

# NCBM OUTREACH



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# PAKLAH AND THE DISABLED: THE 2005 NATIONAL BUDGET

*By Ooi Hock Tiam*



*Editor's Note: Ooi Hock Tiam is totally blind and he is lecturing on public relations at the School of Humanities, University of Science, Malaysia in Penang. Here are his comments about the policies for the disabled in the National Budget for 2005 as announced by the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi, during the September 10, 2004 parliamentary budget session.*

Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi took over from Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad as the new Prime Minister and Finance Minister on October 31, 2003. Since then, Paklah (as he is fondly called) has enunciated five measures for the benefit of the disabled and these were announced in the National Budget for 2005 which was presented to parliament on September 10, 2004.

The measures were as follows:

## **1. INCOME TAX EXEMPTION**

The first relief was to increase the special income tax exemption allowance from RM5,000.00 to RM6,000.00. In other words, a disabled person who is in employment can now claim a personal income tax exemption allowance amounting to a total sum of RM14,000.00, i.e. RM8,000.00 for personal allowance as accorded to all individual payers of income tax plus another RM6,000.00 as income tax relief for disabled persons.

Unfortunately in my opinion, although there is an increase of RM1,000.00 exemption allowance it sounds like a lot of money, but this policy will only benefit very few disabled persons. This is because most of the disabled are already enjoying income tax exemption because of their low income. Moreover, even if the disabled may be earning RM30,000.00 per year, they still do not have to pay any income tax because of the rebate of RM350.00 which is given to every individual if the taxable income is below RM35,000.00.

To make this clear, let me take, for example, the income of

an average person who is disabled of RM30,000.00 per year. From this sum, RM8,000.00 can be deducted for himself plus RM6,000.00 for his disability. This will leave him a balance of RM16,000.00. After these deductions, he will have to pay a tax of RM175.00 for the first RM10,000.00. For the next RM6,000.00, the tax is 3% or RM180.00. Thus, he has to pay an income tax of RM175.00 plus RM180.00, which adds up to RM355.00. From this RM355.00, he has a rebate of RM350.00. Thus, he has to pay RM5.00 only.

However, I am quite certain that he will have other deductions such as for EPF and for insurance (which have been increased from RM5,000.00 to RM6,000.00 in the 2005 National Budget). At the end of the day, therefore, he actually does not have to pay any tax at all.

## **2. DISABILITY ALLOWANCE**

The second measure to be introduced was the increase of the disability allowance from RM2,500.00 to RM3,500.00, i.e. a working person can claim for his or her spouse who is disabled an exemption allowance of up to RM3,500.00. Of course, if the disabled spouse is himself or

herself working, then he/she can claim RM6,000.00. Well, I guess this is something better than nothing.

**3. FOOD ALLOWANCE FOR DISABLED CHILDREN IN GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS**

The third measure has to do with the increase of the food allowance for disabled children in government institutions from RM3.90 to RM8.00 per day. In spite of the amount having been doubled, however, the effect may be quite negligible in view of the price increase for oil, diesel and many food items.

**4. EXTENSION OF FOOD ALLOWANCE TO THE NGO(S)**

Some NGO institutions such as the Gurney Training Centre have traditionally been receiving this benefit from the Welfare Department. However, it is good that the allowance has been increased from RM3.90 to RM8.00 per day. If this measure is fully implemented, it will surely benefit many more NGO institutions and the disabled trainees.

**5. SIGN LANGUAGE INTERPRETERS FOR THE DEAF**

The policy to employ sign language interpreters for the deaf is indeed very heartening. However, as no detailed explanation was given concerning this measure, I assume that the

government intends to employ teachers in governmental institutions in order to train up interpreters for the deaf.

I wonder whether the government will be considering to employ one sign language interpreter for each deaf person in the public sector. If so, this measure is very positive indeed and I hope that it will eventually be extended to the blind civil servants as well if they are in need of a personal assistant or reader.

To conclude, I would like to thank Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi for having made the move to introduce some measures for the benefit of the disabled. Nonetheless, it is my sincere hope that more will be done for the disabled in the lower income group, i.e. those who are earning less than RM30,000.00 annually. It would be most helpful if future policies could go much further in meeting the needs of the poorer disabled persons as the current measures would only benefit a few disabled persons.

So let us wish Paklah all the best. I have no doubt that we can look forward to more goodies for the disabled in the second budget presentation next year.

# ANNOUNCEMENT

**1. ON-LINE APPLICATIONS FOR GOVERNMENT JOBS**

The disabled are now able to register themselves on the net for consideration of employment in the public sector. The application form is available on the net to be filled in so that there will be no necessity at all for the disabled person to go to the Human Resource office.

Jobs available in the government sector will be advertised on the net along with the date for the interview.

Interested disabled persons can log on to [www.elx.gov.my](http://www.elx.gov.my)

**2. CONGRATULATIONS TO RADHA KRISHNAN**

We would like to extend our hearty congratulations to S. Radha Krishnan for having been elected as the Asian continental delegate to IBSA at its 7th General Assembly that was held in Beijing, China in June 2005. Thus, he has been charged with the responsibility of being the Chairman for the IBSA Asia region.

En. Radha takes over from Michael Barredo of Philippines while Mr. Barredo becomes the

President of IBSA, the first time this has happened in any Asian country.

**3. THE PIAF MACHINE**

The PIAF is an adaptive piece of equipment which can produce an embossed "picture in a flash" on a piece of special paper. As the Blind Professional Assistance Service (BPAS) of NCBM is interested in promoting all kinds of adaptive equipment, especially those that can help the blind "see" the world better, one of these machines has been made available at the BPAS office in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur.

All those who are interested to know more about this equipment or would like to help a blind friend understand graphics better, please contact Moses Choo at tel. 03-22721442.

(For further details, you can also refer to "Technology Updates" of this issue of "The NCBM Outreach".

**4. THE MAB RECREATION CLUB**

This club was formed in 2003 and takes the place of the Social Activity Centre which was established in 1997. Its current premises is based at the Kompleks MAB and the Club is open every day from 2.30 to 7.00 pm. It is a place for the blind, especially blind workers and the self-employed blind, to come together for fellowship and to play indoor games. The Club also organises competitions such as

talentime, battle of the bands, ping-pong matches and excursions.

The annual subscription is RM5.00 per year.

At its AGM on Sunday, July 24, 2005, Omar bin Ahmad was elected as the new Chairman of the Recreation Club Committee. We would like to extend to En. Omar our hearty congratulations.

For more information, please contact Mohd. Fairuz bin Abdullah, the coordinator, at tel. 03-22722677 ext. 20.

**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.

**IF YOU KNOW OF  
ANY BLIND  
PERSON NEEDING  
REGISTRATION  
FOR EDUCATION  
OR  
REHABILITATION,  
PLEASE CONTACT  
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**NCBM**  
**TEL: 03-2272 4959**  
**03-2272 1442**

**MAB**  
**TEL: 03-2272 2673**  
**03-2272 2677**

**SOME ARE  
BORN GREAT,  
SOME ACHIEVE  
GREATNESS AND  
SOME HIRE  
PUBLIC  
RELATIONS  
WRITERS.**

(DANIEL J. BOORSTIN)

# 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**

# NCBM DEVELOPMENTS IN 2004

*By Ivan Ho Tuck Choy,  
Executive Director,  
National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*

## NCBM ANNUAL REPORT 2004

MAJLIS KEBANGSAAN BAGI ORANG BUTA, MALAYSIA  
(NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA)



### CHANGE IN LEADERSHIP

1. The period under review, 2004, was yet another year for which we are most thankful to the Almighty for His many blessings showered upon Malaysia in general, and on NCBM in particular. We are grateful for the smooth transfer of power from Tun Dr. Mahathir Mohamad to Datuk Seri Abdullah Ahmad Badawi towards the end of 2003 and the peaceful General Elections which took place on 20 March 2004. On account of a stable government and the prevailing peace in this country, the people can go about their business peacefully and organisations, like NCBM, can continue to operate, with hope and confidence, in pursuit of their objectives.

2. Similar to what took

place in the country, NCBM, too, experienced a smooth change-over in its leadership through the democratic process under its revised constitution approved by the Registrar of Societies on 3 December 2003. At the 18th Annual General Meeting which took place on 15 April, we saw the outgoing President, Ven. Canon Andrew Phang See Yin, announcing that he would not seek re-election after having served two terms.

3. In his farewell address before stepping down, Canon Andrew Phang expressed his heartfelt thanks to all Council members and staff for their contributions, co-operation and support which had made his presidency most memorable and rewarding. He then highlighted some of the achievements made during the past four years which he attributed to the excellent teamwork of the various chairpersons and committee members, and these included the following:

4. Despite the disruptions caused by the SARS epidemic and the Middle-East conflicts in

2003, and after having purchased the property at 96 Jalan Tun Sambanthan at RM 2 million for expanding the operations of the Malaysian Braille Press (a unit of NCBM), the outgoing President thanked the Hon. Treasurer and the fund-raising team for keeping the financial position of NCBM very stable.

5. Having established MBP and with its operations running smoothly, he said the next challenge before NCBM is how it could expand its services to meet the increasing demand for Braille materials without straining the financial resources of the organisation. He suggested that MBP should negotiate for long-term contracts with Jabatan Pendidikan Khas in planning its future moves.

6. The setting up of the Blind Professional Assistance Service in 2002 was a very laudable move. In complementing the work of some Member Organisations, BPAS did manage to help several blind people in gaining new employment and with their job mobility. The outgoing President hoped BPAS will be able to make greater progress in the months ahead as it continues to venture into uncharted territories.

7. In its co-operative efforts, he said NCBM is working with Member Organisations in developing their placement units, helping with the setting up and running of ICT Corner, assisting in their massage projects and contributing funds for the organising of the World Sight and White Cane Day celebrations.



*Opening ceremony of the St. Nicholas Home ICT Corner by the Honourable Tan Sri Dr. Koh Tsu Koon, Chief Minister of the state of Penang in year 2004.*

8. In the international arena, the outgoing President said NCBM is actively involved in strengthening the World Blind Union-Asia Pacific Region by paying the travel expenses of the Executive Director as its Secretary General in order to implement the decisions of their Board. NCBM was also able to help some blind people in six neighbouring countries with the donation of computer software, Braille slates, Braille paper and white canes. To help Member Organisations gain exposure and experience, NCBM sponsored participants to the various conferences organized by WBUAP.

9. The outgoing President concluded his address by saying that NCBM will have plenty of work to keep itself busy for the next few years by trying to implement the numerous resolutions adopted by WBUAP, UNESCAP and those formulated at the Langkawi Employment Seminar. But, above all, he reminded the house of the vast opportunities put at our doorstep to help the blind children through the School Adoption Programme.

10. We wish to thank Ven Canon Andrew Phang See Yin for his valuable contributions dur-

ing his term of office and hope he will continue to serve NCBM in other ways. In fact, before the AGM came to a close, he was appointed one of the three trustees of NCBM.

11. The house then unanimously elected Mr. S. Kulasegaran as the sixth president of NCBM. He is the nominee from the Malaysian Association for the Blind, but in this post, he will be holding a neutral position.

### **THE FINANCIAL POSITION OF NCBM**

12. The worries of the fund-raising team at the beginning of the year fortunately proved to be uncalled-for. Despite the economic disruptions caused by the SARS outbreak and the Iraqi invasion in 2003, the outlay of RM 2 million for the purchase of the property at 96 Jalan Tun Sambanthan and the money put into renovating and furnishing the premises. The financial position still remains reasonably stable. When the 2004 budget was approved towards the end of 2003, we projected an income from all sources of RM 1,241,782.00 and an expenditure of RM 1,438,967.00. This meant we would have ended

up with a deficit of RM 197,185.00. Thanks to the support of our faithful and generous supporters, the careful management of funds by some chairpersons who sought for additional money from outside sources for implementing their projects. We happily ended the year with a surplus of RM 299,456.00. However, due to the Indian Ocean Tsunami of 26 December 2004 which brought untold miseries to this region, we are most concerned that donations for 2005 might be adversely affected.

13. We are highly grateful to all our donors and supporters - individuals, companies, the Welfare Department and the Christoffel Blindenmission of Germany - which donated from a few to thousands of Ringgit. As the list of donors will run into several pages, we again regret for not publishing their names here. Thank-you letters and receipts have been sent to them.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

14. As a result of the increase in activities and workload in NCBM, we have recruited Cik Roslina bte Lah as the Alternate Media Assistant Coordinator to help in MBP. She joined the unit in August and is put in charge of the Digital Access to the Information System (DAISY) production. Meanwhile Mr. Moses Choo Siew Cheong, the Executive Officer at BPAS has been promoted as the Assistant Executive Director with effect from October 2004. There are now eleven full-time staff in the four units as given below:

- Secretariat:  
two executive officers and one clerk;
- BPAS:  
one executive officer and one clerk;
- Fund-Raising Unit:  
One coordinator and one appeal assistant;
- Malaysian Braille Press:  
One executive officer, one Braille production assistant, one alternate media coordinator and one clerk.



*Cik Roslina bte Lah, the Alternate Media Assistant Coordinator.*

15. The number of staff in each unit is definitely inadequate to cope with the increasing workload and responsibilities. But, realising the payment of salaries is the highest expenditure in the budget, everyone is going about his or her work without complaints.

16. We are indeed most fortunate to enjoy the services of our few faithful volunteers who come in regularly to assist us in the fund-raising unit and MBP. To them we extend our heartfelt gratitude.

### **THE 18TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

17. As mentioned earlier,

2004 was an election year. Besides the election of the principal office-bearers, the meeting also appointed new chairpersons to most of the committees and representatives to other organisations. The list of names can be found at the end of the report.

18. The positions of the Secretary and the Hon. Treasurer remain unchanged - Mr. John Wong Siong Cheng and Mr. Loh Yoon Kwai respectively. We welcome back Mrs. Clarice Mojji Ligadu as the new Vice-President. She held that post once before from 1996 - 1998.

19. The AGM also appointed three new trustees as provided for under the revised constitution. As mentioned earlier, Ven. Canon Andrew Phang See Yin was appointed as one of the trustees. The others are Mr. John Wong and Mr. Loh Yoon Kwai.

### **THE MANAGEMENT COUNCIL**

20. The Council, consisting of 25 persons - a president (neutral position with the casting vote), two representatives from each of the five Member Organisations with voting rights, co-opted chairpersons and government representatives - met twice in 2004, on 15 April and 22 November respectively. The Council is a policy-making body. Apart from formulating policies, it makes appointments and approves or endorses important decisions made by the various committees.

21. With the Executive Com-

mittee now meeting six times a year to monitor the day-to-day business of the organisation, the work of the Management Council has been made much easier. Still, it scrutinises very closely the decisions made and members will not hesitate to point out the inconsistencies. One of the difficult tasks for the Council is to approve the annual budget. This it did on 22 November by passing the 2005 budget.

22. The 2005 budget projected an expenditure of RM 1,714,569.00, income at RM 1,456,300.00 with a deficit of RM 258,569.00. With a deficit staring at us, the fund-raising team will have to work doubly hard to off-set the deficit. That is our financial challenge!

**THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE**

23. The Executive Committee (Exco), consisting of the four Principal Office-Bearers and a representative from each of the five Member Organisations and is chaired by the President, Mr. S. Kulasegaran, met six times in 2004 - February at NCBM; April at the Tun Hussein Onn National Eye Hospital; July at St. Nicholas Home; August at the Sarawak Society for the Blind; October at the Sabah Society for the Blind; and December at NCBM. The move to rotate the meetings around the country took on a more significant meaning when dialogues were arranged with Board members of Member Organisations where the meetings were held.

24. The functions of the Exco

are to implement the policies and decisions of the AGM and Council, deal with administrative matters and to monitor the activities and projects of the other eight committees. Among some of the many actions taken were:

25. Took action on the NCBM Tun Hussein Onn Award, and decided to review its rules with the view of giving recognition to more people.

26. Saw to the completion of renovations at 96 Jalan Tun Sambanthan, the shifting in of MBP at the end of May and the maintenance of the two buildings.

27. Initiated the series of dialogues between officers of NCBM and Member Organisations. To date, four such dialogues have been held - SKSB, SHSB, SBM and SNH. The recommendations put forward will be acted on by NCBM and the respective Member Organisations.

**WE BELIEVE  
IN WORKING  
TOGETHER  
FOR COMMON  
GOOD**

**TO ATTEMPT  
TO SILENT A  
MAN IS THE  
GREATEST  
HONOUR YOU  
CAN BESTOW  
ON HIM. IT  
MEANS THAT  
YOU  
RECOGNISE  
HIS  
SUPERIORITY  
TO YOURSELF.**

**(JOSEPH SOBRAN,  
UNIVERSAL PRESS  
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# THE SIXTH WBU GENERAL ASSEMBLY

*By Ivan Ho Tuck Choy,  
Executive Director,  
National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*

The Assembly was held from 6 – 10 December 2004, at the International Convention Centre of Cape Town. We had a good start with very inspiring speeches given by outstanding figures in the South African National Council for the Blind and the Civil Service, which included a blind constitutional judge and a member from the Election Commission. There were over 500 participants although only 300 were delegates. The four delegates from Malaysia were present with Mr. Kulasegaran and Mr. Ivan Ho represented NCBM.

On the whole, the Assembly went off smoothly and business-like. An amendment was made on the constitution - The President would be permitted to run for a second four-year term, and for the amendment was to take immediate effect – At this point the Assembly was thrown into disarray. At one point the atmosphere was so charged that it threatened to disrupt the entire proceedings. This came about when the outgoing President, Mrs. Kicki Nordstrom, alleged that the South African participants were trying to influence the floor to reject the amendments so that their candidate, Dr. William Rowland, being the sole nominee then, would automatically be

the new president. The chaotic situation was due to the mismanagement of the Chairman, Sir John Wall, who tried to secure the acceptance of the two amendments. Initially, he refused to put the amendments to a vote, and when he finally did, the explanations were very misleading. Ultimately, the two amendments were thrown out but the other amendments were accepted. Regrettably, this was a disgraceful episode in the history of WBU.

The election was keenly contested, especially for the post of treasurership. The Americans mounted a very intense campaign by hosting a grand reception and the offering of mementoes. There were so many people carrying proxy votes and thus creating the fear that they could be fictitious. The credentials of every delegate and every proxy had to be verified.

4. The WBU officers elected for 2005 – 2008 are:

President: Dr. William Rowland, South Africa.

1st Vice-President: Mrs. Maryanne Diamond, Australia.

2nd Vice-President: Mrs. Gloria Peniza, Venezuela.

Secretary General: Mr. Enrique Perez, Spain.

Treasurer: Dr. Susan Spungin, United States.

Immediate Past President: Mrs. Kicki Nordstrom, Sweden.

## **THE WBUAP QUADRENNIAL REGIONAL GENERAL ASSEMBLY:**

5. Due to the time taken up for amending the WBU constitution and the elections, very limited time was left for the holding of the WBUAP QRG. In fact, we had just an hour to complete our work. Despite this, we managed to cover most of the agenda. Besides the usual items on the agenda – address by the President, adoption of minutes and the elections, two important events took place.

6. The Takeo Iwahashi Award 2004 was announced and it went to Mr. Monthian Buntan of Thailand. The winners of the 2nd Onkyo Braille Essay Contest were also announced.

7. The Ootsuki Prize of US\$1,000.00 went to Miss Amanda Kym Acutt of Australia. Two excellent prizes of \$500.00 each went to Mrs. Wacih Kurnasih

of Indonesia and Miss Kylie Rene Forth of Australia.

8. The officers elected onto the WBUAP Policy Council for the period 2005 – 2008 are:

**President:** Mr. Graeme Innes, Australia.

**Vice-President:** Mr. Didi Tarsidi, Indonesia.

**Secretary General:** Mr. Ivan Ho Tuck Choy, Malaysia.

**Treasurer:** Miss Michiko Tabata, Japan.

**Representatives to WBU:** Mr. Monthian Buntan, Thailand; Mr. Chuji Sashida, Japan; and Mrs. Paula Daye, New Zealand.

**South-East Asia Regional Chairman:** Mr. S. Kulasegaran, Malaysia.

**Pacific and Oceania Regional Chairman:** Mr. Allen Little, New Zealand. The East Asia Region failed to elect their chairperson.

The WBUAP Board met on 25 – 26 March 2005, in Tokyo, to draw up a strategic plan and to allocate assignments to the members. They have accepted the invitation of Mr. Kulasegaran, made in the name of Malaysia, to hold their next meeting in KL in October, where they will review progress. The WBU Officers' Meeting will also be held in KL.

Mr. Kulasegaran, the Chairman of the South-East Asia Regional Committee, managed to convene his first meeting in Pattaya on the side-line of the

ICEVI East Asia Conference held from 20 - 23 February. 16 persons from seven countries of ASEAN were present. They drew up the Terms of Reference which included the following:

To innovate plans for the region and to monitor its progress.

To implement the objectives of WBUAP and plans for the region.

To encourage interaction between countries and for the richer organisations to assist the poorer ones.

There was a proposal that SEARC look into the feasibility of doing bulk purchases to lower the prices of items being used by blind people and to rake in the profits to fund activities in the region. Another proposal was to promote economic empowerment for the blind by taking advantage of the opportunities offered by the ASEAN Free Trade Zone. Yet another suggestion was the offering of vocational training scholarships for blind people in the region. The proponents were requested to put their thoughts on paper for further discussion.

Prepared by:

(IVAN HO TUCK CHOY)  
Executive Director  
NCBM.

**IF YOU KNOW OF  
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PERSON NEEDING  
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03-2272 1442**

**MAB**

**TEL: 03-2272 2673  
03-2272 2677**

# THE USEAGE OF BRAILLE AND LARGE PRINT AMONG LOW-VISIONED STUDENTS

By Kway Eng Hock,  
The Sultan Idris University of Education,  
Tanjong Malim, Perak, Malaysia



It was found that six low-visioned students (or 15.79 percent) used Braille, 19 low-visioned students (or 50 percent) used large print, and 13 of the students (34.21 percent) used both Braille and large print.

Schedule 1: Braille and Large Print Users Among Low-visioned Students

| Braille |           | Large Print |           | Braille & Large Print |           |
|---------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| No.     | Percent % | No.         | Percent % | No.                   | Percent % |
| 6       | 15.79     | 19          | 50        | 13                    | 34.21     |

n=38

## INTRODUCTION

The method of learning for low-visioned students has often been a topic of discussion – should they use large print or Braille? Special teachers of the blind are in a dilemma as to whether low-visioned students should be taught Braille or not. Thus, the aim of this study is to examine the use of Braille and large print by the low-visioned and to look at the factors that affect them. We shall also identify the problems that are faced by low-visioned students in deciding which method of learning to adopt.

This sample study was conducted among 38 low-visioned students. They included 13 male students, 25 female students and 10 specialist teachers in the Setapak Secondary School for the Blind in Kuala Lumpur.

In general, the proportion of low-visioned students using large print is greater in comparison to the number of low-visioned students using Braille alone or using both Braille and large print.

## BRAILLE AND LARGE PRINT USERS IN PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The schools for study included the SKPK Alma, SKPK Princess Elizabeth, SKPK Jalan Batu, SKPK Tuaran, some integrated programmes, and others.

Schedule 2: Braille and Large Print Users in Primary Schools

| Learning Method       | Name of Primary School |                         |                 |             |                       |        |
|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-----------------------|--------|
|                       | SKPK ALMA              | SKPK Princess Elizabeth | SKPK Jalan Batu | SKPK Tuaran | Integrated Programmes | Others |
| Braille               | 03                     | 10                      | 11              | 2           | 1                     | 7      |
| Large Print           | 6                      | 10                      | 4               | 3           | 7                     | 0      |
| Braille & Large Print | 0                      | 6                       | 5               | 4           | 10                    | 0      |
|                       | 000                    | 654                     | 545             | 035         | 0                     | 0      |

No.%No.%No.%No.%No.%No.%Braille-0310019.1112.5116.7-0  
Large Print6100-0436.4337.5233.34100Braille &  
Large Print-000654.5450350-0n=38

It was found that primary education played an important role in influencing the method of learning to be adopted by the low-visioned students. At the Alma Primary School, the number of low-visioned students using large print was 100%. On the other hand, at the Princess Elizabeth School the number of low-visioned students using Braille was 100%.

At Sekolah Jalan Batu, the results indicated some variation among the students. 36.4% used large print, 9.1% used Braille, while 54.4% used both Braille and large print.

A similar trend was reflected in the integrated programmes where 33.3% used large print, 16.7% used Braille, and 50% used both Braille and large print.

At Sekolah Tuaran in Sabah, 12.5% used Braille, 37.5% used large print, and 50% used both Braille and large print.

For the low-visioned students in the ordinary primary schools, 1% preferred the “normal” or “sighted” method of learning.

Schedule 3: The Use of Braille and Large Print According to Degree of Vision

| Learning Method                | Degree of Vision |      |             |      |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------|-------------|------|
|                                | Poor Vision      |      | Good Vision |      |
|                                | No.              | %    | No.         | %    |
| <b>Braille</b>                 | 6                | 54.5 | -           | -    |
| <b>Large Print</b>             | -                | -    | 19          | 70.4 |
| <b>Braille dan Large Print</b> | 5                | 45.5 | 8           | 29.6 |
| <b>Total</b>                   | 11               | 100  | 27          | 100  |

n=38

The degree of vision is a significant factor in influencing the method of learning adopted by low-visioned students. The third schedule indicates that students with good vision prefer to use large print, which was 70.4%. Only 29.6% used both Braille and large print.

For those with poor vision, 54.5% were inclined to use Braille while 45.5% chose to use both Braille and large print.

Schedule 4: Level of Academic Achievement According to Method of Learning

| Level of Academic Achievement | Type of Learning Method |             |         |             |         |             |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|---------|-------------|---------|-------------|
|                               | Braille                 | Large Print | Braille | Large Print | Braille | Large Print |
| <b>High</b>                   | 4                       | 66.7%       | 3       | 15.8%       | 3       | 23.1%       |
| <b>Average</b>                | 2                       | 33.3%       | 7       | 36.8%       | 7       | 58.8%       |
| <b>Low</b>                    | -                       | -           | 9       | 47.4%       | 3       | 23.1%       |
| <b>Total</b>                  | 6                       | 100%        | 19      | 100%        | 13      | 100%        |

Thus, the method learning adopted is influenced by the level of academic achievement of the low-visioned student. The fourth schedule indicates that those who used Braille achieved higher educational standards when compared with those who used either large print or both Braille and large print. 66.7% who used Braille were high academic achievers compared to 15.8% who used large print.

Those who used both Braille and large print also achieved higher academic standards than those who used only large print, i.e. 23.1%.

This phenomenon is due to the fact that the handwriting of low-visioned students on the answer scripts is difficult to be deciphered. Thus, the rate of achievement by students using pen and paper is lower than that of students using Braille.

Three samples of writing indicate that the writing of those low-visioned students with good vision are very legible. For those with poor vision, their writing is still legible but some of the words can only be guessed at. In the third sample, the writing is not legible at all.

In fact, an independent study carried out by Ryles (1996) supports the view that low-visioned students using Braille as a tool of learning are capable of achieving high academic standards and they stand a better chance of obtaining good careers with commensurate salaries when compared with those using large print and low-vision aids as their learning tool.

According to Ryles, low-visioned students who use Braille read much more than those who use large print. This is because those using their sight to read are easily tired and suffer from eye pain if they read for long periods at a stretch.

However, it cannot be denied that using large print does improve one's vision so that one can read better. According to another study by Norani (1986), 72% of the specialist teachers say that

their children with special needs like to use low-vision aids for reading. However, specialized training is required in order to acquire the skills in using optical aids and closed circuit television (cctv). Moreover, the prices of some of this equipment are prohibitive and they are difficult to use.

While low-visioned students may be able to read large print with or without low-vision aids, their ability to produce presentable writing with reasonable speed is by no means assured. Proof of this is supported by data obtained from specialist teachers. Without exception, all these teachers agree that not all low-visioned students have the same degree of visual acuity. Thus, it can be said in general that using Braille is more effective in raising the standard of academic achievement among the low-visioned students with poor vision as well as for those whose vision is deteriorating seriously.

### **REASONS WHY LOW-VISIONED STUDENTS PREFER NOT TO USE BRAILLE**

According to a study, low-visioned students have to deal with a number of problems in using Braille as a learning tool even though this method enables them to achieve high academic standards.

Firstly, they do not want to be labeled. They feel that those who use large print enjoy a higher status than those who use Braille.

In fact, many low-visioned students read Braille with their eyes rather than with their fingers. This tires the eyes easily because the Braille dots are small compared to large print. They

need to adjust their vision in order to see the dots clearly.

In addition, parents tend to discourage their low-visioned children from learning Braille because of the misperception that if their children use Braille, they will be labeled as being "blind".

### **CONCLUSION**

Disability need not be an obstacle to achieving one's ambitions. With guidance and assistance from teachers in choosing the appropriate learning tool, the low-visioned student will be able to achieve the desired level of education.

Every individual is unique and they all have different needs. One's degree of vision will help to ascertain the kind of learning tool needed while we as teachers must understand and be aware of such matters.

Low-visioned students should be exposed to both methods of learning so that they will be able to use both Braille and large print. This will help to overcome the difficulty in reading the writing of some students which is not so legible.

Besides this, I suggest that low-visioned students should be allowed to use both Braille and large print when sitting for their examinations. For example, they could be permitted to read the question papers in large print and to provide the answers in Braille, thereby overcoming the problem of illegible writing for the examiners.

(Translated by Godfrey Ooi)

# PENGGUNAAN BRAILLE DAN CETAKAN BESAR DI KALANGAN PELAJAR PENGLIHATAN TERHAD

Oleh:

Kway Eng Hock

Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris

35900 Tanjong Malim, Perak.

## Pengenalan

Kaedah pembelajaran bagi kanak-kanak penglihatan terhad sering menjadi tajuk perbincangan, sama ada kaedah cetakan besar ataupun Braille. Guru Pendidikan Khas Bermasalah Penglihatan juga dalam situasi dilema dan serba salah sama ada perlu mengajar Braille kepada pelajar penglihatan terhad (low vision). Kajian ini ialah bertujuan untuk mengkaji penggunaan Braille dan cetakan besar serta faktor-faktor yang berkesan di kalangan pelajar penglihatan terhad. Sementara itu, masalah-masalah yang dihadapi oleh pelajar penglihatan terhad dalam memilih kaedah pembelajaran juga dikenalpasti.

Sampel kajian ini terdiri daripada 38 orang pelajar penglihatan terhad; 13 orang lelaki dan 25 orang perempuan serta 10 orang guru pendidikan khas di Sekolah Menengah Pendidikan Khas (Cacat Penglihatan) Jalan Genting Kelang, Setapak, 53300 Kuala Lumpur.

## Penggunaan Braille dan Cetakan Besar Pelajar Penglihatan Terhad

Dalam kajian ini, didapati bahawa terdapat enam orang pelajar penglihatan terhad (low vision) ataupun 15.79% menggunakan Braille, 19 orang pelajar ataupun 50% menggunakan cetakan besar dan seramai 13 orang pelajar ataupun 34.21% yang menggunakan Braille dan cetakan besar. (Jadual 1)

Jadual 1: Taburan Penggunaan Braille dan Cetakan Besar Pelajar Penglihatan

| Braille |           | Large Print |           | Braille & Large Print |           |
|---------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-----------------------|-----------|
| No.     | Percent % | No.         | Percent % | No.                   | Percent % |
| 6       | 15.79     | 19          | 50        | 13                    | 34.21     |

n=38

Secara keseluruhan didapati peratusan pelajar-pelajar penglihatan terhad yang menggunakan cetakan besar adalah tinggi berbanding dengan pelajar-pelajar penglihatan terhad yang menggunakan Braille serta Braille dan cetakan besar.

## Faktor Jenis Sekolah Rendah Dengan Penggunaan Braille dan Cetakan Besar

Jadual 2: Hubungan Faktor Jenis Sekolah Dengan Penggunaan Braille dan Cetakan Besar

| Jenis Sekolah Rendah |           |                         |                 |             |                   |           |
|----------------------|-----------|-------------------------|-----------------|-------------|-------------------|-----------|
| Kaedah Pembelajaran  | SKPK ALMA | SKPK Princess Elizabeth | SKPK Jalan Batu | SKPK Tuaran | Program Integrasi | Lain-Lain |
|                      |           |                         |                 |             |                   |           |

Bil.%Bil.%Bil.%Bil.%Bil.%Bil.%Braille-0310019.1112.5116.7-0  
Cetakan Besar6100-0436.4337.5233.34100Braille dan  
Cetakan Besar-000654.5450350-0n=38

Faktor jenis sekolah rendah didapati mempengaruhi kaedah pembelajaran pelajar penglihatan terhad. Dengan berdasarkan jadual 2

sebanyak 100% pelajar penglihatan terhad daripada Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Alma menggunakan kaedah cetakan besar dalam proses pembelajaran mereka. Keadaan yang sebaliknya berlaku di Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Princess Elizabeth iaitu sebanyak 100% pelajar penglihatan terhad yang menggunakan Braille sebagai kaedah pembelajaran mereka.

Di Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Jalan Batu pula, keadaannya adalah berbeza. Sebanyak 36.4% pelajar penglihatan terhad sekolah ini menggunakan cetakan besar, kaedah Braille sebanyak 9.1% serta Braille dan cetakan besar 54.4%. Situasi yang agak serupa berlaku di program integrasi iaitu sebanyak 16.7% pelajar menggunakan kaedah Braille, 33.3% menggunakan kaedah cetakan besar serta 50% pelajar penglihatan terhad yang memilih kaedah Braille dan cetakan besar.

Di Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Tuaran, Sabah pula, sebanyak 16.7% pelajar penglihatan terhad yang menggunakan Braille sebagai kaedah pembelajaran mereka. Manakala 37.5% bagi kaedah Braille serta 50% pelajar penglihatan terhad menggunakan kaedah Braille dan cetakan besar.

Bagi pelajar-pelajar penglihatan terhad yang datang daripada sekolah rendah biasa pula kesemuanya ataupun 100% daripada mereka menggunakan kaedah “sighted” sebagai kaedah pembelajaran mereka.

### **Faktor Darjah Penglihatan Dengan Penggunaan Braille dan Cetakan Besar.**

Jadual 3: Taburan Penggunaan Braille dan Cetakan Besar Mengikut Darjah Penglihatan

| Kaedah Pembelajaran              | Darjah Penglihatan |      |               |      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------|------|---------------|------|
|                                  | Nampak Sedikit     |      | Nampak Banyak |      |
|                                  | Bil.               | %    | Bil.          | %    |
| <b>Braille</b>                   | 6                  | 54.5 | -             | -    |
| <b>Cetakan Besar</b>             | -                  | -    | 19            | 70.4 |
| <b>Braille dan Cetakan Besar</b> | 5                  | 45.5 | 8             | 29.6 |
| <b>Jumlah</b>                    | 11                 | 100  | 27            | 100  |

n=38

Faktor darjah penglihatan memainkan peranan yang penting dalam mempengaruhi kaedah pembelajaran yang digunakan oleh pelajar penglihatan terhad. Jadual 3 menunjukkan bahawa pelajar penglihatan terhad yang dapat melihat dengan banyak lebih suka memilih kaedah cetakan besar. Sebanyak 70.4% pelajar penglihatan terhad yang dapat melihat dengan banyak memilih cetakan besar sebagai kaedah pembelajaran, dan hanya 29.6% yang memilih kedua-dua kaedah pembelajaran.

Bagi pelajar penglihatan terhad yang hanya dapat melihat dengan sedikit pula, sebanyak 54.5% gemar menggunakan Braille dan hanya sebanyak 45.5% sahaja pelajar penglihatan terhad yang dapat melihat dengan sedikit memilih kedua-dua kaedah Braille dan cetakan besar.

### **Faktor Kaedah Pembelajaran Dengan Aras Pencapaian Akademik**

Jadual 4: Taburan Aras Pencapaian Akademik Mengikut Jenis Kaedah Pembelajaran

| Aras Pencapaian Akademik | Type of Learning Method |               |         |               |         |               |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|---------|---------------|---------|---------------|
|                          | Braille                 | Cetakan Besar | Braille | Cetakan Besar | Braille | Cetakan Besar |
| <b>Tinggi</b>            | 4                       | 66.7%         | 3       | 15.8%         | 3       | 23.1%         |
| <b>Sederhana</b>         | 2                       | 33.3%         | 7       | 36.8%         | 7       | 58.8%         |
| <b>Rendah</b>            | -                       | -             | 9       | 47.4%         | 3       | 23.1%         |
| <b>Jumlah</b>            | 6                       | 100%          | 19      | 100%          | 13      | 100%          |

Faktor jenis kaedah pembelajaran didapati mempengaruhi aras pencapaian akademik pelajar penglihatan terhad. Jadual 4 menunjukkan bahawa pelajar penglihatan terhad yang menggunakan kaedah pembelajaran Braille mencapai aras pencapaian akademik yang lebih tinggi berbanding dengan pelajar penglihatan terhad yang menggunakan kaedah pembelajaran cetakan besar dan juga Braille dan cetakan besar. Sebanyak 66.7% pelajar penglihatan terhad yang menggunakan Braille mencapai aras pencapaian akademik tinggi berbanding dengan hanya 15.8% pelajar yang menggunakan cetakan besar. Pelajar yang menggunakan Braille dan cetakan besar mencapai aras pencapaian akademik yang tinggi adalah lebih baik daripada pelajar yang menggunakan kaedah cetakan besar sahaja iaitu sebanyak 23.1%.

Fenomena ini berlaku adalah disebabkan oleh tulisan pelajar penglihatan terhad adalah sukar dibaca oleh pemeriksa kertas jawapan. Oleh kerana itu, rata-rata pencapaian pelajar cacat penglihatan yang menulis jawapan mereka dengan pen dan kertas mencapai pencapaian akademik yang rendah berbanding dengan mereka yang menggunakan Braille untuk menjawab soalan mereka.

Contoh tulisan pelajar penglihatan terhad yang dapat melihat banyak. Tulisan mereka boleh dibaca.

Contoh tulisan pelajar penglihatan terhad yang dapat melihat dengan sedikit. Tulisan mereka masih boleh dibaca dan sesetengah perkataan perlu diteka.

Contoh tulisan pelajar penglihatan terhad yang tidak dapat dibaca.

Dapatan ini dapat disokong oleh kajian lampau yang dijalankan oleh Ryles (1996) yang berpendapat bahawa orang cacat penglihatan yang menggunakan Braille sebagai medium pembelajaran membolehkan tahap pencapaian akademik yang tinggi dan peluang mendapat kerja yang baik serta gaji yang lebih tinggi jika berbanding dengan mereka yang menggunakan cetakan besar dan alat-alat bantuan penglihatan terhad sebagai medium pembelajaran.

Dalam kajian beliau juga mendapati bahawa pelajar-pelajar yang menggunakan kaedah pembelajaran Braille lebih kerap membaca berbanding dengan pelajar-pelajar penglihatan terhad. Ini ialah kerana pelajar-pelajar penglihatan terhad mudah merasa penat dan sakit mata jika membaca teks terlalu lama.

Tidak dapat dinafikan bahawa kaedah pembelajaran cetakan besar dapat meningkatkan penggunaan penglihatan dan memudahkan mereka membaca seperti mana kajian yang telah dilakukan oleh Norani (1986) menunjukkan bahawa 72% guru-guru khas menyatakan yang kanak-kanak berkeperluan khas mereka memilih kaedah pembelajaran melalui alat "low vision".

Akan tetapi penggunaan alat-alat optik dan Closed Circuit Television (CCTV) memerlukan latihan yang khusus, tambahan pula sesetengah alatan tersebut bukan semua pelajar mampu memilikinya kerana harganya

yang mahal serta pengetahuan untuk mengendalikan alatan tersebut.

Walaupun pelajar penglihatan terhad dapat membaca cetakan besar dengan atau tanpa bantuan alat-alat optik khas dengan kadar yang agak tinggi, tetapi bukan semua pelajar penglihatan terhad juga dapat menulis dengan cantik dan dengan kadar yang laju. Kenyataan ini mendapat sokongan daripada data-data yang diperolehi daripada guru-guru pendidikan khas, kesemua atau 100% guru pendidikan khas mengatakan bahawa bukan semua pelajar penglihatan terhad mempunyai darjah penglihatan (visual acuity) yang sama.

Oleh itu, secara keseluruhannya boleh dikatakan kaedah pembelajaran Braille adalah lebih berkesan dan dapat mempertingkatkan aras pencapaian akademik bagi pelajar penglihatan terhad yang dapat melihat sedikit serta bagi mereka yang mengalami masalah penglihatan yang semakin merosot.

### **Sebab-sebab Pelajar Penglihatan Terhad Tidak Mahu Menggunakan Tulisan Braille**

Hasil kajian yang diperolehi menunjukkan bahawa pelajar penglihatan terhad menghadapi beberapa masalah untuk menggunakan kaedah Braille sebagai kaedah pembelajaran mereka walaupun kaedah ini dapat meningkatkan aras pencapaian akademik mereka.

Mereka tidak mahu menggunakan kaedah Braille



sebagai kaedah pembelajaran mereka ialah mereka tidak mahu dilabel. Menurut mereka, status pelajar yang menggunakan cetakan besar adalah lebih tinggi berbanding dengan mereka yang menggunakan Braille.

Ramai di antara pelajar penglihatan terhad membaca Braille dengan menggunakan mata dan bukannya dengan sentuhan jari mereka. Cara ini meletihkan mata mereka kerana titik-titik Braille adalah terlalu kecil berbanding dengan menggunakan tulisan cetakan besar. Mereka perlu mencari sudut yang sesuai supaya bayang-bayang dapat terbentuk pada sisi titik-titik Braille untuk memudahkan mereka membaca teks dalam Braille.

Selain daripada itu, ibu bapa mereka juga tidak menggalakkan anak mereka belajar dan menggunakan Braille kerana mereka beranggapan sekiranya anak mereka menggunakan kaedah Braille, anak mereka akan dilabel sebagai “buta”.

Contoh tulisan pelajar penglihatan terhad yang tidak dapat dibaca.

### **Rumusan**

Kecacatan bukan faktor penghalang untuk mencapai cita-cita seseorang. Dengan adanya bimbingan dan bantuan daripada guru-guru dalam pemilihan kaedah pembelajaran yang sesuai akan menjamin tahap pencapaian akademik seseorang pelajar penglihatan terhad.

Setiap individu adalah unik dan mempunyai keperluan yang berbeza. Tahap penglihatan seseorang pelajar penglihatan terhad akan menentukan jenis kaedah pembelajaran yang diperlukan dan kita sebagai pendidik harus peka dan mengetahui akan tentang perkara ini.

Pelajar penglihatan terhad harus didedahkan kedua-dua jenis kaedah pembelajaran Braille dan cetakan besar supaya mereka dapat menggunakan kedua-dua kaedah pembelajaran tersebut. Tujuannya ialah untuk mengatasi tulisan sesetengah pelajar penglihatan yang sukar dibaca.

Disamping itu, saya juga mencadangkan supaya pelajar penglihatan terhad dibenarkan menggunakan kedua-dua kaedah pembelajaran tersebut dalam peperiksaan. Misalnya membaca soalan-soalan dalam bentuk cetakan besar dan menjawab dalam bentuk Braille supaya tidak menimbulkan masalah pemeriksaan ekoran tulisan yang sukar dibaca.

**IT'S TIME FOR  
THE BLIND  
TO HELP THE  
BLIND**

**TO ATTEMPT  
TO SILENT A  
MAN IS THE  
GREATEST  
HONOUR YOU  
CAN BESTOW  
ON HIM. IT  
MEANS THAT  
YOU  
RECOGNISE  
HIS  
SUPERIORITY  
TO YOURSELF.**

**(JOSEPH SOBRAN,  
UNIVERSAL PRESS  
SYDICATE)**

# NEWS FROM THE NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA

## THE MALAYSIAN BRAILLE PRESS

Since the beginning of 2005, the MBP has been in full operation where it has been set up on two floors – 96-B dan 96-C Jalan Tun Sambanthan, Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. It has a work-force of four full-time staff, five part-timers and nine volunteers.

An evaluation of the Press was made by Mr. Christopher Day and his recommendations had been considered for implementation, including the upgrading and installation of the computer system for networking and smooth operations.

The users served included 125 government departments, 98 NGO(s) and four blind persons for the year of 2004. However, for the first four months of 2005, the number of users had been increased generally as follows – there were 15 blind customers, 150 NGO(s) and 77 government departments.

Meanwhile, regarding the production of school textbooks in Braille, a different process had to be followed as recommended by the BBT officers after their inspection visit on March 31, 2005.

## THE BLIND PROFESSIONALS' ASSISTANCE SERVICE

BPAS provided services in a number of areas which included the following:

As requested by the Sabah Society for the Blind, a four-day training programme in the use of the Braille embosser was provided for their staff. The syllabus covered the Duxbury Braille Translation, Malay Braille Translation and how to set up the Everest embosser.

At least 31 blind teachers were allowed to sit for the Penilaian Tahap Kecekapan (PTK) government examinations. BPAS assisted them by making available notes in Braille with regards to the government documents and circulars.

In 2004, Help University agreed to take on a blind person, Miss Cheah Kam Lin, as a Student Coordinator. She was previously working as a telephone operator and Help University decided to promote her in view of her good performance.

BPAS also provided technical support which enabled Mr. Har from Ipoh to be actively involved in running his own business, Wong Huey Siew to establish his leadership and career development company, Mohd. Asri Hussein, a former town planner, to adjust to his blindness and to consider going into business, and Jeremy Tan,

another blind entrepreneur, to set up his own business.

## LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES

In order to implement the DAISY production of talking books, three training courses on the use of the MyStudio PC system was setup for the staff of St. Nicholas Home, MAB library, the SMK Setapak Special Secondary School for the Blind, Sabah Society for the Blind and Sarawak Society for the Blind. So far only St. Nicholas had gone through the course and they have even started issuing their Newscast on compact disk.

## ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

In keeping with its main objective to bring about awareness, especially among the blind in this country, concerning the availability of new adaptive technologies for the blind, the Committee on Access to Technology for the Blind (CATB) has plans to import two Book Couriers for training and exhibition purposes. This machine will enable blind persons to read and listen to documents contained in MP3 files and text files while on the move.

Meanwhile, NCBM jointly cooperated with MAB and SBM to put up an exhibition of adaptive equipment for the blind at the book fair which was declared

open by Datuk Dr. Ahmad Sipon, the Director of Education on April 23. The exhibition was held from the opening day to the last day on May 2 when the book fair came to a close.

**THE INDAH PURA VOCATIONAL SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND**

The Ministry of Education has started a special vocational school for the blind in Johor and its operations began in 2004. A detailed course on various aspects of reflexology is being provided for blind students at the upper secondary school level. Besides foot reflexology, consideration is being given to the inclusion of hand reflexology, ear reflexology and aromatic science.

There are also plans to introduce a course on audio technology which would provide blind students with skills as audio technicians and sound engineers.

The Special Education Department is planning to hold road-shows in the special schools and education programmes for the blind in order to popularise the Indahpura vocational programme. This is an opportunity which is being offered to blind students who are not so academically inclined and it is hoped that the authorities and teachers at the relevant schools will cooperate in recommending blind students to the programme.

On the academic level, the Education Ministry also has plans to introduce foreign language courses such as French, German, Arabic, and Mandarin. The Ministry may be considering sending selected candidates for training in the skills of the foreign languages and their Braille codes.

**NEWS FROM THE MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND**

**THE MAB SHOPPE**

The MAB shoppe now runs two outlets – one at the Mid-Valley Mall and one in Times Square. Six full-time masseurs, two part-time masseurs and two salesgirls are working at the Mid-Valley shop. Reflexology chairs have been introduced in order to attract customers to the outlets.

**JOB PLACEMENTS**

In 2004, there were 31 job placements – 22 were in the private sector and 8 were in the public sector.

However, from January to April 2005, there were 14 job placements and the breakdown is as follows:

|                    |    |
|--------------------|----|
| Telemarketeers     | 3  |
| Masseurs           | 7  |
| Braillist          | 1  |
| Salesgirls         | 2  |
| Telephone Operator | 1  |
| Total              | 14 |

Recently, a blind graduate from University Sains Malaysia, Meena Kumari d/o Ramlal, with a degree in social science, took up a course in translation at the National Institute of Translation in Wangsa Maju, Kuala Lumpur. This short course of ten days (or 60 hours) was sponsored by MAB at a special discount price of RM900 only. Meena is the best blind person in this country to enter such a course with the career of a translator in mind.

Meanwhile, MAB is looking for a suitable person to take up the post of Assistant Placement Officer. Blind persons are most welcome to submit their applications for consideration.

**THE GYM AND OTHER SPORTS EVENTS**

On 17th January 2005, Adnan bin Ail joined MAB as a part-time instructor to provide coaching for the gym members as well as to take care of the equipment. He will be at the gym four times a week for three hours per session.

Blind persons are welcome to register as gym members for a fee of RM10 per year. Those interested, please contact En. Fairuz at tel. 22722677 ext. 20.

On 19th February 2005, a lawn bowl competition for the blind was organised at the Bukit Kiara Lawn Bowl Greens. Six out of the 18 contestants were chosen for the championship tournament in Johannesburg, South Africa from 3rd to 15th April. Twelve countries took part and Malaysia won two bronze medals. Our two champions were Norhayati bt. Sarnoh for the B1 Ladies' Singles and she together with Zamrie bin Hassan for the B1 Pairs.

The MAB Recreation Club also organised a ping-pong open competition for the blind. There were 25 participants who competed for the cash prizes.

On 30th April, 29 blind persons took part in the MAB talentime. The first prize of RM300 went to Mohd. Zaki bin Ismail, the second prize of RM200 was won by Faris bin Abdullah, and the third prize of RM100 went to Rosmaria bt. Ahmad.

### **GTC TO OFFER NEW OFFICE CAREER COURSE FOR THE BLIND**

In the fast changing world of this computer age, the switchboard telephone operators will soon be obsolete as they are replaced by the more flexible and multi-tasking Information Systems Administrative Assistants. In recognition of this fact, the GTC is making preparations to replace the telephony course with the information administrative assistant's course by the year 2006. This course is designed to equip the blind trainees with skills so that they will be able to perform

secretarial duties by using information systems applications and technologies in the service-based department of a company or organisation.

The course content will include:

- \* How to organise office equipment and environment;
- \* How to maintain filing systems;
- \* How to organise business messages;
- \* Performing administrative functions;
- \* Maintaining electronic filing systems;
- \* Organising electronic documents;
- \* Handling client complaints (internal and external);
- \* Coordinating with other departments;
- \* Carrying out computer operations;
- \* Organising information systems maintenance;
- \* Performing supervisory functions.

For the purpose, the relevant instructors have been sent for training at the Systematic College of Kuala Lumpur at the cost of RM5,000 per person for level 2 and 3. The duration is seven months per level.

# THE INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF SPORTS AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

*By S. Radha Krishnan,  
Manager,  
Majlis Paralimpik Malaysia*

***Editor's Note: 2005 has been declared by the United Nations as the International Year of Sports and Physical Education. In connection with this event, the Physical Education and Scientific Sports Association of Malaysia held a symposium on Saturday, April 10, 2005 at the Grand Olympic Hotel at Jalan Hang Jebat, Kuala Lumpur.***

En. Radha Krishnan was invited as one of the speakers at the symposium. Besides being the Manager of the Malaysian Paralympic Council, En. Radha Krishnan is also a member of the MAB Council.

Here are his reflections:

### **INTRODUCTION**

The declaration of 2005 as the International Year of Sports and Physical Education is indeed very appropriate and timely. It is significant not only for the able-

bodied but also for the disabled who are an integral part of society. In reality, however, the lack of resources often mean that the disabled are left out of the development process, even in sports and physical education.

## **1. The Role of Sports and Physical Education in Society**

Sports and physical education do certainly play an important role in bringing about health awareness, bridging of the cultural gap, and the development of positive collective values and in the spurring on the spirit of achievement amongst the individuals of a community or nation.

Nevertheless, it must be realised that sports and physical education also play a significant role in the lives of disabled persons like the lives of able-bodied persons. We must, therefore, promote such programmes since they are also aimed at encouraging and fostering the spirit of sportsmanship to excel and achieve among the disabled.

## **2. Sports as a Tool of Achieving National Development Goals**

Indeed, many worthy goals have been set by national governments and by the United Nations in the form of declarations and resolutions. Of course, we in Malaysia are no exception.

The Malaysian Paralympic Council, for example, has been active in helping to establish various goals and standards for our

disabled athletes. The ultimate objective is to enable them to play their part in fulfilling the goals of the nation.

However, sports and physical education can only be an effective tool if the relevant authorities are interested in ensuring that the sportsmen and sportswomen possess the necessary skills, including the disabled. I, therefore, suggest that inculcating an interest in sports and physical education must begin with the young right at the primary school level. This means that all the necessary resources for the development of sports and physical education must be made available to the primary school children.

Particular attention should be paid to disabled children; otherwise they would automatically be left out of the process in developing successful sportsmen and sportswomen. Serious effort must be made to introduce adapted sports and physical education at the primary school level. This means the development of adapted programmes, providing properly trained instructors for the disabled, and making available adapted equipment and facilities.

## **3. Promoting Cooperation and Solidarity**

Undoubtedly, sports and physical education can play a significant role in promoting cooperation and solidarity among the different cultures and help to create an environment of peace and harmony amongst nations, between organisations, and bring about gender equality among all individuals. In fact, through

sports and physical education for the disabled, the Malaysian Paralympic Council (MPM) is helping to promote such cooperation and solidarity both at the national and international level. Over the past few years, MPM has been making it possible for the disabled of both sexes and from all races to take part in national sports events through joint partnership with the relevant government agencies. On the international level, MPM has been spending a lot of resources in preparing and training the disabled so that they are able to participate in competitive sports events organised by such international organisations as the FESPIC Federation, the International Paralympic Committee, and the International Olympic Committee. Through such programmes, MPM has been playing an active role in promoting peace, solidarity and harmony among nations and communities by providing opportunities for the disabled to show their skills and prowess in sports and games. Nonetheless, in order for MPM to continue playing its role effectively, it needs not only moral support but real and substantial financial assistance.

## **4. Recognising the Contribution of Sports and Physical Education**

Certainly, sports and physical education can make and, indeed, has made a significant contribution to the economic and social development of a nation. It has done this in an outstanding way by spurring on the building and construction of sports infrastructure which include beautiful and immense architecture as

a testament to the feat of man's talent and ingenuity. Besides the buildings which attract tourists to the country, the country also gains much prestige through its sports champions who act as the inspirational force, especially for the young, to emulate their good example. With the youths and, ultimately, the whole nation, interested in sports and physical education, it will result in the promotion of a healthy lifestyle. This, in turn, will lead to economic productivity among the labour force of the country.

Unfortunately, such infrastructure usually does not take into account the needs of the disabled because it is assumed that they cannot play an active part in sports and physical education. This is wrong, of course, as we have proved that through activities organised by MPM, the disabled in Malaysia have been able to excel in sports and games and to bring back many gold, silver and bronze medals from various international events. In spite of their achievements, nonetheless, the disabled still face many obstacles. For instance, the venues for training and competitions are usually not user-friendly and are full of barriers which prevent the free movement of the disabled. Furthermore, there is the lack of adapted equipment at these venues and a dearth of qualified personnel to provide the disabled with the requisite skills.

### **5. Health, Education, Social and Cultural Development**

In order for sports and physical education to be effective

in promoting health, education, social harmony and cultural understanding, particularly at national level, much greater effort must be made to encourage involvement and participation from all sectors at the local level. This means that the authorities at the state and district level need to take an interest in promoting sports and physical education among all the people. They must set the model and example for others to follow in order to instill interest and enthusiasm especially among the people at the school level, among the NGO(s), and even in the public and private sectors.

### **6. Strengthening Cooperation and Partnership**

As indicated above, sports and physical education can truly be used as an effective instrument to bring together the various groups together, including the families, schools, clubs, leagues, local communities, youth associations, and even the decision-makers, the public sector and the private sector. But it would be an ineffective instrument if we do not recognise that sports and physical education is meant for everyone, including the disabled. Starting with the family and schools as the basic foundation, society must realise that the disabled too are an integral part of the community and that they also need to participate in the active and healthy lifestyle of the nation, through sports and physical education. If the family and the school are infused with the understanding and enthusiasm in sports and physical education for everyone, this will surely and ulti-

mately lead to the true strengthening and cooperation of partnership among all the sectors of society.

### **7. Developing Young Talents in Safe Environments**

Sports and physical education need not end up in violence and unruly behaviour (which unfortunately does happen quite frequently). Such mishaps can be avoided if good moral values are emphasised in the training programmes. The young, in particular, must be made aware that to win is not everything in a sport or game. They should be able to take defeat in a positive spirit of true sportsmanship.

Likewise, this sportsmanship spirit must also be inculcated in the aspiring disabled sportsmen and sportswomen. Like the able-bodied, they must know that the most important thing in sports and games is to be able to participate for the purpose of cultivating the spirit of cooperation and solidarity amongst all groups and nations.

### **CONCLUSION**

To sum up, I want to re-emphasise that all the resolutions and declarations will be meaningless and will lead to nothing if they are not implemented. However it is imperative that resources must be made available for the purpose of implementation.

Moreover, programmes cannot be implemented effectively if there is no monitoring system to

ensure that all the resolutions and programmes are carried out. There needs to be an effective evaluation mechanism or process that could be put into practice at least once in every five years.

Before closing, allow me to cite as a final example the International Year of Disabled Persons which was declared in 1981. I remember very well that many resolutions had already been passed both on the national and international level for the benefit of the disabled. However, even after 24 years or so, we are still talking about such issues as rights, equality, accessibility, and so on instead of having them implemented effectively.

**SOME ARE  
BORN GREAT,  
SOME ACHIEVE  
GREATNESS AND  
SOME HIRE  
PUBLIC  
RELATIONS  
WRITERS.**

(DANIEL J. BOORSTIN)

# NEW POLICY ON LOW-COST HOUSING FOR THE DISABLED

*By Sia Siew Chin,  
Director,  
Beautiful Gate*

***Editor's Note: The proposal on the new policy to provide low-cost housing for the disabled was initiated by Puan Sia Siew Chin, the director of an organisation of the orthopaedically disabled named Beautiful Gate, in 2004. She extended invitations to other organisations serving the disabled to take joint action with her organisation in presenting the proposal to the Ministry of Local Government and Housing on May 12, 2004.***

***The Malaysian Association for the Blind accepted the invitation to be one of the partners in presenting the memorandum to the government. Here is Sia Siew Chin's introduction followed by the proposal:***

In view of the government's initiative to review the National Housing Policy in 2004, Beautiful Gate and a number of organisations serving the disabled took joint action in drawing up a memorandum on low-cost housing for the disabled. The memorandum was presented to the Minister of Local Government and Housing, Dato' Seri Ong Kah Ting, on May 12, 2004.

In the document, it was recommended that the government should introduce two schemes that would make it much easier for the disabled to rent or acquire their own accommodation. They are:

1. The low-cost house rental scheme; and
2. The low-cost house purchase scheme.

During the presentation, the Minister responded very positively to our request. We are, therefore, very hopeful that our proposal may be incorporated into the new National Housing Policy of Malaysia.

Our proposal is as follows:

## **MEMORANDUM**

To: **Dato' Seri Ong Kah Ting,**  
*Ministry of Local Government and Housing, Malaysia*

From: **a Group of Organisations Serving the Disabled,**  
**Kuala Lumpur.**

Date: **May 12, 2004**

**Subject: New Policy on Low-cost Housing for People with Disabilities**

We would like to propose that two (2) schemes be introduced in order to meet the needs of the disabled population in this country for low-cost housing.

The schemes are:

### **A. LOW-COST HOUSE RENTAL SCHEME**

1. People with disabilities should be allowed to rent low-cost houses from the Government at a minimum rate. After a period of twenty (20) years or after such period as the Government deems fit and suitable, the disabled shall own the rented house.
2. The accumulated rental paid to the Government over the years shall be taken as the purchase price of the house and there shall be no down payment involved in the purchase of the house.
3. The unemployed disabled persons should be allowed to pay the rental through a sponsorship scheme arranged by the respective NGO(s) or non-governmental organisations.
4. There shall not be any prohibition to the disabled chief tenant if he/she wants to sublet the house to the other tenants. It is necessary for the disabled (especially those who are intellectually disabled) to stay with their friends as they need companionship and mutual support.
5. There shall not be any prohibition if individual persons with disabilities would like to rent a low-cost house from the Government if they wish to live on their own. (At present, the current practice by DBKL is that there should be four (4) single persons in order to qualify for the rental of a low-cost flat.)

### **B. LOW-COST HOUSE PURCHASE SCHEME**

1. The low-salary group of people with disabilities may choose to purchase their own low-cost houses and they shall be given 20% discount on the purchase price of the house (as announced in the budget 2004 session).
2. People with disabilities should be given a chance to purchase low-cost houses even though they earn low salaries if they manage to obtain a bank loan to finance the purchase.



3. The government should give financial assistance such as interest-free loans to disabled applicants.
4. The regulation insisting upon marriage for owning low-cost houses should not be applied to people with disabilities. In fact, the disabled need to have their own houses before they are able to get married.
5. There should not be an age limit imposed upon disabled applicants.
6. The government should set up a special unit or appoint a special officer to be in charge of the housing scheme for the disabled.
7. The process of application for low-cost housing by the disabled should be simplified.
8. The government should allocate 10% of low-cost houses built in a housing area to the needy population (including people with disabilities, senior citizens and single mothers) and the houses should be disabled-friendly.
9. The government should keep the NGO(s) informed and updated on any new low-cost housing development so that the NGO(s) would be able to help the disabled make immediate applications.
10. The wheelchair-users should be given priority consideration for owning houses on the ground floor. However, other disabled persons should not be compelled to stay on the ground floor if they choose to own houses on other floors.

# THE FRIM NATURE WALK

By Godfrey Ooi Goat See

One day in January 2005, I received a phone call from Albert Lim, a member of the Damansara Residents and House-Owners' Association (DHROA), with the exciting news that they would be organising a FRIM nature walk for the elderly blind of MAB. The blind would be able to take a walk, touch the trees and smell the flowers. I thought this was a very good idea and immediately accepted the offer.

Later on, however, when I telephoned Albert to confirm the programme, he said that after the walk the elderly blind could sit in the field and shout their lungs out with the children from Sun-beam Home. I was a little disturbed by this news and told him that the elderly blind would probably not relish such an idea. He said that if they didn't like shouting, then they could just have a sing-along session and I could bring along my guitar. Normally, I would have jumped at such an idea as I really do enjoy playing the guitar for a sing-along session. This time, however, I felt rather uneasy. After all I was looking forward to a somewhat challenging nature walk and it would be essential to travel light. Moreover, I knew from experience that it wouldn't be much fun singing in the hot sun and in an open field. However, I relented when Albert assured me that it would be quite cool among the

trees but I told him that I wouldn't be bringing the guitar.

So I went ahead and made the announcement over the Teley MAB, a telephone information service of the Malaysian Association for the Blind. Since only a few elderly blind persons responded, I opened the trip to other interested blind persons. Eventually, together with about five volunteers, we had 39 persons altogether registering for the excursion.

Subsequently, when I got the programme from Albert, I realised that it would not include the rope-walk among the trees, something which I was terribly excited about for the blind adventurers. I telephoned Albert to express my concern. He told me that I would have to write a second letter to the Forest Research Institute Malaysia (FRIM) to request for the rope-walk; this was because the walk would be dangerous for the blind since they would have to walk for about one hour across a small hill and even traverse a little stream in order to get to the rope. I told him that I had undertaken this walk before and I didn't remember wading across any stream in order to get to the rope when I joined my wife with another group excursion some years ago. He was not convinced and he reminded me of the Bukit Kiara walk the previous year in 2004 when some of the elderly

blind walked up a tarred hill slope for less than five minutes and they opted to be taken down the hill by car. This was true, of course; so I did not argue further and I wrote to FRIM.

Soon after, Albert telephoned to inform me that FRIM was reluctant to take on the responsibility for the blind. He also asked me to speak to Lai Yong, a lady who was an officer in the forest department. Reluctantly, I again yielded when she said that the hill walk would be dangerous. However, I made her promise that the blind would be able to touch the trees and smell the flowers.

Then I got another telephone call from Albert; he said that an indemnity letter was necessary in order to free FRIM and DHROA from any liability for the blind. I told him that if it was just a relaxing walk among the trees, there would be no risk at all; moreover, the blind were old enough to be responsible for themselves. Nevertheless, he insisted that I should produce the letter which I did. In my mind, I could not help wondering whether the "charitable" gesture of the free tickets for admission to FRIM and the free food were, in fact, obstacles contributing to an unfavourable opinion of the blind. Why did sighted people think that the blind were so incapable of taking risks and un-

dertaking the challenges that are taken up by ordinary sighted people?

Just before the day arrived, Albert informed me that besides the lunch-box of “nasi lemak,” they would also be providing vouchers for a breakfast burger. However, on the morning of April 30 when we arrived at FRIM in Kepong, we were first ushered into the public hall for a one-hour briefing on the work being carried out by FRIM. I tried to focus my attention on the talk but at the same time I was feeling rather anxious about the gnawing stomachs of the people in our group as I had earlier mentioned to them about the “free” breakfast. Sure enough, as we were filing out of the hall, some of them asked me where was the breakfast.

I got one of our volunteers to ask Albert discreetly. He said that after we had all cleared the toilets, we would be walking to the field and the vouchers would be distributed. This was already almost about ten o’clock, way past breakfast time. In another two hours, it would be a very heavy lunch of nasi lemak! Where would we fit all that in?

Another question that was bothering me was about the pairing off of the children from the Sun-beam Home with our blind participants (which had been done before for the 2004 Bukit Kiara walk). I told Albert that the pairing off should have been before the talk so that there would be adequate assistance for our five volunteers right from the beginning. Prior arrangements had not been made and there was a rush for the very few toilets available and this

gave rise to some confusion. Then, as I recalled the previous walk, it dawned on me that pairing off the adult blind with sighted children wasn’t such a wise idea after all. The children had no knowledge, experience or training on how to deal with blind people and they were too young to understand how to adapt themselves to unforeseen situations. In fact, some of the elderly blind had complained that for the previous Bukit Kiara walk, some of the children had been lured away by other distractions and had left them to walk on their own. Besides, some of the little children were too short and this made it difficult for the elderly blind in particular to walk with them.

As I strolled along the road with Lai Yong to the field, I learned that we would not be walking in the jungle because that was too dangerous. Instead, we would be singing in the field and she asked me if I had brought my guitar. My reply was that the blind had been looking forward to the walk and merely spending the time of the excursion singing would be very boring for them.

With these thoughts turning in my mind, we reached the field and to the voice of queries about the vouchers. Suddenly, I remembered that Albert had given all the vouchers to our chief volunteer and she was getting the burgers for the blind. On second thought, I realised that it would have been better for the vouchers to have been distributed to the participants individually so that they could get their own burgers with the help of their own volunteers. So later when I was asked whether

the gift packets should be given to the leader, I quickly suggested that they should be distributed to the participants individually.

After the breakfast, we were all sitting around and Albert informed me that the singing session would be starting soon. Fortunately, Lai Yong had told me that there was a waterfall and I asked Albert if we could walk there instead of singing. Thus, it was very fortunate that we were able to save the day even though it was just a token walk up a very small hill which took only about 20 minutes. Even this little adventure would have been lost if I had not been insistent to Albert that the short walk would at least be more interesting than just sitting around.

Eventually, when quite a number of us had made it to the waterfall and some even to the top of the hill just a little way beyond the waterfall, the members of DHROA expressed amazement that we blind people were so capable and they felt pleased that something had been achieved. So, after a few moments of deep thought, I roused myself from the depths of low-spiritedness and joined in the brief singing session at the edge of the waterfall.

Then we walked down the hill for some “nasi lemak.” One of the elderly blind members then told me that he had expected to be sweating himself out in an adventurous and challenging walk. Instead of just listening to the public talk on FRIM, he would have preferred the real thing, i.e. to touch the trees and learn their names, smell the flowers and herbs, and perhaps buy something home for

his garden.

He also observed that the programme could not be managed effectively because the organisers were trying to cater for two groups – the children from the orphanage and the elderly blind. The needs of the sighted children tended to over-ride the needs of the elderly blind. While he appreciated the food and the gift packets, he felt that the really important thing would have been the walk in the forest and the thrilling opportunity of experiencing the rope-walk.

Thus, this has made me keenly aware that when organising an excursion, we should try to achieve at least two important objectives – to educate the public, particularly the organisers, on the capabilities of the blind and to use this as a golden opportunity for the blind to be involved in organising the activity or learning new knowledge and skills.

# REHABILITATION AND TRAINING FOR THE BLIND IN HONG KONG, AUSTRALIA AND AMERICA

## Part III



*Editor's Note: The second part of this article appeared in the July – September 2005 issue of "The NCBM Outreach".*

cial service agencies, neighbours, friends or families. The school day lasts from 8.15 a.m. to 3.00 p.m.

The childhood programme also includes a summer camp called Camp KanDu. This camp provides fun and exciting activities with the aim of helping the blind children to achieve the desired goals. The camp lasts for six weeks and for five days a week from 9.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. Funding and transportation are provided by the student's school district.

The creative curriculum includes learning to communicate, learning through technology, preparing for them, Braille buddies, and learning through play.

### 3. OVERBROOK SCHOOL FOR THE BLIND IN THE U.S.A.

#### 3.1 Early Childhood Programme

In this institute, the early childhood programme is a fun and educational pre-school experience with a special focus on meeting the needs of blind children between the ages of three and six. One of the main objectives is to prepare them for entry into appropriate school programmes of the same age as their peers. The children may be referred to the programme by their school districts, physicians, so-

#### 3.2 The Stepping-stones Programme

This programme is for blind students beginning at age five who will follow an elementary curriculum. The focus is on developing a strong academic foundation, including intensive training in orientation and mobility, daily living skills, self-esteem and socialisation skills. These are considered to be the pre-requisite

IT'S TIME FOR  
THE BLIND  
TO HELP THE  
BLIND

skills in preparation for a successful school programme in the future.

The rationale is that blind students moving from a special pre-school programme for the blind to a regular kindergarten class experience difficulty in making a successful transition. Thus, the early childhood programme has to meet the following criteria:

- \* To integrate and expand upon their functional vision and tactual skills;
- \* Independently to complete visual motor tasks in colouring, writing, match, etc.
- \* Independently to complete fine motor tasks involved in writing, cutting, pasting, tearing, dressing, etc.
- \* To meet the expectations of basic kindergarten concepts;
- \* To meet social expectations of age-appropriate peers;
- \* To function independently in a large group situation in an unfamiliar setting;
- \* To orientate themselves in unfamiliar settings;
- \* To travel independently in the class-room and at school;
- \* To display good communication skills and self-confidence.

In the kindergarten curriculum, there is an overlapping between the early childhood programme and the elementary life programme. Reading, writing

and mathematics are taught in the elementary classes. The kindergarten students have lunch in the main cafeteria and join the first- and second-grade students every day during recess. The early childhood programme and the kindergarten join together for music, physical education and art activities. Orientation and mobility instruction, occupational therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy are available, depending on each student's needs.

From kindergarten to grade five, the national curriculum standards are adopted and supported with textbooks and materials. Adaptations are made on an individual basis according to needs and blindness requirements.

### **3.3 Employment Assessment and Career Development**

Blind students may need to broaden their life and work skills and to prepare for the transition from the school setting to living at home and subsequently to the world of work. Training is provided through the IDEAL transition programme (i.e. the Individual Development through Employment Assessment and Learning programme). The Overbrook School for the Blind and the DELCO Blind/Sight Centre collaborate in this programme designed to assist students in making the transition.

IDEAL, funded by the Pennsylvania Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services, is a summer programme for high school students with visual impairment aged 15 to 21 years old. It offers activities in individual and group settings.

For career development and worker readiness, the blind student has to go through an individual assessment of abilities and interests. They also use a special computer programme to conduct a self-assessment analysis and carry out an exploration of career options. These activities serve as a foundation in decision-making and career guidance.

The programme aims at enhancing employment skills such as interviewing for a job, writing a resume, preparing a job application, improving social skills and developing healthy work habits. Students are also taught how to deal with disability issues in the job-seeking process.

The highlight of the IDEAL programme is the opportunity for students to learn career and work skills in the class-room. They then have the opportunity to test those skills through on-site visits to employers in the area, conducting of employment interviews and panel presentations with workers who are blind.

### **3.4 Work Experience**

Students may also obtain summer jobs through the Overbrooks CHOICE programme (i.e. Career Help at Overbrooks for Individuals who Choose Employment). If required, the programme can provide a job coach on the job-site to assist the blind student in adjusting and in mastering the skills needed for the job to be carried out successfully.

### **3.5 Transition Planning**

At the end of each summer, the staff, family members, educators and other advocates are invited to meet with each participant to discuss and to review their progress. The group then develops a plan based on recommendations made at the meeting in order to facilitate an effective transition into adult life. This plan could include the following:

- \* Independent skills development to communicate effectively in a sighted world;
- \* Ability to travel safely within residential and community environments;
- \* To live safely and independently in a private residence.

Instruction is also offered in Braille, touch typing, use of various writing equipment and aids, cooking and other kitchen skills, budgeting and shopping, personal record-keeping, housekeeping and consumer affairs, white cane and sighted guide techniques, crossing the street and public transportation and, if necessary, how to optimise their remaining senses (including the development and efficient use of any residual vision). The programme may also offer basic computer literacy (i.e. the use of adapted computer technology such as hard-copy Braille, synthetic speech, and state-of-the-art screen magnification systems).

### **3.6 Residential Living**

IDEAL provides supervised residential living where students learn to practise a variety of self-help and independent living skills. Students also take part in

recreational and social activities in the community with opportunities for indoor and outdoor leisure pursuits. Trained staff are on a 24-hour supervision duty to ensure safety and security for the students. They are encouraged to use both private and public transportation for community-based services such as summer employment, career exploration, and recreational activities.

For more information about the IDEAL Transition Programme, contact:

Patrick Mituell,  
Overbrook School for the Blind,  
6333 Malvern Avenue,  
Philadelphia,  
PA 19151,  
U.S.A.  
Tel: (215) 877-0313  
Fax: (215) 877-2709  
Email: Patrick@obs.org

### **3.7 The LIFE Programme**

The Learning in Functional Environments (LIFE) programme adopts the philosophy of having fun and improving skills through the daily living skills instruction and therapy community.

The daily living skills include brushing of teeth, preparing a meal, cleaning living quarters and other practical skills along with a host of various functional skills. The LIFE staff try to teach these skills in the most logical and understandable ways as far as possible. For example, rather than teaching students dressing skills in a class-room setting, the staff organise situations in which the students have to mobilise those skills. Leisure skills include

bowling, video games, crafts, and table games in order to develop interest both in independent activities which require a partner or a group. These skills are essential in providing students with the opportunity to be active during times when they are not in school or not at work.

Therapy services are also incorporated into the programme such as language therapy, physical therapy, as well as orientation and mobility instruction.

Everyone participates in physical education twice a week along with other subjects that may include horticulture, art, music, computer literacy, food and physiology, etc.

Each class is staffed with one teacher and one or two aides so that one-to-one instruction can be provided both in the class-room and in the community.

In fact, all students are involved in community-based instruction which is specially designed to help the students to develop the skills to live and work successfully as adults in the world at large. They learn how to shop for groceries and personal items and banking, as well as, they take part in community activities such as bowling and eating in a restaurant. They also learn how to use various public amenities such as the public library, recreational parks, and so on.

Students entering the LIFE programme are also automatically admitted to the work experience programme known as the TOUCH Programme (i.e. training, em-

ployment, careers and rehabilitation). Students under the age of 16 take part in the pre-vocational programme where they learn such skills as packaging, assembling, making bows for gifts and decorations, and basic office skills.

They may also work on campus in various locations and the jobs could include setting the tables in the cafeteria, loading vending machines, or even cleaning bath-rooms. They also learn skills such as punching in and out, locating work stations, and counting work completed at the end of the day.

Once LIFE students turn 16 and receive working papers through their home school district, they can begin working in the on campus licensed workshop on tasks such as packaging plumbing supplies, operating heat sealing, the blister pack and other machines. They could also work on off-campus job placements at fast food restaurants, community centres, nursing homes, stores, and other places.

Pre-vocational students are provided with an allowance for training activities and instructional purposes. For students working in the workshop or out of school, they are paid by the employer.

For entry to the LIFE programme, students are referred to the Overbrook School by their local school district. They are then assessed and an individualised education plan is formulated to meet each student's needs. Progress is reviewed on a regular basis by the staff and outside consultants in conjunction with the parents and

local school district authorities.

Finally, effort is made to provide for students for all levels of ability. Hence, this requires the individualised education plan. The pre-vocational LIFE programme is for blind students between 6 to 11 years of age while the LIFE programme is for blind students between 12 to 21 years of age.

For more information on the pre-vocational LIFE programme, please contact:

JoAnn McNamee,  
Tel: (215) 877-031  
Email: joann@obs.org

For more information on the LIFE programme, please contact:

Jackie Brennan,  
Tel: (215) 877-0313 ext. 215  
Email: Jackie@obs.org

**TREAT A  
PERSON AS  
HE IS,  
AND HE WILL  
REMAIN  
AS HE  
COULD BE, AND  
HE WILL  
BECOME WHAT  
HE SHOULD  
BE.**

(JIMMY)

## **A POINT TO PONDER**

### **ARE YOU REALLY VERY LUCKY?**

*By Wong Kow*

Special offers, promotions and cheap sales often attract a lot of people. I suppose, customers naturally would like to maximise the value of their money. Spend less and get more; or sometimes, buy one and get one free. Even better still, just buy something which allows you to scratch a piece of paper with a lucky number in it and you could win a prize ranging from a tv set to an expensive motor-car. How fascinating! Can you resist yourself not to try your luck, especially after hearing the sweet talk from the well-trained promoter or the sales representative?

Out of the blue, you may also receive a congratulatory letter or a phone call from a certain company representative informing you that you have won a lucky prize, and you just need to present yourself at a given address. At times, they also bring the lucky prize right to your doorstep. Before you fall into the trap, ask yourself, are you really that lucky? Why must they give you something "free"?

The other day, my niece Yvone related to me that she had

spent RM2600 getting a number of items which she would never buy if she could have a clear mind to think carefully at that moment.

Yvone first received a letter from an unknown company telling her that she had won a mystery gift. Out of curiosity, she took the letter with her and went to the given address to find the truth.

Good enough, after presenting the letter and filling a simple form, she was given a beautifully packed gift. Yvone was indeed happy for her lucky star and thanked the company's representative for his kind assistance.

When she was just about to leave the shop, another handsomely dressed man, believed to be the manager, approached her politely, with a warm hand-shake. He then spoke to Yvone in a very friendly manner, "Congratulations! Your IC number makes you the proud winner of a 29-inch tv set which is 100 percent free. However, she was told that in order to get the "free" tv, she had to purchase electrical items worth not less than RM1900. She hesitated for a moment, but was told that the special prize offered was only on that day and she would be disqualified if she did not take up the offer and the tv set would be for sale at RM2500.

Yvone was not given sufficient time to consider carefully. She couldn't resist those wonderful items in front of her. Accordingly, she bought a radio, a DVD player, etc and made a payment of RM1900. Of course, the large-screen tv set was hers "free of charge."

When the manager issued her the receipt, he flipped through a few pieces of paper relevant to the lucky prizes, and exclaimed "wau! You are extremely lucky today. You only need to buy another RM700 worth of electrical items and could qualify for another lucky draw. The grand prize for today is a motor car."

"I am really very lucky today." Yvone thought. "Why not just spend another RM700, buy something nice and go for the lucky draw. Who knows? The brand new car could be mine, free of charge again!" She was overwhelmed by her own imagination while speaking to herself. She did so, but she was not lucky this time. The lucky draw number only enabled her to win a fan.

Like many other unhappy customers who fell into the trap, Yvone regretted when money was wasted.

My only advice to Yvone is that when somebody can even promise you "the moon from the sky", give yourself ample time to consider whether the promise is genuine before accepting the offer. Don't be lured by words such as: "The offer is on for today, you are the most lucky winner, sign up now or you will be disqualified, ....."

It could be tricky when you are required to act immediately. When you spend for something which is unnecessary, the discount, rebate or money-saving scheme will only make you poorer!

# TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

*Contributed by Moses Choo*

## **BRAILLENOTE AND VOICENOTE M-POWER**

Humanware announces the Braillenote and voicenote M-power, the next generation of information management systems for the blind. According to Humanware, one of the world leaders in information technology for the blind and visually impaired, Braillenote M-power is available in 18 and 32 cell versions, using hll or qwerty keyboards. Voicenote M-power is also available with a Braille or qwerty keyboard.

With state-of-the-art connectivity, Braillenote M-power provides the functionality and ease of use required by today's blind students, professionals and anyone who needs to access information anywhere with efficiency.

New features include:

- Expanded on-board storage
- USB host and client
- Great quality stereo sound
- Streaming media
- Audio recorder
- Built-in Bluetooth
- Fast intel X-scale processor.

*(For more details, please contact Moses Choo at the BPAS office of NCBM, tel. 22721442.)*



## NEW SOLUTIONS FOR THE DEAF-BLIND

Freedom Scientific is excited to announce a series of new deaf-blind solutions! This is just one more example of why the PacMate BX and QX series of accessible Pocket PC's are superior adaptive devices.

Deaf-blind PacMate users will now be able to communicate more effectively with friends and colleagues in the classroom, over the internet, via telephone, and face-to-face with the aid of refreshable Braille displays and messaging TTY software.

*(For further details, please contact Christine Ng Lai at the MAB library, tel. 22722677 ext. 56.)*

## WHAT IS THE BRAILLE SENSE?

One of the first note-takers with a Braille keyboard that captured the market of the blind in Malaysia was the Braille 'n Speak, and it has been around for about ten years. With the evolution of technology, the operating system in such devices is gradually being replaced with new systems of higher quality and with more efficient features.

After the Y2K episode, Microsoft released their Windows CE, palm top and hand-held computers.

The brailnote family of note-takers were the first to emerge using the Windows CE operating system. PacMate followed soon after. Now there are several kinds

of Braille note-takers which offer different solutions to the blind.

The Braille Sense is the first Braille note-taker to offer note-taking and entertainment features in a single package. It can perform several functions from one powerful device. The features include a note-taker, word processor, email, web browser, MP3 player, and a digital audio recorder.

*(For further details, please refer to the website <http://www.gwmicro.com>)*



## THE BOOK COURIER

This piece of equipment is a little bigger than a handphone and has a voice chip built in.

It has many advantages over all the MP3 players in the market.

1. With the voice chip, a blind person is able to read the filenames before going into the file.

The voice chip also makes it possible for a blind person to read a text file which is virtually impossible with all MP3 players.

3. Being able to read the filename means that you can be sure of deleting the unwanted file.

4. While reading a file, you can stop, move to another file and even read a couple of other files. When you return to your first file, the device will place you back at the same place where you left off. In other words, the system creates a bookmark for you so that you can continue the next time you get into the file. This feature works for both the MP3 files and the text files.

5. There is a feature for browsing by word and the word is even spelt out.

There is a memo voice recorder to take down simple notes for later reference.

7. The voice can also tell you the current date and time and how long you have been reading in the file.

8. There is a battery indicator to let you know the amount of power

that has been consumed. However, it is not very accurate when chargeable batteries are used.

9. This equipment is fully compatible with DAISY books.

However, there is one disadvantage with regards to the speed of transferring a digital file and DAISY books as you need to use a special utility programme.



# 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.

**TREAT A  
PERSON AS  
HE IS,  
AND HE WILL  
REMAIN  
AS HE  
COULD BE, AND  
HE WILL  
BECOME WHAT  
HE SHOULD  
BE.**

(JIMMY)

**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**

**PRINCIPAL OFFICE-BEARERS AND  
COUNCIL MEMBERS  
OF NCBM**

**FOR 2005 - 2006**

|  |   |   |
|--|---|---|
| Mr. S. Kulasegaran                       | - | President (neutral)                             |
| Mrs. Clarice Moiiji Ligadu               | - | Vice-President (Sabah Society for the Blind)    |
| Mr. John Wong Siong Cheng                | - | Secretary (Sarawak Society for the Blind)       |
| En. S. Hadi Abdullah                     | - | Treasurer (Malaysian Association for the Blind) |
| Mr. George Thomas                        |   | Malaysian Association for the Blind             |
| The Venerable Canon Andrew Phang See Yin |   | (St. Nicholas Home)                             |
| Mr. Ooi Chee Khoon                       |   | St. Nicholas Home                               |
| Mr. Samat Lakai                          |   | Sabah Society for the Blind                     |
| Miss Chok Siew Lee                       |   | Society of the Blind in Malaysia                |
| En. Mohamed (Zaki) Ismail                |   | Society of the Blind in Malaysia                |
| Mr. Robert Tham Ah Lek                   |   | Sarawak Society for the Blind                   |

# CHAIRPERSONS OF COMMITTEES OF NCBM FOR 2004 - 2006

|                              |   |  |
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| Dr. Zakaria Osman            | - | Blind Professional Assistance Service Management Committee |
| Tuan Haji Ahmad Mohamad Said | - | Committee on Education and Welfare                         |
| Mr. Stephen Hsu Wee          | - | Committee on Employment and Placement Service              |
| Miss Chok Siew Lee           | - | Committee on Library and Information Service               |
| Dato' Dr. Veera Ramani       | - | Committee for the Prevention of Blindness                  |
| En. S. Hadi Abdullah         | - | Malaysian Braille Press Management Committee               |
| En. Muhd. Fairuz Abdullah    | - | Committee for Sports and Recreation                        |
| Dr. Zakaria Osman            | - | Committee on Access to Technology for the Blind            |

# REPRESENTATIVES OF NCBM TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS 2004 - 2006

|                                |   |   |
|--------------------------------|---|---|
| Mr. Godfrey Ooi Goat See       | - | Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation (MCR)                          |
| Ven. Archdeacon Samuel D. John | - | National Council of Welfare and Social Development Malaysia, NCWSDM |
| Dato' Dr. Veera Ramani         | - | Standing Committee on Prevention and Control of Blindness           |
| Mr. S. Kulasegaran             | - | World Blind Union   |
| Mr. Ivan Ho Tuck Choy          | - | World Blind Union   |
| Auditors 2004 - 2005           | - | Ernst & Young, Kuala Lumpur.  |