gunung Tahan expedition was “The Blind Take Up Challenge to Celebrate Malaysia’s 50th Merdeka Anniversary”. Through this event, the blind mountaineers accomplished a number of landmark achievements – firstly, the biggest expedition of blind persons ever to attempt and successfully climb Gunung Tahan; the first blind man to reach the peak of Gunung Tahan; the first blind woman to arrive at the summit of Gunung Tahan.

At the ceremony officiated by Senator Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail bin Mohd. Salleh, the MAB President, on the evening of December 28, 2007 (Friday) at the MAB hall, the eight blind climbers received their awards from Dato’ Denny Ooi of the Malaysia Book of Records. They were Nik Mohd.

Sadri, Siti Huraiza, Che Masuri, Mohd. Yusaini, Mohd. Fatah, Jebry Moming, Muhd. Yakob, and Lucas Dominique.

Their achievements together with beautiful pictures of the expedition will make it in time for the new Malaysia Book of Records which will be published in February 2008.

## CHOIR OF BLIND PERSONS

The Elderly Blind Club started Mandarin sing-along sessions in 2006 with Lai Kok Keong as coordinator and Liong Teck Yau as song-leader. NTV7 heard of the group and decided to do a feature programme in order to “find angels” who would be willing to volunteer their time and services in providing the group with proper training. The programme was telecast on December 8 and December 15, 2007 and two “angels” have come forward to offer their services.

An introductory lesson was conducted on the evening of Thursday, December 6. The first hour was spent on the techniques of singing followed by another hour on the practical aspects of singing.

At least 15 blind persons have indicated their interest in participating by registering their names for the choir. The first real lesson will begin on January 7, 2008 when the singers will be given their parts – soprano, tenor,

alto and bass.

## THE ABACUS AND MENTAL ARITHMETIC

MAB has started collaborating with UC Mas in order to introduce and popularise the abacus and mental arithmetic among the blind. The Jalan Batu Primary School had been identified for the pilot project to be carried out. Thus, a two-day course was organised for the teachers of the school from June 7 – 8, 2007. They, in turn, would pass on their knowledge and skills to the blind students over a period of six months. Unfortunately, when the time came for evaluation, the project had not been implemented by the school due to some miscommunication. However, the principal has promised to have the project implemented during the first half of 2008.

Undoubtedly, however, MAB collaborated with UC Mas in holding a presentation course for the adult blind at the MAB hall on December 1 (Saturday). The objective was to keep the blind informed of the potential of this new method of calculating based on the abacus. They would then be able to give their support when moves are made to get the Ministry of Education to introduce the abacus and mental arithmetic to the blind in all the education programmes throughout the country.

Each of the participants received

a specially adapted abacus from UC Mas. They found the course to be very interesting and useful and have asked for follow-up sessions.

### **MAB NATIONAL GOALBALL OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP 2007**

The championship finals of the MAB National Goalball Open 2007 was held on Sunday, December 2. The winners were the Wira team headed by Isman while the runners-up were the Taman Harapan team headed by Zubir and the PSOCM team headed by Hasidi Hasan.

Y.Bhg. Dato' L. Krishnan, Chairman of the MAB Sports and Recreation Committee, officially closed the event after giving away the cash prizes and trophies.

A special prize was also awarded to the best player of the championship, Qasmiee Abdul Rahman.

### **THE BLIND EXTEND HELPING HAND TO BLIND IRAQI**

The blind in Malaysia extended a hand of friendship to an Iraqi blind citizen who was in desperate need. Raed Ali, a blind man from Iraq, first came to MAB in May 2007 to request for a letter to the UNHCR to speed up the process for him to go to Europe as a refugee. Unfortunately, because his nephew (who was his companion) was taken to Europe illegally by his mother and leaving him behind, Raed's refugee status was cancelled by the UNHCR.

We learned about this when he returned to MAB in October for assistance to return to Iraq. Our appeals to the Iraqi embassy by phone, by letter and finally by reporting in person were to no avail – the counsellor flatly refused to give any assistance and told Raed to go back to the UNHCR.

At the UNHCR, they said he could reapply for the refugee card but the process would take a year or much longer and the result was far from certain.

Raed was in a serious predicament as he had over-stayed for five months. Reviving his passport would cost RM5,000, i.e. RM1,000 per month. He feared that, like many of his friends, he may end up in a Malaysian jail.

The financial relief of RM350 from MAB was sufficiently only for a few days. Fortunately, the blind responded favourably to an appeal on Teley MAB, resulting in a collection of RM683.

But he still needed money for his passport and for his airfare. Thanks to a Catholic relief organisation, RM1,200 was eventually provided to reinstate his passport by an Iraqi lawyer. Then, finally, a sum of RM3,700 was provided by Baitumal (an Islamic organisation) to enable Raed to purchase his air ticket to Baghdad.

With heartfelt and deep appreciation, Raed had requested that the names of the contributors be acknowledged as follows: Those who gave RM20 were Jonathan Mok, Taslim Kosni, John Kim, Samuel Khor, Cheah Bok Keat, Tan Boon Khim, Mohd.

Ruzani Jusoh, Anna Loo and Lim Chee Hwah; RM50 contributions came from Noreshah bt. Mohamad, Mohd. Bin Harun and Godfrey Ooi; RM100 was given by Wan Jamilah bt. Mohd. Rasdi; while RM200 was contributed by Ahmad Salleh and his friends.

Khoo Chee Tiong gave RM8, Opar contributed RM5 while the Asunta student nurses gave RM40.

### **VISIT TO SHELTERED WORKSHOPS IN NEGERI SEMBILAN**

On August 22, 2007, a team from the MAB Job Placement Unit made an exploratory visit to Negeri Sembilan to see what was being done at the sheltered workshops there. The first workshop they saw was known as the Bengkel Sri Sembilan which had been established in the 1960's. It was being run by the Rehabilitation Organisation of Negeri Sembilan (better known as PPOC Negeri Sembilan) with financial support from the National Welfare Department (JKM) with a grant of RM300,000 per year.

Their main project is making envelopes of various sizes. The envelopes are supplied to the government offices and cooperatives. Each worker is paid on piece-rate basis for every thousand envelopes produced and according to the sizes of the envelopes.

They also run a minor sewing project which employs between six to eight persons. "Bengkong" is their main product, which is made from the chukin or berlachu cloth. It is an abdominal wrapper used by women during confinement.

They have plans to start a massage centre so that more blind persons can be employed at the workshop.

There were 84 inmates, including the orthopaedically disabled and wheelchair-users, the deaf, slow learners and even four blind persons (two men and two ladies). They are provided food and accommodation with their monthly EPC allowance from JKM.

The second workshop visited was the Bengkel Sri Perkasa located in Johol. The workshop had been established in 2003 and there were about 20 inmates, most of them slow learners plus two blind persons. Food and accommodation are provided and they receive their monthly EPC allowance from JKM. However, they are not given any other remuneration from the activities in which they are involved.

The activities include rearing of chickens, fish and even cattle, planting of fruits and vegetables, and making of handicrafts from rattan, beads and even paper. Packing of chips and cleaning of ikan bilis is also done on an irregular basis.

Of particular interest was the making of paper handicrafts in view of the impressive and fascinating products that were on display. Old newspaper and magazines were made into paper canes for weaving to produce vases, baskets, pencil holders, flowers and other decorative items. The items were made to look presentable by shellacking.

The Placement Unit is exploring

the possibility of providing training in weaving with paper cane and perhaps to sell the handicrafts as a source of income for the blind.

### **THE MAB HARMONICA GROUP IS PROUD OF THEIR ACHIEVEMENT**

Even though the MAB harmonica group was the fifth runner-up in the Shah Alam Harmonica Competition and Festival from December 8 – 9, 2007, they felt proud of their achievement with their rendition of the famous piece, “William Tell”. This was their first time of competing as an ensemble group among so many groups of sighted competitors from Penang and KL. The blind group only started learning the harmonica about one and a half years ago when Mr. Tay Keng Seng of the Suzuki Resource Centre kindly agreed to provide classes since the middle of 2006.

In fact, the group was featured on Traxx FM on December 3, 2007 in conjunction with Disabled Persons’ International Day.

Harmonica classes had also been started for blind children at Kompleks MAB since mid-2006 under the tutelage of Mr. Tay Keng Seng. The children are making good progress and they are given the opportunity to perform at various functions of MAB.

### **INDOOR GAMES FRIENDLY COMPETITION**

This was held for the members of the Elderly Blind Club and the MAB Recreation Club on December 15, 2007 (Saturday) at

the MAB canteen. The objective was to promote and popularise indoor games among the blind.

The winners for dominoes were Chiew Shook Shyeen, Lucy Lee Nyak and Siti Jineh bt. Jaimun while the winners for chongkak were Lele Suryarni Omar, Asmaliana bt. Mahmud, and Shamuni Manokaran. The cash prizes were RM30, RM20 and RM15 respectively.

For othello the winners were Abian Jambot, Yap Pau Li and Mohd. Norhafizan; for draughts the winners were Ahmad Abdullah, S’ng Ei Kheng and K. K. Goh; While for scrabble the winners were Zahari Hashim, Razimah bt. Mat Yasin, and James Mong Ah Sang. The cash prizes were RM50, RM30 and RM20 respectively.

### **PETPOSITIVE WORKSHOP AT FRIM**

MAB was happy to be able to join in with various NGO’s and animal lovers to participate in a very unique and first ever workshop on animal therapy and love of nature and the environment. The workshop was held at the new extended open area of FRIM on October 30, 2007. All the different disabled categories were in attendance and so were quite a number of animals, including dogs, cats, a rabbit, a tortoise and even a few frogs.

For the first part of the workshop, the disabled and volunteers together with their animals had a very pleasant walk through a jungle track. The paved road made it easy to walk and there were

railings to help the wheelchair-users. The walk is named after the former director of FRIM and it is called the Razak walk. Along the way we were able to see and touch all sorts of exotic plants which had been collected from all over Malaysia in order to save them from extinction.

Back at the workshop, we had a discussion on how to make the Razak path more accessible to the disabled. We then had a look at five kinds of frogs caught from the jungle in the night and which were released after the workshop.

Towards the end of the workshop, we were astounded to learn that not only dogs and cats but, in fact, all kinds of animals could be used in helping to bring about healing to a person. The animals could be even a rabbit, a lizard, a snake, a tortoise or a fish.

We were informed by the President of Petpositive, En. Anthony Sivabalan, that any disabled person who is in need of an animal could email him at athanasayan@yahoo.com.

“People are just as happy as they make up their minds to be.”

**Abraham Lincoln**

# COMPLEMENTING EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT IN REALISING THE GOALS OF THE MALAYSIAN EDUCATION POLICY

## Part I



*Editor's Note: This paper was presented by Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail Md. Salleh at the NCBM Seminar on Educational Issues Concerning the Blind. The seminar was held at the Allson Klana Resort in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan from September 5 – 7, 2004.*

*Here is the article as follows:*

### 1. 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 the idea of providing education for all children, including the disabled. Every child should be guaranteed the

right to education because this is ultimately the key to future economic and social independence later on in life, particularly for the disabled child. And, in signing the declaration, the signatories all agreed that 2015 should be the target year for making education available to everyone.

### 2. MALAYSIAN POLICY ON EDUCATION (2001–2010)

The government of Malaysia is on the right path towards achieving 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 in education which we believe will have very positive effects upon the future of Malaysian society.

The four important aspects outlined in this policy are accessibility, equity, quality as well as efficiency and effectiveness. Highlighting these four general principles in the new education policy is certainly most timely and relevant not only for the able-bodied but also for all disabled persons.

Moreover, these seven characteristics as outlined in the policy will definitely have far-reaching implications for the creation of a dynamic and vibrant society. The characteristics include pre-school education, compulsory education, the twelve-year system (P12), vision schools, early streaming, community colleges and new infrastructure (particularly information and communication technology or ICT).

### **3. THE DISABLED IN EDUCATION**

The blind and other disabled persons would certainly want to be beneficiaries of the new education policy and participants in the fast changing and dynamic process of developing the new education system in our country. In this respect, it is heartening to note that at least some attention has been given to the disabled in the new policy. For example, provision has been made to increase special education opportunities for the disabled with the plan to make available trained and specialised teachers right from the primary school level. There are also plans to introduce technical and vocational schools for the disabled and to encourage participation and contribution by the public, especially the families, to education programmes for the disabled.

### **4. THE BLIND IN EDUCATION**

Nevertheless, there is still much more that needs to be done in order to ensure that the blind will have real and sufficient opportunities

to education. We would like to highlight some of the issues as follows:

#### **4.1 MAINTAINING HIGH STANDARDS IN EDUCATION**

Effort should be made to ensure that the educational programmes for the blind, be they residential schools, integrated programmes or special programmes for the multi-handicapped, should be highly motivated and well trained teachers as well as properly planned curricula and challenging activities so that the blind will be properly equipped with knowledge and skills in preparation for life after leaving school. This would be in keeping with the stated objective in the new education policy to provide suitably trained teachers to teach and prepare the disabled right from the primary school level.

Perhaps one way to ensure that the blind and other disabled persons will be able to contribute inputs into the development of the education programmes for the disabled is to provide opportunities for them to take up some key positions in the Ministry of Education, particularly in the Jabatan Pendidikan Khas. Some proper vetting procedures could be adopted to ensure that the appointed disabled persons are competent and truly committed to help in bringing about improvements for other blind and disabled persons in education.

With regards to training opportunities for blind teachers, we would like to urge that the government continue to maintain this policy that had been introduced

in 1998. Currently, there are over 70 blind teachers teaching in normal schools. In order to ensure their effectiveness in performance, the blind teachers are in need of extra help in marking papers and preparing assignments.

We would, therefore, like to recommend that a special allowance of RM300 be made available to blind teachers. This would enable them to engage the extra help needed to assist them in carrying out the above mentioned assignments.

#### **4.2 PRE-SCHOOL EDUCATION**

It is encouraging to note that the Ministry of Education has been establishing pre-school programmes throughout the country. We are very grateful that this policy will also cater for the needs of blind and other disabled children as well. Such programmes are necessary in helping to equip young blind children with basic skills in Braille, orientation and mobility, and daily living, thereby ensuring their proper development.

(to be continued)

# UPGRADING THE GURNEY TRAINING CENTRE

Our immediate objective of upgrading the Gurney Training Centre (GTC) is to bring about important changes and improvements in the vocational training curriculum. The idea is to make the courses being offered at the GTC more relevant to the employment needs and demands of the present day.

The focus of the GTC will be on the high-end level courses with the emphasis being placed on educational competency and the development of knowledge and expertise. Besides upgrading the existing courses, new initiatives will be taken to introduce a wide range of related courses. The ultimate aim is to work towards the accreditation of all the courses at the GTC. This will enable our blind trainees to graduate with recognised certification, thereby making them more marketable and enhancing their opportunities for employment.

The task before us cannot be accomplished effectively without considering other measures that need to be taken. These include taking a serious look at our currently available human resources and deciding what should be done in terms of human resource development and needs. Two other important factors to consider are the physical or infrastructural requirements and our funding sources.

Currently, the existing courses at the GTC are massage, telephony, computer literacy, woodwork,

and the rehabilitation courses in orientation and mobility, daily living skills, Braille and social skills.

## **1. MASSAGE**

The existing massage course is for a duration of ten months (800 hours), inclusive of training and assessment. Plans are under way to have this course recognised as the MLVK Certification Level 2 course. It is hoped that the accreditation process could be completed by September 2007.

At the same time, we are planning to introduce the higher grade massage courses for Level 3 and 4. The duration of these courses will be three years (or 1,600 hours) with the possibility of certification from MLVK, or from Edexcel of the United Kingdom, or from ITEC of Singapore. In addition, there will be a one-year attachment with one of the MAB Shoppe outlets.

Our instructors will receive training from the Okinawa Training Institute of Japan for a period of seven months in order to upgrade their teaching skills. This will be done through the JICA training programme in collaboration with the JPA and the National Welfare Department.

## **2. TELEPHONY**

The present course being offered is for a duration of five months

(or 500 hours). This course will be incorporated with the office management course and the duration of the new course will be one year (or 800 hours).

It will be a Level 2 or 3 course to be accredited with MLVK.

## **3. COMPUTER LITERACY**

At present, this is being offered as an elective course for a duration of five months. With the change, it will now be offered as a full-time one-year course at the GTC.

## **4. REHABILITATION COURSES**

### **4.1 ORIENTATION AND MOBILITY**

This course includes daily living skills (DLS) and communication skills. A study is being made of the course materials at the National Association for the Blind in Bangalore, India. The curriculum will be upgraded to a Level 1 or 2 course with MLVK accreditation and certification.

### **4.2 BRAILLE**

This course too will be reviewed and suitable accreditation and certification will be explored.

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## **5. NEW COURSES**

### **5.1 REFLEXOLOGY**

This was initially incorporated into the massage course. Since 2005, however, it has been run as a separate course for a duration of three months (or 250 hours) with MLVK accreditation and certification.

### **5.2 PHYSIOTHERAPY**

The demand for physiotherapy in Malaysia is growing with the opening of many specialised departments in the district general hospitals and the many private hospitals. Blind physiotherapists are commonly engaged in India, Japan and Taiwan; as for Malaysia, no blind person has entered this field so far.

The Malaysian government offers a three-year physiotherapy degree programme at the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and a diploma programme at the UITM. Dialogue has been initiated with the Malaysian Physiotherapy Association regarding the possibility of blind persons taking up the course. The University Hospital will be approached to seek joint collaboration in adapting the course for the blind.

### **5.3 ENTREPRENEURSHIP COURSE**

This new course will include basic accounting, communications, and various management elements. It will be for a duration of 250 hours.

The course will be offered once or twice a year and external lecturers

will be engaged to conduct the programme.

### **5.4 ICT COURSES**

This will be a comprehensive programme which will include a wide range of ICT courses as follows:

#### **(a) WEB DESIGNING**

This will be for a duration of three months (or 250 hours). It is being developed in collaboration with ON-Net initiated by the Overbrook School for the Blind in the U.S.A. We will also work with the NVQ of the United Kingdom, and with the NIIT-related programme of the National Association for the Blind in Bangalore, India.

#### **(b) MICROSOFT OFFICE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM**

This will be offered as a nine-month programme (or for 650 hours) in collaboration with the United Kingdom or the Philippines or India.

#### **(c) ADAPTIVE TECHNOLOGY**

This will be a course of three months and will prepare blind persons to handle the production of quality Braille materials with the use of a wide range of adaptive software and hardware.

The possibility of having these courses on-line with the assessment being done on campus is also being explored. The objective is to produce competent

blind computer programmers as is being done in Bengalore, India. Help is being sought from NIIT Malaysia.

### **STAFF DEVELOPMENT**

Our current instructors are mostly SPM or STPM certificate holders. In order to improve their teaching techniques, they are required to be equipped with additional special skills by taking up in-service training programmes throughout as well as the ICEVI global on-line programme or suitable correspondence courses.

New instructors will also be recruited as and when necessary. Top priority will be given to the courses with attachment options such as massage and reflexology.

### **CONCLUSION**

Our ultimate goal is to raise the GTC to the level of a college. Its new name will be the "Gurney Training College".

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

NCBM

Tel: 03-2272 4959  
03-2272 1442

MAB

Tel: 03-2272 2673  
03-2272 2677

# CHANGING THE ENROLMENT SYSTEM IN THE GURNEY TRAINING CENTRE

*Editor's Note: Dr. Tan Tok Shiong (totally blind) is an economics lecturer at the University of Malaya. While on sabbatical leave during the 2005-2006 period, he took the opportunity to undergo an experiential training programme at the rehabilitation centre for the blind in Salt Lake City, U.S.A.*

*He observed that the Salt Lake Centre had a very interesting drop-in system for the recruitment of blind trainees. He compares this with the current enrolment system at the Gurney Training Centre of MAB.*

*Here is what he says:*

The Rehabilitation Centre for the Blind in Salt Lake City follows a different enrolment system compared to the system being practised at the Gurney Training Centre. The Salt Lake system is more flexible and its orientation is different from that at the GTC.

The Salt Lake Centre believes that once a person is oriented to his blindness, he can overcome his disability and would be able to take up any career, particularly the one he was following before he became blind. Thus, no specialised courses are offered at the Centre such as massage or telephony. Instead, only very general courses are offered which are aimed at helping one to

overcome the challenges posed by blindness. The courses include cane travel, independent living, computer literacy, woodwork, adaptive technology, Braille and netting.

For a total enrolment of fifty students, the Centre has three independent living teachers. They each handle three to four students in a session which will last for one and a half hours.

There are also three mobility teachers and the students are taught on one to one basis. There are also two teachers in advanced computing. However, there is only one instructor each for carpentry, netting, Braille, adaptive technology and basic computing. A comparatively larger number of students are taught in each of these classes.

There are three semesters in one year, each lasting about three months. This is followed by a break of one month. Anyone who is certified as blind is eligible for admission, regardless of age. A person can be enrolled simply by making a telephone call to the Principal of the Centre just a few days before the semester begins. The oldest trainee (when I was there) was 80 years of age; in fact, several of them were more than sixty years old. Ex-trainees could also return to the Centre for refresher courses. Two of the trainees were multi-handicapped – one was on a wheelchair while

the other blind person also had speech difficulties.

The training is free of charge as the Centre is entirely funded by taxes collected by the local government. The Centre does not provide food or cash allowance to the trainees. Only the outstation trainees are provided with accommodation in the form of flats which are specially rented by the Centre. For those who live within travelling distance of the Centre but have difficulty in taking public transport, they will be picked up by van. Part-time instructors are also sent out to give lessons to eligible blind persons who could not be physically enrolled into the Centre.

Although the drop-in system at the Salt Lake Centre has many advantages, it will be quite difficult to prove that adopting such a system would make the GTC more effective in serving the blind in Malaysia. Unlike the Salt Lake Centre, the GTC provides more facilities to the blind as they are given training, accommodation, a monthly allowance of RM50, and they do not pay any admission fee. In addition to providing the general courses such as Braille, mobility and woodwork, the GTC also runs vocational courses such as massage and telephony. Moreover, the short-term computer courses provided at MAB's ICT Centre for a duration of about one week such as SoundForge, PC Maintenance, and Braille Music

notation are not available at the Salt Lake Centre.

Nevertheless, I am of the view that the GTC should undertake some changes due to the continuing changing labour market and rapid technological advancements. These include scaling down the telephony course and introducing new courses which are more competitive such as computer programming, piano tuning and telemarketing. I believe some of the changes are already taking place at the GTC.

I would like to suggest some new directions that the GTC may want to consider. They are as follows:

### **1. THE NUMBER OF INSTRUCTORS SHOULD BE INCREASED AND THEIR QUALITY SHOULD BE UPGRADED**

The independent living course, for example, is a very important course and more than one instructor is needed to help in the training. Currently, the trainees rarely have the opportunity to go through a complete programme because there is only one instructor available.

The mobility course is another good example. The GTC should follow in the footsteps of the Salt Lake Centre by taking in qualified blind instructors.

For training in computer software and hardware, qualified instructors are needed so that the blind can be adequately prepared for the computer industry. Trainees undergoing computer courses should be able to use the internet

and email before graduating. For the Chinese-educated trainees, the Chinese-language internet should be introduced and an appropriate instructor should be engaged for the purpose.

### **2. THE NEEDS OF THE BLIND DUE TO INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS, DIABETES AND OLD AGE SHOULD BE CATERED FOR**

The number of persons becoming blind due to accidents, diabetes and old age is increasing. The system at the GTC should, therefore, be modified so that these people can be easily enrolled in the Centre.

### **3. PART-TIME ENROLMENT**

Due to improved health standards, the number of people becoming blind in childhood is decreasing significantly. Instead, because of the rising life expectancy, more and more people are becoming blind due to old age or age-related diseases such as diabetes. However, the bureaucratic procedure of having to possess the welfare card before allowing enrolment poses a problem to those who do not wish to be registered as disabled even though they are eligible for admission to the GTC. Furthermore, even if they want to be registered with the Welfare Department, the process often takes as long as six months or more.

For such cases, I would recommend that the GTC follow the system of the Salt Lake Centre whereby one only needs to show proof from a doctor that he is blind or visually impaired.

As long as places are available, enrolment into the Centre should be as easy as abc. Students should be allowed to be enrolled on a part-time basis. Such students only need to drop in to learn some skills; the GTC does not have to be responsible for their food or accommodation.

### **4. HELP FOR BLIND PERSONS WHO ARE HOUSE-BOUND**

The Salt Lake Centre provides help to those blind persons who are house-bound. In fact, the Centre provides employment to many blind persons who have been trained in independent living skills; these part-time workers are sent out to teach the newly blinded or the house-bound individuals such subjects as mobility, Braille, or even the use of computer software such as JAWS.

### **CONCLUSION**

The GTC is playing a very important role in bringing about the upliftment of the blind in Malaysia. However, I hope that consideration would be given to the views that have been expressed in this article. I look forward very much to a more dynamic programme at the GTC that can reach out to many more blind people in this country.

## DEFINITIONS ON LOW VISION



***Editor's Note: Barnabas Lee has been working as Low Vision Assistant at the MAB Low-Vision Unit since March 2002. In the process of carrying out his work, he has been faced with the issue of how "low vision" should actually be defined. He would like to share with readers his thoughts on the matter.***

At the first low-vision conference which was held by the Malaysian Association for the Blind in 1986, the main theme was, "Low Vision is not Blindness". As I am a low-visioned person, this theme had put me in a quandary for some time. Am I to consider myself as a blind person or a sighted person? Moreover, I have often heard people say that low-visioned persons enjoy the best of both worlds – they have one foot in the world of the blind where they can enjoy the benefits given to the blind. However, they also have the other foot in the world of the sighted where they often claim they are better than the blind because they can see and, therefore, have the right to be regarded as equals to their sighted peers.

Later, with the popularisation of sports for the disabled in this country, especially during the 1990s, it has become increasingly common to use the terms of B1, B2 and B3. These terms are being used in order to differentiate the totally blind from those persons with low vision or visual impairment. The purpose is to enable the organisers of sports for the disabled to divide the blind and visually impaired into three main categories in order to pick out the winners for the various competitions.

These terms are becoming so popular that now they seem to be even encroaching upon other areas of work for the blind such as in education and employment. This is because the terms of B1, B2 and B3 are much more convenient to use and easier to understand than the terms provided by medical and health professionals. I am very concerned about this as I feel that the medical definitions on low vision and blindness provide better clarity because they refer to the existence or non-existence of visual acuity and distance. A person is said to be blind if his vision is 3/60 and below with optimum corrected vision in the better eye. He is legally blind or regarded as a low-visioned person if his vision is between 3/60 and 6/18; above 6/18, the person is regarded as having normal vision.

To give an example: a person standing three metres from the eye chart will see the equivalent

of what a person with "normal vision" will see sixty metres away (3/60).

In my view, I feel that other than sports and games, the medical definitions of blindness and low vision should be used by the professionals. This is because the medical terms of measurement would enable us to understand better the different kinds of support and facilities that are required by the two different categories of blind persons, i.e. the totally blind and the low-visioned.

With regards to the symbols used to indicate blindness and low vision, I can immediately think of two examples – the white cane and the checkered eye. Since a person with low vision may choose to use the white "identification cone" to increase visibility for traffic safety, the white cane is appropriate for either group. Nevertheless, as the wearable checkered eye is more discrete and cannot function as a mobility tool or safety beacon, it is only appropriate for people with low vision.

Bearing this in mind, provision should be made for dual schemes so that both the totally blind and the low-visioned can benefit from them. When carrying out barrier-free projects, for instance, the totally blind would need tactile blocks while the low-visioned would need distinct colours in order to recognise the difference in floor texture. For reading and writing, Braille should be the tool

of education for the totally blind while large print should be used for the low-visioned as much as possible.

The government has made available white canes and Perkins Brailers and these will greatly benefit the totally blind in particular. For the low-visioned, however, other gadgets such as closed circuit television (CCTV) and other low vision aids should be provided.

Finally, I would like to suggest that two separate lists should be drawn up regarding the items and gadgets that are required by the totally blind and the low-visioned so that their needs can be met more effectively. I hope these two lists could be presented for consideration at the National Budget consultation with the Finance Ministry.

# THE JKM NATIONAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE DISABLED

## Part II



*Editor's Note: The National Department of Social Welfare (JKM) held a workshop in Langkawi from September 18 – 21, 2006 for the purpose of formulating a national plan of action for the disabled. The first part of this article appeared in the October – December 2007 issue of "The NCBM Outreach".*

*It highlighted the objectives and guidelines for the plan, explained the BMFA and International Disability Convention as the basis for the plan, and the ideas to be used in formulating the Plan of Action.*

*It went on to touch on the issue of definitions on disability. In this second part of the article, the writer continues the discussion on the other issues that were raised as follows:*

development should be included as a very important component in policy formulation and strategic planning. R&D is essential if an organisation is to evaluate and monitor its programmes and services in an effective manner.

Some budget allocation, therefore, should always be made for the purpose of organising activities related to research and development. However, in order for research projects to be carried out effectively, those involved should be equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills; this means that they should be provided with the necessary training in the various methods and techniques employed in research and development. Persons chosen to be involved in research projects should include not only the committee members and administrators but also the disabled clients and even volunteers. The results gained from such research projects would be very useful in providing insights concerning the weaknesses and strengths of a programme or service. And, of course, it is important for research and development to be carried out at both the national and local level.

“Don’t agonize.  
  
Organize.”  
  
**Florynce Kennedy**

### **5.2 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT**

It was agreed that research and

### **5.3 RIGHTS-BASED SOCIETY**

In order for a rights-based society

to function effectively, it must be backed up by a system of values and code of conduct. Otherwise there will be no motivation for the ideals to be put into practice.

In fact, we were surprised to discover that contrary to what is generally assumed, charity should be regarded as an important value rather than as an obstacle when dealing with rights and responsibilities. Nevertheless, what is required is “enlightened charity” and not “patronising charity”.

For instance, it was pointed out that in a rights-based society, a blind beggar should be able to exercise his right to reject an offer of twenty cents given as alms from the giver and instead to demand that he be given the opportunity to earn the full dollar. In this way, he would gain respect and dignity rather than being looked down and despised as a mere depending upon society.

However, society needs to be educated and made aware with regards to the rights and responsibilities of the disabled and their capacity and abilities to participate and contribute to the process of nation-building and development of the community in which they live. Without such awareness campaigns to educate the public, the behaviour and response of the disabled to “patronising charity” will always be met with confusion, incredulity, misunderstanding and even anger and their supposed ingratitude for the alms that had been given in good faith and with noble intentions.

#### **5.4 NATIONAL ADVISORY AND CONSULTATIVE COUNCIL (NACC)**

It was agreed that where channels for communication and networking already exist, we should first try to work through these channels in bringing disability issues to the fore and in formulating plans and programmes for the disabled. Maximum efforts should be exercised in order to make these channels work effectively for the benefit of the disabled.

As an example, the NACC was identified as an important and useful channel of communication between the disabled and the government. This consultative council was established by JKM in 1998 as a response from our government to the call issued by UN ESCAP for such channels to be set up. In fact, it had been suggested by ESCAP that such a body should be headed by the prime minister in every country of the Asia-Pacific region in order to ensure that the policies and plans would be effectively implemented.

It was noted that in Malaysia, the NACC is headed by the Welfare Minister rather than the Prime Minister. It was suggested that perhaps consideration could be given to the idea of the Welfare Minister deputising the Prime Minister as head of the NACC so that more authority would be vested in the chairmanship of the Council, thereby enabling it to have the policies and programmes of NACC implemented more effectively.

#### **5.5 PARENT SUPPORT GROUP**

It was suggested that an effective family support group should be developed. This parent group should be able to work and collaborate with other NGO's and with the government agencies in meeting the needs of the respective clients.

The services of a parent support group should have the objective of creating awareness among all parents regarding the capabilities and potential of disabled children and in nurturing the feelings of love and care for their disabled offspring based on positive notions, beliefs and values. This is particularly essential for children who are deaf-blind, the autistic or who have multiple disabilities.

(to be continued)

“Most plants taste better when they’ve had to suffer a little.”

**Diana Kennedy**

# TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

## THE DAISY AND THE MULTIMEDIA INFORMATION SYSTEM

AMIS (or the Adaptive Multimedia Information System) is a free DAISY playing software distributed free of charge by Source Forge. The AMIS software is a part of the DAISY For All (DFA) project – the goal is to bring DAISY talking-book technology to the disabled in developing countries.

The goals of the project are as follows:

1. To provide playback software in local languages, particularly those in the South-East Asian region.

To address the needs of the multi-disabled by offering a variety of ways to interact with a DAISY publication.

All software developed under this project is made available through open sources. In this connection, a DFA workshop was held in Bangkok and hosted by the Thailand Association for the Blind. The task assigned to the ten participants from five countries was to produce new language packs. Malaysia was represented by Yeoh Soon Chin of St. Nicholas Home, Penang and Silatul Rahim bin Derahman of the Malaysian Association for the blind. The new languages included Chinese, Filipino, Malay, Nepali and Thai.

By May 29, 2007 the updates

were ready for downloading at the following site: <http://amis.sourceforge.net/110n/>

It should be noted that the latest language pack will only work with version 2.6 and can be downloaded from <http://amis.sourceforge.net/>

### A NEW REVOLUTION IN SPEECH ACCESS TECHNOLOGY

On June 13, 2007, Serotek Corporation, the leading producer of internet and digital information accessibility software, announced the release of a web application called SA To Go (System Access To Go), the first product to make Web 2.0 accessible to the blind and visually impaired.

SA To Go is a web-resident product stemming from Serotek's award-winning System Access software. More than a screen reader, System Access requires no installation; it provides complete control of your email, makes web surfing easy, and offers intuitive access to Microsoft Office productivity tools such as Word, PowerPoint and Excel.

SA To Go makes System Access available on the web for instant operation and it has no permanence on the computer in use. Thus, users can access System Access software any time and anywhere that the internet is available.

SA To Go provides instant accessibility. Once online, users can visit [www.satogo.com](http://www.satogo.com) and it will appear in seconds. When the task is completed, the user simply closes the programme and any personal information vanishes, leaving the host computer completely unchanged.

With the help of software such as Fonix's text-to-speech programme and because of its small size, SA To Go loads within seconds, giving the blind user the same access on the go as his sighted peers. Since SA To Go is a true web application, accessibility is no longer an expensive operation. Companies that want to provide public accessibility to customers can do so for a fraction of the cost.

Therefore, Serotek's new SA To Go application gives blind and visually impaired users quick and convenient access to PC functions. It incorporates Fonix text-to-speech which has been optimised to provide clear intelligible TTS voices without using large amounts of processing power or memory. Fonix speech technology is a good fit for Serotek's System Access Mobile applications.

Serotek is putting the system out for public Beta because they are encouraging user input. The company can imagine hundreds of applications but it believes the

users will direct its true potential. Thus, the company will be surveying users on a regular basis and encouraging them to email their ideas and comments to SA To Go at serotek.com.

To participate in the public beta, users can go to <http://www.satogo.com> and follow the instructions. Immediate accessibility will lead the user through the registration process.

### **CHANGES IN THE ENGLISH BRAILLE CODE**

The following is a link to the changes and additions to the Braille rules contained in the new edition of British Braille issued by the Braille Authority of the United Kingdom (BAUK). This edition replaces the previous edition published in 1992. The revision incorporates ideas and suggestions of Braille users and producers collected since the last update in 1992. The document, "Capitals in British Braille", published by BAUK in 1998 is also superseded by this edition of British Braille.

The official date for implementation was August 2005. Therefore, if you do not have any documentation pertaining to English Braille, you may do so by downloading it from <http://www.bauk.org.uk/pubs.htm>. There are also Braille formatted versions.

### **GENERAL STRUCTURE**

This edition of British Braille covers the rules relating both to transcriptions where capitals are indicated and to those in which

they are not. Capitals are normally indicated in the examples in the print edition. Both the capitalised and non-capitalised versions of British Braille are being produced in Braille. Both versions contain the full set of rules.

You can download a copy of the print manual or a Braille-formatted manual at the following site: <http://www.bauk.org.uk/pubs.htm>.

“Try not to become  
a man of success but  
rather try to become  
a man of value.”

**Mahatma Gandhi**

“Three grand  
essentials to  
happiness in this life  
are something to do,  
something to love,  
and something to  
hope for.”

**Joseph Addison**

# THREE BLIND LADIES FULFIL THEIR WISH TO VISIT AUSTRALIA

*Editor's Note: Violet Kok is a member of the MAB Elderly Blind Club. She had never travelled overseas during her working life so that when the opportunity presented itself in 2005, she made up her mind immediately to seize on the rare opportunity.*

*She would like to share her experience with readers as follows:*

During my working life, I had told some of my colleagues of my wish to go to Australia. When I retired in 2003, I flew for the first time to Sabah in the following year of 2004. But the real exciting time for me was in 2005 when my two blind friends, Dorothy Wong and Linda Kam, suggested that we make a trip to Australia. Theresia Nathan kindly agreed to go along as our sighted guide.

Very early one Saturday morning (2 am, to be exact) on 8th October 2005, we three ladies took a taxi to the KLIA airport to meet up with Theresia Nathan. We boarded the Australian plane at 5.30 am and touched down at the Sydney airport at around 3 pm next afternoon. We were picked up by a van which brought us to the Bondai Beach Hotel where we stayed for two nights.

On 9th October, we walked to a nearby Roman Catholic church for the 8.30 am service. Then, on

the advice of the priest, we made our way to Circular Quay after a quick breakfast at the hotel. At the quay, we came across a blind girl who was singing and we made friends with her. She invited us to have a date with her for the 21st birthday celebration in the Blue Mountains on 15th October.

Meanwhile, we meet up with a friend and ex-colleague of Linda Kam and she kindly agreed to be our second guide. So we took a ferry to a place called Manly where we had lunch and did some shopping. Back in Circular Quay, we took a stroll and came to Opera House. Unfortunately, the place was closed at the time.

On 10th October, we took the train to Wollongong. We arrived at about 3 pm and Sharon, the manager, checked us into the sky apartment for two nights. In the evening, we had to walk on the steep slope in order to look for our dinner. At one stage, Dorothy cried out, "Wollongong! Wollongong!" and we all had a good laugh. As darkness fell, we dared not ventured further and decided to satisfy ourselves with a cup of mee at the seven eleven.

We all woke up early at 6 am of 11th October because it was Dorothy's birthday and we made our own special breakfast of fried bacon and eggs. As Theresia was frying the bacon and eggs, the alarm went off suddenly. It was so loud that I had to open the

door and stand outside – I just couldn't bear the ear-splitting noise! Fortunately, a man came and stopped the alarm by fanning it.

We were told that the alarm would sound when someone is cooking. It is known as the smoke alarm. So we wrapped a piece of paper around the alarm to prevent it from sounding again.

After breakfast we bought some roses to place at the grave of our old friend and former schoolmate, Martha Ho, who had died quite recently. Her husband came in a cab and took us to the grave. Then we went into a Chinese temple where we had some ice-cream. Then Jeff (Martha's husband and who was also blind) took us to a Thai restaurant for lunch – one of the dishes we had was fried kangaroo meat! After lunch we went to a shop for chocolates in the shape of cute oranges.

Finally, we made our way to Jeff's house with a huge and beautiful garden and lots of flowers. At 4 pm we had tea with Jeff and a birthday cake for Dorothy.

On 12th October we got up even earlier at 5 am and caught a cab to the coach station where we made our way to Canberra to meet up with Mr. and Mrs. John Sheldrick. It was a winding trip and we had to use seat-belts in accordance with the regulations until we arrived at about 11 am. Jeff joined us and

we stayed at the Quality Inn for three nights.

On 13th October, the Sheldricks took us to the zoo and the Botanical Gardens. We saw many types of trees, including the eucalyptus tree and the bart tree. At the zoo, we touched some of the animals, especially the dingoes which we fed with some special food.

On 14th October, we visited the museum and we were required to wear gloves and put on a headphone. A guide showed us around and I was able to hear all the explanations. We were allowed to touch the articles without leaving any finger-prints as we were using the rubber gloves.

On 15th October, we returned to Sydney. In the Blue Mountains, we put up one night with the blind girl who was celebrating her 21st birthday with many friends, young and old. She had a programme of singing, quiz, dressing competition and a delicious barbecue dinner. However, it was so cold that night that I could hardly sleep.

On 16th October, the morning was so cold that I had to put on my windbreaker to keep warm. Back in Sydney, we did some shopping at the petty market. In the evening we took a stroll to the Anglican church shop to purchase some things.

Time had flown by so quickly that before we knew it, it was home sweet home again! It was such a wonderful feeling when we touched down at the KLIA airport at around 11 pm on 17th October.

In spite of the ups and downs, the trip was most enjoyable and

memorable! I was glad to have my two friends, Dorothy and Linda, for company. And of course, we appreciated very much the services rendered by Theresia as our guide – she had to lead three blind persons and she did her best to enable us to enjoy the trip.

The trip was certainly worth the money I had to spend!

“Neither fire nor  
wind, birth nor death  
can erase our good  
deeds.”

**Guatama Buddha**

“I claim to be no  
more than an average  
man with less than  
average abilities. I  
have not the shadow  
of a doubt that any  
man or woman can  
achieve what I have,  
if he or she would  
make the same effort  
and cultivate the  
same hope and faith.”

**Mahatma Gandhi**

# THE DISABILITY ACT OF MALAYSIA FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

## Part I

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 People with disabilities (PWD's) of Malaysia welcome the government's decision to enact a piece of legislation that specifically addresses the rights of persons with disabilities in Malaysia.

As the rights of PWD's are segregated in various pieces of legislation, the effort to consolidate all such provisions relating to the rights and obligations of PWD's is both timely and fitting. With such comprehensive legislation, it would facilitate the development of an effective "barrier-free" and integrated society which will include the disabled as an integral part of the community at large.

1.2 At the workshop organised by the National Department of Social Welfare under the Ministry of Women, Family and Social Development in February 2006, it had been agreed that a policy on disability should first be drawn up as a precursor to the enactment of the Disability Act in parliament.

1.3 The objective and salient issues pertaining to the proposed policy and Disability Act include the definitions on disability, rehabilitation, education, employment, health and disability prevention,

accessibility to information, communication and technology, accessibility to the built environment, equality and non-discrimination.

### 2. OBJECTIVE

2.1 The proposed policy and legislation on disability are actually an explicit statement concerning the rights of PWD's with emphasis on non-discrimination and the full range of human rights - civil, political, economic, social and cultural, including but not limited to:

- (a) The right to belief;
- (b) Prohibition against torture or other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment;
- (c) Access to justice and equality before the law;
- (d) The right to legal capacity;
- (e) Liberty;
- (f) Freedom of abode and movement;
- (g) Freedom of expression and access to telecommunications;
- (h) Freedom of conscience and religion;

(i) The right to vote and to be voted for;

(j) The right to privacy, in particular, data protection and medical records;

(k) The right to decide on medical treatment;

(l) The right to education and to be included in the mainstream education system;

(m) The right to social education;

(n) The right to equal pay for equal work;

(o) The right to family life, protection of the family, and the right to marry;

(p) The right to culture, recreation and sports.

2.2 The policy and legislation on disability should be regarded as part of the broader notion concerning equality (including equality to access and to opportunities).

2.3 The ultimate objective is to build a society for all, which makes it possible for the full participation and inclusion of the disabled into every aspect of community life.

A barrier-free society necessitates not only the removal of physical barriers in the built environment

but also the need to do away with attitudinal barriers that perpetuate the exclusion of and discrimination against persons with disabilities.

**3. DEFINITION**

3.1 As a definitive piece of legislation outlining the rights of persons with disabilities, it is crucial that the ambit of the definition on disability should include all the various types of disabilities. It should be:

- (a) Defined broadly;
- (b) Reflect a paradigm shift to human rights.

3.2 The definition should not be restrictive as disability is not merely an individual pathology. Rather, it has implications with regards to social identity and behaviour. Therefore, the definition on “disability” should cover physical, sensory, intellectual and psychiatric disability as well as multiple disabilities and even temporary, episodic and perceived disability (besides permanent disability).

3.3 It should include people “having” or regarded as “having” a record of disability.

3.4 It should reflect not only the medical model but also the social model of disability.

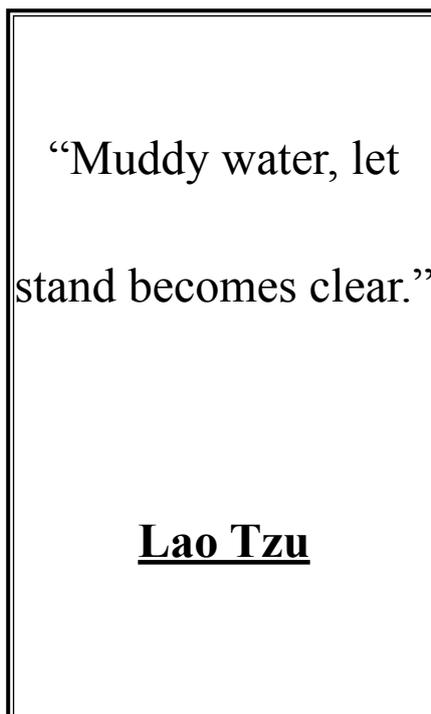
3.5 It should be based on the concept of “equal opportunities” which entails the tackling of deep-rooted negative social attitudes regarding disability, viewing

the disabled as being holders of rights, and addressing the manner in which various economic, social, cultural and political processes accommodate the difference of disability.

3.6 In determining the definition on “disability”, the different concept of “impairment”, “handicap” and “disability” should be taken into consideration, bearing in mind at all times that the definition should not be overly centred on the individual. Rather, the definition should include the interaction between societal conditions and expectations and the abilities of the individual.

3.7 Thus, the term “people with disabilities” (PWD’s) or “orang dengan kecacatan” (ODK) should be accepted as the preferred term to be used because of its universal application.

(to be continued)



# THE COURTESY RULES OF BLINDNESS

When you meet me, don’t be ill at ease. It will help both of us if you just remember these simple points of courtesy as you communicate with or help me as a blind person.

I am an ordinary person who is just blind. So you do not need to raise your voice or address me as if I were a child. Don’t ask my friend or my spouse what I want – “cream in the coffee?” – ask me.

I may use a white cane or a guide-dog to walk independently; or I may ask to take your arm. Let me decide, and please don’t grab my arm; let me take yours. I shall keep a half-step behind you to anticipate curbs or steps.

I want to know who is in the room with me. So speak when you enter. Introduce me to the others, including children, and tell me if there is a cat or dog.

The door to a room or cabinet or to a car that is left partially open is a hazard to me.

At meals I will not have trouble with ordinary table skills. Ask me if you think I need some assistance.

Don’t avoid words like “see”. I used them, too. I am always glad to see you.

I don't want pity, so you don't have to talk about the "wonderful compensations" of blindness. My sense of smell, taste, touch or hearing did not improve when I became blind; I just rely on them more and, therefore, may get more information through those senses than you do – that's all.

If I am your house-guest, show me the bath-room, closet, dresser, window – the light switch, too. I like to know whether the lights are on or off.

I'll discuss blindness with you if you're curious, but it's an old story to me. I have as many other interests as you do.

Don't think of me as just a blind person. I am just a person who happens to be blind.

You don't need to remember some "politically correct" term such as "visually impaired", "sight challenged", etc. Keep it simple and honest – just say, "blind". I have no problems at all when you "call a spade a spade".

“Your body is  
precious. It is  
our vehicle for  
awakening. Treat it  
with care.”

**Guatama Buddha**

## A POINT TO PONDER: MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING, APPRECIATION AND THANKSGIVING



One may be disappointed when his request is not granted or his prayers are not answered.

In this connection, I wish to share with readers the following experience which I encountered not too long ago.

It was a rainy Sunday morning and I had made an important appointment to meet a former colleague in order to discuss some urgent matters over lunch. In fact, we were scheduled to meet after I had attended the usual Sunday morning church service. Thus, while worshipping, I prayed hard for the rain to stop but my prayers seemed to go unheard.

I remember the early Sunday morning as my wife and I were sharing a big umbrella and walking towards the car which was parked just outside our front gate. My neighbour, Robert, also came out of his house at almost the same time. We exchanged our usual morning greetings and, just before I could rush into the car, I heard Robert raising his voice with joy and remarking, "What a beautiful rainy morning!"

I was not too happy, of course. For me, the rain had caused too

many inconveniences. Thus, upon hearing Robert's words, I became rather upset.

"Robert is my good neighbour and friend," I thought. "Then why does he take pleasure in my unhappiness? Is he being sarcastic?"

I later learned that Robert and his family's livelihood depends solely on the sale of umbrellas, hats and rain-coats. The morning rain would probably have boosted their umbrella sales, thereby bringing in a few extra ringgit to support the family.

As for me, I was still able to carry on my activities as planned despite the wet day. I realised, therefore, that I should have been happy for Robert rather than getting upset.

Indeed, mutual understanding does help us to become less self-centred and to be more ready to count our blessings. If we have a sense of gratitude and thanksgiving in our hearts and minds, each and every day will be a happy and blessed one for us.

# HUMOROUS TITBITS

Here are some signs and sign-boards from around the world that tried to communicate with foreign visitors in English. The meanings came out rather different from what the sign-makers intended.

## Sign in a Laundromat:

Automatic Washing-machines:  
PLEASE REMOVE ALL YOUR  
CLOTHING WHEN THE LIGHT  
GOES OUT.

## Sign in a London Department Store:

BARGAIN BASEMENT  
UPSTAIRS.

## In An Office:

WOULD THE PERSON WHO  
TOOK THE STEP LADDER  
YESTERDAY PLEASE BRING  
IT BACK OR FURTHER STEPS  
WILL BE TAKEN.

## In An Office:

AFTER TEA BREAK STAFF  
SHOULDEMPYTHE TEAPOT  
AND STAND UPSIDE DOWN  
ON THE DRAINING BOARD.

## Outside a Second-hand Shop

WE EXCHANGE ANYTHING  
– BICYCLES, WASHING  
MACHINES, ETC. WHY NOT

BRING YOUR WIFE ALONG  
AND GET A WONDERFUL  
BARGAIN?

## In a Rhodes Tailor Shop:

ORDER YOUR SUMMERS  
SUIT. BECAUSE IS BIG  
RUSH WE WILL EXECUTE  
CUSTOMERS IN STRICT  
ROTATION.

## Notice in a Field:

THE FARMER ALLOWS  
WALKERS TO CROSS THE  
FIELD FOR FREE, BUT THE  
BULL CHARGES.

## Spotted in a Safari Park:

ELEPHANTS PLEASE STAY IN  
YOUR CAR.

## Spotted in a Toilet in a London Office Block:

TOILET OUT OF ORDER  
PLEASE XTE FLOOR BELOW.

## Notice in a Health Food Shop Window:

CLOSED DUE TO ILLNESS.

## Sign on a Repair Shop Door:

WE CAN REPAIR ANYTHING.  
(PLEASE KNOCK HARD  
ON THE DOOR – THE BELL

DOESN'T WORK.)

## In a Tokyo Hotel:

IS FORBIDDEN TO STEAL  
HOTEL TOWELS PLEASE. IF  
YOU ARE NOT A PERSON TO  
DO SUCH THING IS PLEASE  
NOT TO READ NOTIS.

## In a Tokyo Shop:

OUR NYLONS COST MORE  
THANCOMMON, BUTYOU'LL  
FIND THEY ARE BEST IN THE  
LONG RUN.

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

NCBM

Tel: 03-2272 4959

03-2272 1442

MAB

Tel: 03-2272 2673

03-2272 2677

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Sabah Society for the Blind

Mr. Samat Lakai  
Sabah Society for the Blind

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St. Nicholas Home

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Malaysian Association for the Blind

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Ven. Archdeacon Samuel D. John

Standing Committee on Prevention and Control of Blindness  
Dato' Dr. Veera Ramani

World Blind Union  
Dato' S. Kulasegaran and  
Mr. Ivan Ho Tuck Choy

Auditors 2006 - 2007  
Ernst & Young, Kuala Lumpur.

## EARN SOME EXTRA CASH

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**
2. Articles containing ideas and suggestions for the improvement of NCBM or its member-organisations (*about 500 words*) - **RM75.00**
3. Articles on funny or unusual experiences (*250 - 500 words*) - **RM35.00 - RM75.00**
4. Interesting articles taken from magazines or documents of limited circulation - **RM10.00.**

*(Note: Articles submitted by officials of NCBM or its member-organisations will not qualify for payment unless these submissions have nothing to do with their daily office duties.)*