

# THE NCBM OUTREACH



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## EDITORIAL BOARD

Moses Choo Siew Chong

Wong Kwee Heong

Ivan Ho Tuck Choy

Chan Yin Fan

Inunkiran Mongijal

## MY FOND MEMORIES OF ISMAIL MOHD. SALLEH

*By Daud Md. Amin*

***Editor's note: Daud M. Amin is totally blind and he has contributed a number of interesting articles to "The NCBM Outreach". Here are his reminiscences of a good friend, the late Senator Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail Salleh, who was also totally blind.***

My mobile phone rang at around 7.30 a.m. and, from my past experiences, I knew it could not be a wake-up call. Nobody would contact me at this time of day as I am fully retired from government service unless there was a special reason. My instincts told me that something must have gone terribly wrong! – I plucked up courage so as to sound cheerful as I reluctantly pressed the answering button.

There was a slight pause on the other end of the line – Then I heard the deep voice of Nordin Hanafiah asking me point-blank if I had heard the news. I sensed that something inevitable must have happened among my circle of friends. Then, with great sadness, he said, "Datuk passed away this morning."

With much grief, I sent him my chain of prayers. My mind immediately flashed back to the time of about fifty years ago like a movie picture being unwound.

We fondly knew him as “Ma’il” – He was born on September 2nd, 1947 in the district of Pasir Emas, Kelantan while I came into this world 28 days later in the district of Bachuk. We both attended the Princess Elizabeth School for the Blind in Johor Baru and we were in the same class until Primary Six.

We sat side by side during the lessons and our strong subjects were Science, Mathematics and English. Our Maths teacher, Mr. Terence D’Cruz, gave us the option of undertaking extra and more difficult sums.

After school hours, we did our homework or played games. Chess and draughts were our favourite games. Indeed, he was such a tough opponent to beat!

The teachers and staff regarded us as twins and the only time we were not seen together was when we had a quarrel. Then someone would ask, “Where is your twin?”

In sports, however, our teachers found it necessary to separate us for the competitions. In fact, our old identification cards bore the running serial numbers ending in 75 for me and in 76 for him.

Over the years, our families migrated to the Tanah Merah district where his parents operated a restaurant while my folks ran a coffee-shop to serve the surrounding villages – Our shops were just about five miles of each other. During the school holidays, I often visited Ma’il and enjoyed sampling their menus.

At school, Ma’il outshone us most of the time academically and in leadership. Indeed, he obtained an unblemished string of A’s in many subjects. This was predictive of the resounding success he achieved later on in public life.

We were friends through thick and thin even in the bad times when we flouted the school regulations. As juniors, we were subject to close supervision by

the prefects or the seniors. If we made noise during rest-time or the sleeping hours, if we were late for meals or for any other indiscipline, our headmistress, Pn. Ann Majid, would hear the reports and reprimand or discipline us during the weekly school assembly. We were very fearful of the assembly day as we may be punished for our “crimes”.

The punishment was meted out in two forms; we would either be sent for detention class or we would face public caning – Ma’il and I had experienced both. If either one of us got into trouble, the other would involuntarily be brought in. I felt sorry for Ma’il because it was mainly due to my fault that he had to suffer.

One day, in order to vent my anger against one of the prefects, I threw his slippers up on to the roof-top. The blame fell on both of us and we had to admit our wrong-doing.

When the Ministry of Education introduced the Integrated Education Programme for blind students in 1963, Ma’il headed home to Kota Baru, Kelantan where he studied at the Sultan Ismail College. As my family was then moving to Taiping in Perak, I was sent to St. Xavier’s Institution in Penang.

But true to the word, “FRANCE – Friendship Remains And Never Can End”, we found ourselves again in Kuala Lumpur in 1969. This time around, Ma’il was in Form Six at St. John’s Institution while I was undergoing the stenography course at the Gurney Training Centre. I would never forget the eve of the infamous May 13th when Ma’il paid me a visit; curfew was declared for the night and so Ma’il could not return to his hostel. Thus, I shared my single bed with him and this gave us the opportunity to catch up on the news. We hardly slept as we fearfully heard the rapid gunshots exploding around the Brickfields area. For dinner, me and my room-mates shared whatever biscuits we had with Ma’il. For the next two or three days, all the trainees at the GTC (including my guest, Ma’il) had to be content with only rice and ketchup – but wow, the food tasted delicious under such circumstances.

Years later, I would surprise Ma'il on three occasions with congratulatory messages. The first was on his being appointed as the Dean of the UKM's Economy Faculty; Secondly, when he was conferred the Honour of Datukship; The third time was when he was appointed to a seat in the Dewan Negara as a Senator. I was gratified to receive his acknowledgment notes of deep appreciation which showed that he had not forgotten an old friend.

I recall with nostalgia one of my brief encounters with Ma'il in Kuala Lumpur several years ago. I addressed him teasingly as "Datuk" to which he promptly replied, "Don't worry about the protocol." His humility put me at ease and we reminisced about the old times and our childhood aspirations to become lawyers. I told him that he had gone so far in his career and that probably no other blind person would be able to surpass him in achievement and success for the foreseeable future. I added that the greatest difference between us both was that he had the patience to wait for success while I did not. He laughed at my joke and then asked to be excused as he had to rush for another meeting while I had to catch a flight home. We shook hands warmly and I patted his shoulder – that was the last time that we had met in person.

It was on Thursday, 27th August, 2009 when YB Sen. Prof. Datuk Dr. Ismail bin Mohd. Salleh (or Ma'il) passed away peacefully, leaving behind for us his legacy of excellent work in academia and significant contributions in services for the Blind in Malaysia.

Unfortunately, he moved so swiftly from this life to the other world that many of his friends were unable to accompany the entourage that made its way on his final journey.

Farewell, old friend! May you rest in peace in the loving care of Allah! Amen.

# **DEVELOPMENTS IN NCBM AND WORK FOR THE BLIND 2009, PART I**

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

***Editor's note: This article is based on "the NCBM Annual Report 2009". Here is the first part as follows:***

At the 23rd Annual General Meeting of NCBM held on Saturday, 25th July 2009, the President, Dato' S. Kulasegaran, outlined some proposals in order to move NCBM forward in fulfilling its role as the national coordinating body in work for the blind in Malaysia. They included promoting ICT literacy, promoting employment opportunities, and promoting recreational activities.

## **1. The Plan of Action:**

The Exco had given great attention to the implementation of the Plan which covered three levels of activities – working directly with member-organisations, organising national events or dealing with national-level blindness issues, and working on the international level in sharing experiences and information as well as improving the quality of services for the blind.

### **On the first level, actions taken were as follows:**

#### **1.1 Sabah Society for the Blind:**

##### **a) Job Placement Unit:**

NCBM had been sponsoring their Job Placement Unit since 2000. The sponsorship was intended to be a three-year project but had to be extended for various reasons. After an evaluation conducted by Mr. William Brohier and the NCBM executive director from 23-25th November, 2009, it was recommended that the sponsorship be extended for another three years from 2010 to 2012 on a reducing scale with a total sum of RM80,000.

## **1.2 Fund-raising:**

As fund-raising was identified by the Evaluation as one of the weaknesses to be addressed, NCBM agreed to consider the appeal from SHSB by providing RM24,000 to employ a fund-raiser for one year.

## **1.3 Sarawak Society for the Blind:**

### (a) ICT Resource Centre:

With the setting up of this Centre in 2008 to help the Blind in the Kuching area to gain computer skills, NCBM continued to pay for the allowances of a part-time trainer. This will be for a period of three years.

### (b) SKSB Job Placement Unit:

This Unit started functioning in mid-2008 with the employment of a Job Placement Officer, Mr. Binson Maja. A full-time clerk was also recruited in 2009. The sponsorship of RM40,000 is for three years and will end in 2011.

### (c) Mushroom Cultivation Project:

Following a successful pilot project with SHSB in 2007 funded by NCBM, a similar project was started at the Kuching Centre for the Blind in 2009. The aim is to provide training for some of the self-employed blind so that they could augment their income through home-based employment. This project was likewise started with a grant of RM10,000 from NCBM.

### (d) Blindness Prevention:

SKSB has a very active committee involved in vision screening and cataract campaigns throughout the state in collaboration with Government Departments, Service Organisations and Private Practitioners. To assist them, NCBM made available a sum of RM15,000 in 2009.

## **1.4 St. Nicholas Home:**

### **(a) The International Therapeutic Massage Seminar:**

This Seminar was held from 28-30th April 2009 and it was organised jointly by SNH and JICA. NCBM paid for the registration fees of participants from member-organisations. The Seminar recommendations and views expressed by 80 practising masseurs at a subsequent dialogue called by NCBM on 26th March will be taken into consideration by the Massage Task Force headed by Dato' Dr. Hsiung when drawing up the measures for upgrading the status of massage for the blind in Malaysia.

### **(b) Frankie Tan's Trishaw Expedition:**

After working overseas for ten years, Frankie returned to Melaka to see his ailing grandmother. In order to bring her for medical treatment and to keep her in touch with the surroundings, he bought a trishaw for the purpose. When his grandmother died on 6th January 2009, he decided to put the trishaw to good use by raising funds for charities.

On 6th June, Frankie Tan, accompanied by enthusiastic friends, Ricky Soh, Huang Kok Chern and others, started the trip from Melaka to the Northern States to raise funds for four charities, including NCBM. He covered a distance of 800 kilometers, going as far as Langkawi before ending in Penang. He raised over RM150,000 and the other organisations involved in the Melaka project were St. Nicholas and SBM.

NCBM and SNH gave him and his team a rousing welcome with a lion dance and kompong performed by the residents and staff of SNH on the afternoon of 30th June. After the press conference, Frankie and his friends were treated to a whole body massage at the Wellness Centre of SNH.

The SBM Melaka branch was invited by NCBM to the flagging-off ceremony on 6th June graced by the Chief Minister. En. Hashim, Chairman of the branch, and some members were at the ceremony. En. Hashim took the opportunity to seek assistance in securing a building for their office. The Chief Minister immediately directed his officers to look into the matter and they eventually got a building to house their office.

### **1.5 Society of the Blind in Malaysia:**

#### (a) Collaboration:

By collaborating with NAFM in the above mentioned Melaka project, SBM was able to secure a building for their Melaka branch office.

#### (b) Cyber Centre for the SBM Melaka Regional Office:

Subsequent to them securing the building, NCBM installed six refurbished computers donated by StanChart, provided them with six computer tables, and gave them Internet connectivity to set up their Cyber Corner.

(To be continued)

# **PAK LAH'S LEGACY FOR THE POOR AND DISABLED: A HOPE FOR THE FUTURE, PART 4**

*By Ooi Hock Tiam*

*Editor's note: The third part of this article appeared in the October – December 2010 issue of "The NCBM Outreach". Here is the fourth and final part:*

*News Reports Concerning Pak Lah's Legacy*

## **Report 9. The Star, May 2nd, 2008: "NGO's to Identify the Disabled for Civil Service" by Ian McIntyr**

The Public Services Department intends to allocate 10,000 jobs for the disabled in the public sector. This was announced by Dr. Ng Yen Yen, when she was Minister of Family, Women and Community Development. I recall that a similar promise was made by another government minister in the 1980's.

Until today, however, the number of disabled workers in the public sector is still way below 1,000. In other words, it is still below the target of at least 1% employment for the disabled in the public sector. In fact, it is even below 0.1 % of the total workforce in the civil service.

## **Report 10. Parliamentary Report, October 30th 2008:**

According to this report, 213,393 disabled persons are registered with the Welfare Department as at June 2008. Out of this figure, the blind make up about 21,000, the deaf about 38,000, and the physically disabled about 78,000. The government again took the opportunity of the occasion to announce its pledge to achieve the 1% employment rate for the disabled in the public sector. Let us hope that this pledge will become a reality in the not too distant future.

### **Report 11. The Star, November 15th 2008: “Schemes for Special Pupils” by Loh Foon Fong**

As at January 2008, about 10,000 students with learning disabilities are attending government schools which run special programmes. This was announced by En. Wee Ka Siong, the Deputy Minister of Education. With the inclusion of blind and deaf students, the total number of disabled students in government schools came up to 28,551. The total number of teachers for these students was 3,321.

Thus, these figures give us a ratio of one teacher to about 12 disabled students. It is felt that the number of students per teacher is rather too high. The ideal ratio would be one teacher to six disabled students. This means that more teachers need to be trained under the Special Education Programme in order to meet this need.

### **Report 12. The Star, May 8th 2008: “CM: Equal Opportunities for the Disabled”**

According to this report, the new Chief Minister of Penang said that equal opportunities should be given to the disabled. To back up this positive statement, he has appointed a physically disabled lawyer, Ms. Lim Kah Cheng, as a state councilor to represent the disabled.

The chief Minister has encouraged the disabled to channel their grievances through her to the state government. Comments and suggestions would be helpful in the formulation of state policies aimed at providing assistance to the disabled.

### **Report 13. The Star, December 18th 2008: “Yen Yen Plans for Disabled to Get Better Help, K.L.”**

According to this report, the Minister said that the Housing Act, the Local Council Act and the Disability Act must be adhered to and that the rights of the disabled must be protected. Of course, this protection has yet to be put to the test because so far no disabled person has challenged the authorities over rights violation.

**Report 14. The Star, September 19th 2008: “Ministry to Hire 1,000 temporary Welfare Workers, Raub, Pahang”**

According to the Welfare Minister, each Welfare Officer in Malaysia currently has to service 450 clients. In the developed countries, on the other hand, the ratio is one officer to 30 clients.

Thus, according to her calculations, it is possible to offer each temporary worker with a six-month contract at RM35 payment per day. If this opportunity is also offered to the disabled, I believe this would be a significant contribution in lowering the unemployment rate among the disabled. Absorbing some of the disabled into the Welfare Ministry would help to reduce the work-load of the present welfare officers and at the same time provide employment for the disabled.

**Report 15. The Star, August 21st 2008: “Faster Aid for the Needy” by Klara Choo**

The Minister of Welfare has announced the intention to cut redtape in the processing of applications by the disabled and the needy for aid. She said that each case could be dealt with at the local level and there was no need to refer them to the central level. If this could be put into practice, it is certainly a move in the right direction.

From my personal observations, I have noted that it would take an officer at least two to three months to decide on a single case. Indeed, we also hope that this process can be speeded up.

In the same report, the Minister also said that the Ministry had handed out RM160 million to about 150,000 people in the previous year. Obviously, this would mean that there is still a lot of money to be distributed to the people. This was because the government had allocated about RM800 million to the Welfare Ministry for that year. Therefore, more effective ways must be found to channel the aid effectively to the poor, needy and the disabled.

### **Report 16. The Star, January 30th 2008: “Penang Launch of Phase 2 of Bakti Programme for the Disabled”**

According to this article, the Prime Minister launched the second programme for community-based rehabilitation (or Pemulihan dalam Komuniti – PDK”) in Puteri Gunong Taman Tasik Indah, Simpang Empat, in his parliamentary constituency. Under this programme, the government will pay RM150 to each client, RM800 to each instructor, and RM1,000 to the supervisor on a monthly basis. An additional RM1,000 will be provided for utilities plus an annual grant of RM30,000 for activities. At the moment, there are several hundred of such programmes throughout the country.

This appears to be a good programme and more of them should be set up. In fact, it would be possible for every parliamentary constituency to have at least one PDK programme as an allocation of RM200,000 is provided for every constituency under the scheme known as Unit Penyayang.

### **Report 17. The Star, February 3rd 2009: “Deadline for Welfare Homes to Register”**

According to this article, all welfare homes have been urged to register with the Welfare Department in order to apply for aid. Successfully registered homes will receive RM8 per day for each in-mate.

A similar call was issued some time back. Unfortunately, however, only a few selected homes were given the promised aid. It is hoped that this aid will be made available to all the NGO welfare homes.

### **Report 18. The Star, April 1st, 2009: “Pakatan States Getting More Aid, Yen Yen, K.L.” By Lee Yuk Peng**

The article reported that anyone earning RM720 or less would be considered poor. That being the case, then financial aid should be made available to all such persons and should not be limited only to those aged 60 years and above.

**Report 19. The Star, March 11th 2009: “RM674 Million to Help Those Affected By the Economic Crunch”**

According to this report, RM200 million will be allocated for the building of low-cost housing units by the National Housing Agency. This appears to be a good move. However, so far the disabled are still faced with difficulties in obtaining assistance for housing.

**Report 20. The Star, January 13th 2009: “Bar Council to Hold Forum on the Disability Act”**

The act was passed by parliament in December 2007 and has been adopted in 2008. However, provisions of the Act have yet to be implemented effectively.

**Report 21. The Star, February 26th 2009: “Special Plan to Help the Poor, Teluk Intan” by Sylvia Looi**

The Prime Minister reiterated for the last time before stepping down that the “Hardcore Poor” would be entitled to some form of welfare aid (based on the guidelines indicated earlier). RM50 million will be allocated for this purpose and about 10,000 households are expected to benefit from this scheme. This was certainly a good gesture before his departure.

In summary, I believe that during his tenure as Prime Minister, Pak Lah has done much to show that he cared for the poor, the needy and the disabled. He has initiated a number of new policies and improved upon the existing provisions in order that the disabled and the less fortunate may have a better deal and a brighter future.

Moreover, he had been a positive influence and had provided the impetus for other government ministers and political leaders to make official pronouncements in favour of the disabled and the poor. Although his initiatives and policies may not have gone far enough to bring about drastic changes, he has at least helped to set the trend which we hope will be built upon by his successors.

Pak Lah, thank you for your genuine concern and your sincere efforts and contributions for the betterment of the disabled and the disadvantaged in society.

# THE ACCESS CONSULTANCY AUDIT

*By Muhamad Fairuz bin Abdullah*

***Editor's note: The Access Consultancy Workshop was organised by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development from August 13-14th, 2010. It was held at the Dewan Bandaraya in Menara DBKL, Jalan Raja Abdullah, Kampong Baru, Kuala Lumpur.***

The three persons who represented MAB at the workshop were En. Muhamad Fairuz and En. Godfrey Ooi (both totally blind) and Cik Raja Norsadah bt. Raja Sulaiman (sighted).

## **The report on the workshop is as follows:**

The Access Audit Workshop was actually an initiative of the Government aimed at formulating a proper plan to audit the accessibility of the built environment to the disabled. Thus, the main objective of the workshop was, in fact, to bring about the establishment of the access consultancy registry.

For this purpose, the workshop had to look at three other objectives. They are:

1. Defining the terms of reference for the registry.
2. Drawing up a training module for the access consultants and auditors.
3. Drawing up the universal design index.

## **1. Terms of Reference:**

### 1.1 Codes of Practice on Access in Malaysia:

These codes will be the main documents of reference to be used for the auditing of access.

### 1.2 Other Reference Documents:

These will include the Singapore Codes on Access, the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Access Codes of Britain, and the U.N. Code on Universal Design.

## **2. Training Plan:**

It was agreed that the Training Module was essential for preparing selected persons to become effective access auditors and consultants. Thus, the elements to be included in the Training Plan are as follows:

- 2.1 Definition and scope relating to access and universal design.
- 2.2 Guidelines for evaluating the accessibility of buildings, facilities and infrastructure.
- 2.3 The role to be played by the registry of access auditors, consultants and advisors.
- 2.4 The items that must be included in the universal design index.
- 2.5 Some knowledge relating to the terms of reference and documents concerning the universal design index.
- 2.6 What is access auditing practice and how it should be approached.
- 2.7 How to prepare the access audit checklist.
- 2.8 How to identify and evaluate the problems of access.
- 2.9 The seven indices of the universal design index.
- 2.10 The study of best practices in providing access (based on the seven indices of the universal design index).

In view of the above, it was proposed that a three-day workshop be conducted in order to prepare and familiarise both professionals and volunteers with regards to the elements that are considered to be essential in the audit training plan. It was further suggested that the Pertubuhan Arkitek-arkitek Malaysia (PAM) be assigned the task of conducting this workshop.

## **3. The Universal Design Index:**

The term of Universal Design is defined as being inclusive, accessible and barrier-free. According to the Americans with Disabilities Act (or ADA), the design should cater for the widest scope of needs. In the case of the World Health Organisation (or WHO), the term is defined as meaning that adaptive aids are available and functional for all the disabled categories; This means that the products and the environment should be useable by the greatest number of people.

Whatever it is, the focus for all is on design rather than on barriers. Ultimately, and based on the Singapore model and guidelines pertaining to access of buildings and infrastructure for the disabled, it was agreed that the seven important indices in the Universal Design Index should include the following – Connectivity; Accessibility; User-Friendliness; Safety, Integrated Design; Operation And Maintenance; Innovation And Enhancement.

Connectivity means there is seamless communication in the infrastructure from terminal to terminal, e.g. from the train station to the bus-stop.

Besides connectivity, the three other most important elements in the Universal Design Index are accessibility, a barrier-free environment and the incorporation of user-friendly features in the development project.

#### **4. Creating a registry of access auditors, consultants and advisors:**

Initially, the professionals in the workshop were of the view that it would suffice just to have professionals in the registry who would act as consultants. However, the disabled representatives spoke up and said that provision should be made for disabled persons to be included as the access auditors. In the end, it was agreed that there would be three levels of consultation in the registry, i.e. the auditors, the consultants and the advisors. The disabled will be selected to be the auditors while the professionals will be selected to be the consultants and advisors.

#### **5. Scope of Work for the Registry:**

The work would include:

5.1 Providing advice and facilitating the implementation of access.

5.2 Providing training to clients both in the private and public sectors with regards to access.

5.3 Recommending improvement of design and preparing access audit statements.

## **6. Recommendations:**

At the end of the workshop, some recommendations made were as follows:

### 6.1 Access issues:

There was the strong feeling that access consultancy would result in duplication because the professionals are already doing all those things (as required of them) in their work. They were, therefore, of the view that it would be better for access issues to be included in the course syllabus so that they would be able to learn of these things before going into their careers or professions.

### 6.2 Certified Access Auditors:

The disabled were of the view whether the registry came into existence or not, official recognition should be granted to trained disabled persons as access auditors. The certification should be provided by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development. Such qualified disabled persons would be given the authority to provide the expertise in access audit surveys and in conducting the disability equality training and awareness workshops.

## **7. Conclusion:**

The proposal for setting up the Audit Consultancy Registry will be discussed by the Disabled People's Council. If they agree that the Registry should be established, they will then decide to which ministry the Registry would be attached in order to provide the certification to those authorised to take on the auditing or consultancy.

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

## **Presentation of Best Blind Student Awards 2009:**

On November, 11th, 2010, MAB presented the Best Blind Student Awards 2009 to seven blind achievers in education from primary to university level.

They were:

Teh Yong Shing with RM200 – he was a student at Sekolah Kebangsaan Pendidikan Khas Seremban; He obtained three A's and two B's for the UPSR examination in 2009. He is now studying at the SMK Setapak, a special secondary school for the blind.

Kong Hwei Zhen with RM300 – She is a student of the Integrated Programme at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Kajang Utama: She obtained seven A's for the PMR examination in 2009. This is her second time receiving an educational award from MAB – She received the first award from MAB in 2007 for the UPSR examination in 2006.

Ruth Yong Wan Then with RM400 – She was a student at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Batu Lintang, Kuching; She obtained three A's, two B's and three c's for the SPM examination in 2009.

Loh Wei Siong with RM500 – He was also a student at Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Batu Lintang Kuching; He obtained four A's for the STPM examination in 2009. He is now studying law at the University of Malaya.

Yeo Kok Soon with RM2,000 – He obtained a first-class degree in business education with a CGPA score of 3.76, a rare feat indeed for a blind student in tertiary education. He was studying at the Universiti Pendidikan Sultan Idris in Tanjong Malim, Perak for four years from 2006 to 2010. For the immediate term, he would like to be a teacher of History and Economics in a secondary school. Sports is his second love and he is an avid player of goalball.

Ahmad Shamsuri bin Muhamad with RM2,500 – He obtained a Master’s degree in counselling with a CGPA score of 3.69. He graduated from the same university, i.e. Universiti Malaya, in 2006 with a B.A. (Hons.) degree in counselling. He is now reading for his Ph.D. in counselling.

Dr. Wong Huey Siew with RM3,000 – He obtained his Ph.D. in Special Education from Universiti Malaya in 2006. Indeed, Dr. Wong is among a special breed of just a handful of blind individuals who have achieved the highest academic qualification with a Ph.D.

After graduating from UM with a B.A. (Hon.) degree in Anthropology and Sociology in 1995, Dr. Wong was the first blind person in Malaysia to take up the vocation of a Student Affairs Career Counsellor in a local college. He went on to pursue his Master’s in Psychology and obtained his Master’s degree in 1996. Then, while pursuing his Ph.D. from 2007-2010, he took up part-time lecturing in Psychology in another private college. During this period, Dr. Wong, with boldness and great courage, also ventured into pioneering a new avenue of employment for the blind by starting a company which specialised in running motivational and leadership training courses. Eventually, he landed himself at the Open University of Malaysia (OUM) where he has been attached with the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences since 2007.

### **DBKL’s Positive Response To Request From Massage enterprises of the Blind:**

On Thursday, August 26th, 2010, the MAB Executive Director, En. George Thomas, met with a group of blind massage enterprise owners. The massage entrepreneurs were elated to hear the positive news regarding the decisions that had been taken by DBKL after several years of delay.

At long last DBKL had agreed to cancel the compound payments on the licences for the blind massage enterprises and to reduce their deposit payment from RM10,000 to just RM1,000. The best news of all was that DBKL had agreed to revert to the old payment of just RM12 per square metre of floor space for the whole premise instead of the new imposition of Rm50 per square metre which is the condition currently imposed on massage

enterprises run by other private owners. In addition, the Ministry of Finance has agreed to the exemption of 5% tax on the blind massage enterprises for custom duty.

However, there are certain conditions that must be adhered to by the blind massage enterprise owners. Firstly, the blind masseurs employed in these enterprises must be certified as medically fit and they should obtain their medical certificates from the MAB family doctor. Concerning the 5% tax exemption from custom duty, the owners must have a letter from MAB as proof that their enterprises are genuine.

In order to allow for greater involvement and participation of blind masseurs in the development of the massage industry, they were given support in their initiative to form the Massage Club in MAB.

### **Battle of the Bands:**

The seventh competition among the bands of the blind was held on December 5th 2010 at Kompleks MAB in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. However, as there were only four bands which took part, the Skype Band which performed the best was awarded the prize of RM500. The other three bands were awarded the consolation prizes of RM300 each. They were Rock Z, Reunion, and Pistol.

### **Blind Women's Club:**

This is another club which was set up in MAB early this year in 2010. They have organised a number of talks and visits aimed at promoting the welfare of blind women and in looking at issues that are of immediate concern to them.

On December 11th, a business opportunity talk was held. The product being promoted was a particular brand of sanitary towel with very special features that provide comfort and good health besides being very easy to use and promoting good hygiene. Not only blind women but even blind men could consider taking up this business opportunity.

### **Indoor Games Competition:**

The Elderly Blind Club of MAB held the third indoor games competition for the blind on Saturday, October 30th 2010. The games played and the winners were as follows:

#### **Chongkak –**

Rosmaria – RM30;  
Khatijah – RM25;  
Mahsuri – RM20.

#### **Dominoes –**

Siti Aishah – RM30;  
Ong Leng Kee – RM25;  
Muhamad Harun – RM20.

#### **Draughts –**

Ahmad Abdullah – RM40;  
Kakumaresan – RM35;  
Sayaganathan – RM30.

#### **Othello –**

Abian Jambot – RM40;  
Cheong Mun Kit – RM35;  
Ah Kit – RM30.

#### **Chess –**

Mahadzir – RM80;  
Idris – RM70;  
Amir – RM60.

## Scrabble –

Haji Majid – RM80;

Razimah Mat Yasin – RM70;

Isa Taib – RM60.

## **Basket-Weaving and English-Text Processing:**

MAB in collaboration with the Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation (MCR) held both the basket-weaving and English-text processing competitions at Kompleks MAB on December 4th 2010 (Saturday). For basket-weaving, all the three winners were blind and they were Abdullah bin Awang from Taman Harapan, Roslan bin Bidin from Perlis, and Idris bin Ahmad from Taman Harapan.

For English-text processing, only two of the winners were also blind – They were Sumitha Rasamy with first prize and Wong Kwee Heong with the third prize. A deaf person, Chai Wei Xiong, won the second prize. The cash prizes being awarded to the winners are RM500, RM300 and RM200 respectively.

Both the competitions were held in conjunction with the fourth National Abilympics organised by MCR from 2010 to 2011. Besides basket-weaving and English-text processing, the other events include floral arrangement, wood-carving, painting, photography and webpage design. The first prize winners for each of the competitions will be selected to represent Malaysia at the International Abilympics which will be held in South Korea towards the end of 2011.

The Abilympics were initiated by Japan in the 1980's in conjunction with the International Year of Disabled persons (or IYDP) in 1981.

# INCREASING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND, II

*By Godfrey Ooi Goat See*

*Editor's note: The first part of this article appeared in "The NCBM Outreach" of October – December 2010. Here is the second part:*

## **3.4 Community-based Rehabilitation (CBR):**

Since the introduction of CBR for the blind in Pahang in 1985, other similar programmes have been established in Negeri Sembilan, Kedah and Melaka. However, some of the questions often asked are:

- (a) How effective are CBR programmes in meeting the needs of the blind for economic independence?
- (b) Are the CBR schemes and the vocational training programmes really complementing one another in equipping the blind with livelihood skills?
- (c) Are the community-based and vocational training programmes actually competing with each other in recruiting clients to be trained for gainful employment?

Over a period of more than 25 years since 1985, the number of clients served through CBR seems to have been quite static. Moreover, not many stories of success have been highlighted as proof regarding the achievements of CBR for the blind.

On the other hand, the number of trainees attending vocational training has been climbing steadily every year. In fact, with the establishment of the new hostel for vocational trainees at the GTC, more blind persons are being accepted for vocational training. The GTC used to be able to accept 40 to 50 trainees per year; Now it can accept up to a maximum of 90 trainees each year. And of course, we have the statistics to prove that many of the blind have been gainfully employed after training.

In spite of this, nonetheless, there are still many blind persons who have yet to be reached, especially in the rural areas. It is believed that the best way to reach them is through the Community-Based Programme (or CBR). Rather

than uprooting all these blind people and bringing them to a centre-based programme in Kuala Lumpur, it would be preferable to bring rehabilitation and economic skills training to them right in their own villages. Apparently, there are many of these blind people in Terengganu and MAB is exploring the possibility of reaching them through CBR.

The question has been raised in some quarters as to whether a comparative analysis should be made regarding the achievements of CBR and centre-based training in Malaysia. Perhaps this may be a topic for future researchers to explore.

### **3.5 Trainers and Instructors:**

It has often been argued that one of the reasons why blind persons are not well prepared for employment is because of the low-quality training received. This is because the organisations serving the blind are inclined to employ lowly qualified staff as trainers or vocational instructors. This is in view of the fact that these organisations are largely dependent on public charity for donations and financial support. Therefore, they rightly feel that such money should not be wasted on the payment of high salaries to qualified staff.

Without much thinking, one would be tempted to agree that this, in fact, is the main reason for the blind not being well prepared for employment. We are inclined to overlook the fact that when the blind are admitted for vocational training, they have already gone through a number of years in education. I believe that is where the preparation for employment should begin. This means that right from the early years, high standards should be expected of the blind whether it be in the class-room, extramural activities, in attitudes, in discipline or in ethical behaviour. The teachers are well paid and suitably qualified but perhaps they do not have the appropriate training. Suitable persons must be identified and they must be given the appropriate training. While techniques of teaching may be important, an essential part of the syllabus should be on the psychology of blindness and on the shaping of attitudes of the blind during their early years. This will then enable the teachers to be more effective in focusing on the need for high standards among the young blind students not only academically but also in their outlook on life.

In certain countries, especially in the west, the governments provide substantive financial support to the charity organisations. Thus these organisations are able to recruit suitably qualified staff for their programmes, thereby enabling them to focus on the need for high standards among the blind. This government support is made possible through some form of taxation system. Perhaps this idea needs to be explored in Malaysia so that the government will be in a better position to support the charity organisations.

With proper training, the blind will be able to set exemplary high standards in employment. By their good example, the employers will be inspired and encouraged to provide job opportunities for the blind.

#### **4. Comparative Research:**

Currently, as in the past, there is no role at all for research to help in bringing about improvement and raising standards in charity organisations. I guess this is quite understandable in view of the insubstantive government support so that charity organisations have to spend major resources on raising at least 80% of their funding through public donations.

In my view, some resources should be allocated for research. For example, it would be a good idea if a comparative study could be made with regards to services for the blind in Malaysia and in overseas countries. Through research, we will be able to gain access to knowledge and information that will help us to understand the strengths and weaknesses of various programmes. Indeed, I believe research has an important role to play in enabling the charity organisations in this country to initiate and maintain high standards, whether it be in education, vocational training or job placement.

In fact, the government of Malaysia has recognised the importance of research in bringing about a knowledge-based and more effective community in meeting human needs at all levels. Research could provide the information that will spur on efforts to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and information and the sharing of experiences between and among charity organisations. Research can be a very useful tool in facilitating our search for good models and best practices to emulate. Ultimately, this could lead to high standards in services for the blind, thereby helping to bring about better prospects and increased employment opportunities for the blind.

## **5. Conclusion:**

I would like to conclude with an anecdote and a poem. The anecdote first – One day an Admiral asked his Captain, “What do you hope to achieve?” The captain replied, “I don’t hope. What I want I plan to achieve and I will achieve it.”

Therefore, like the Captain, let us go beyond hoping in order to achieve our plans.

And now for the inspiring poem written by a blind man from Sabah, Peter Gumba bin Agaram, in appreciation of the job placement service that NCBM helped to initiate in Sabah a few years ago. The poem is entitled “Searching for Freedom,” which was published in “the NCBM Outreach” of October – December 2000. Here it is:

### **Searching for Freedom**

In the distance I can hear the wild birds singing,  
And all around me I seem to feel the cool breeze gently blowing.  
Oh, how wonderful and thrilling life must be,  
But for me, this is not at all a reality.

I desire to live in comfort and prosperity  
But my folks constantly feed me with negative mentality.  
I tell them, “I want to be free like the birds in the sky.”  
But they say to me, “just sit still and let the days go by.”

In the midst of my depression I can hear shouts of victory,  
Proclaiming that the jobless will be free from bondage and poverty.  
Suddenly, my gloomy night has turned into a bright sunny day  
And my sadness and sorrows have all flown away.

I can now stand tall in the community  
Because someone at last has given me dignity.  
The new Job Placement Unit is for you and me to cherish,  
Our dreams and aspirations together we will accomplish.

# **TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN WEB ACCESSIBILITY**

*By Moses Choo Siew Chong,*

*Assistant Director*

*National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*

With the rapid increase of internet users in Malaysia, our web developers now need to consider those who are facing great challenges in accessing the net. This group of people, which constitutes about 10% of the population, includes those with vision impairment, the blind and low-vision persons, senior citizens, and those with limited arm and hand movements.

While it is stated in Act 685 that access to information is the responsibility of the service-provider, it is also important for web developers to realise that they have the duty to ensure that this segment of the population is able to gain access to information. Failure to take into consideration the needs of these people would also result in depriving them of the opportunity to connect with the huge internet audience. Not only does this not make good business sense but developers could also be ending up breaking the law; For instance, if you are working for an organisation that wants to do business with the U.S. government, you will be contravening Act 508 by not providing web accessibility.

## **How to Meet Accessibility Requirements**

In order to provide for the accessibility needs of the disabled, it is important to understand the technological challenges that they face every day. The World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) maintains accessibility standards and best practices on their All Standards and Draft page; Of particular interest would be the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.0 – <http://www.w3.org/SR/2008/REC-wcag20-20081211/>

This document contains the accessibility recommendations and guidelines designed to accommodate persons with a wide range of disabilities.

Advantage can also be taken of Web Accessibility Design Tools. Recognising the need to provide support for the world's disabled internet users, a number of companies have developed free and low-cost tools to help designers to comply with the accessibility guidelines. Here are some of the tools that can be used by accessibility supporters:

### **Wave:**

For those who dislike reading reports and believe that a picture is really worth a thousand words, Wave is an excellent tool for you. Instead of producing reports, Wave displays the actual web-page with embedded icons and other visual indicators that point out where the potential accessibility issues exist.

In fact, Wave provides an amazing number of ways in which this tool could be used. Besides actually embedding the Wave validation code into your designs, other options include:

- Enter the URL of the page to be checked into a form on WAVE's site.
- Copy and paste the code to be checked into a form on WAVE's site.
- Install the Firefox Toolbar.

### **Colour Oracle:**

This is a colour-blindness simulator for Windows, Mac and Linux. No longer is guesswork necessary when designing for colour-blindness needs because it shows you in real time what people with common colour vision impairments will see.

### **Image Analyser:**

This service examines all the images found on a web-page in order to check for any accessibility issues. Simply enter the URL of any website and it will do the rest. The width, height, ALT, and longdesc attributes are all examined for appropriate values.

### **Colour blindness Simulator:**

This is a web-based tool which can reveal how your images may appear to users with a variety of colour blindness conditions.

## **Readability Testing:**

This on-line tool can perform tests on your text in order to determine its level of readability. For example, your text will be penalised for polysyllabic words and long, complex sentences. This means that your writing will score better when you use simpler diction or write shorter sentences.

## **Evaluation Tools and Legal Requirements:**

In addition to the accessibility design tools, there are also a number of free and low-cost accessibility evaluation tools. They can perform in-depth evaluation of web-pages and generate extensive reports pertaining to accessibility issues. Some of them are highly specialised and can focus on specific disabilities such as blindness. The W3C maintains a complete list of most of the commonly used accessibility evaluation tools. It also maintains a regularly updated list of new legal requirements worldwide. In fact, many countries and local governments are becoming more involved in ensuring equal internet access for everyone regardless of any physical disabilities. In addition to simply staying legal, however, the ability to discuss accessibility with clients could be a great way to set you apart from other competitors.

## **Understanding the Importance of Web Accessibility:**

In order for a web developer to understand the importance of his job, he should sit next to a blind or physically challenged user. He will be able to see firsthand how much a difference web accessibility can make in the lives of these people if the websites are designed to be accessible to them. Once he has witnessed for himself the difficulties faced by at least 25% of the internet user population, he will surely want to give top priority to accessibility when working on new web designs.

(Note: This article in the print version of “The NCBM Outreach” contains diagrams and pictures that will enable the reader to understand more clearly the issues raised by the writer.)

# **SBM'S ROLE IN PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE BLIND, PART II**

*By Godfrey Ooi Goat See*

*Editor's note: This paper was presented at the seminar on "The Future of SBM". The seminar was held at Sri Malaysia Hotel in Genting Highlands and organised by the Society of the Blind in Malaysia from March 28-30th, 2010 (Sunday to Tuesday). Here is the article:*

## **1. Introduction:**

I remember presenting a paper on Employment for the Blind at a seminar organised by NCBM in 1987. My focus then was on the need for more effective job placement units for the blind. Indeed, I am very happy to note that in the intervening years until now, action has been taken by NCBM in helping to establish effective job placement units in certain organisations serving the blind such as the Sabah and Sarawak Societies for the Blind.

## **2. Should SBM Set Up a Job Placement Unit?**

In spite of the encouraging signs we have seen in the development of job placement units for the blind, the question I would like to pose is this: "Does SBM need to set up its own job placement unit?"

In my view, there is no necessity for SBM to simply follow in the footsteps of other organisations by having its own job placement unit. After all the existing job placement units still have a lot of work to do to increase the number of blind people entering the job market. Currently, only 50 to 100 blind persons are able to find jobs each year. I believe there will be many more years to come before the job placement units will be able to increase job opportunities for the blind by a significant number. Thus, this will leave them with very little time or energy to look into other aspects of employment for the blind.

In fact, from the beginning until now, the main emphasis of existing job placement units has been on seeking job placements for the blind. This is not a bad thing, of course; But I remember that in my paper at the 1987 Employment Seminar, I had posed the challenge that placing the blind in employment is not the only task that needs to be done. There are several other aspects that should be looked into which can help enhance opportunities of the blind in securing employment.

### **3. Other Areas in Employment for the Blind:**

What are the other areas in employment for the blind? Indeed, I believe there are several areas that SBM could look into and thereby make a real difference for the blind in employment. These include focusing on advocacy, research, skills development, training scholarships, and initiating alternative employment models that could be pursued by the blind. So this is where SBM can come in and fill in the gaps.

### **4. Skills Development:**

Firstly, I must acknowledge that SBM has taken the first steps with regards to this aspect. In fact, I believe SBM was the first organisation to start providing the Computer Literacy Training Programme to the blind. I remember how I myself was desperately looking for somewhere to learn how to use the computer when SBM announced the first Part-time Computer course for the blind and I was among the initial few to enrol. Indeed, I am glad to know that SBM is still running the programme today and that there are additional facilities. These include the Computer Resource Centre and the availability of the braille embossing production service to the blind.

Besides computer literacy, SBM has also provided Skills Development programmes to the blind in other areas, including Braille, English, Orientation and Mobility, Cooking, Massage and Reflexology, Indoor Games and even Leadership and Management Responsibilities. Some of these courses are on a long-term basis while others are merely ad hoc or one-off programmes.

My question then at this point is this: “Is SBM going in the right direction by promoting Skills Development among the blind?”

My answer, of course, is in the affirmative – SBM is on the right track. In my view, Skills Development is a very important area that is related to employment and independent living. We are all probably aware that too often the blind go into employment without good preparation, i.e. they are not equipped with skills which can make them self-reliant. Flexible in their approach to work, and capable of coping effectively in or with their job functions. In other words, they lack the skills which are necessary to make themselves adaptable, sociable and confident in taking up challenges and even leadership roles in the work-place. Consequently, they are fearful of accepting responsibilities and they have great difficulty adjusting to the new situation in employment; In fact, because of these factors, quite a number of the blind have decided to leave their jobs.

My next question is: “Can SBM do more to help the blind develop all kinds of skills?”

I have no doubt SBM can do this. As mentioned earlier, SBM is already doing quite a bit in promoting some skills among the blind. Nevertheless, I believe that SBM can do much more in this area and I would like to propose three approaches in bringing this about, i.e. through advocacy, tapping of resources outside SBM, and through research and development.

## **5. Advocacy in Employment:**

SBM should play a more active role in advocating for skills development opportunities for the blind. SBM should also actively advocate for policies, especially on the government level, that would open up doors to the blind for participation in various skills development programmes. While most of these programmes may not be accessible to the blind, SBM could advocate for adaptations to be made so that the blind can benefit from such programmes.

### **5.1 The Cubarithm Set:**

As an example, I would like to go back to the 1980’s when the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) of Britain had apparently made available to the schools in Malaysia (through the Ministry of Education) a new mathematical device known as the cubarithm set. This tool enables

blind students to manipulate braille dices on a board in order to perform calculations. Once adept at using the device, a blind person can perform calculations with this tool, more speedily than with the taylor frame or even with the Perkins Brailier. Thus, it was hoped that through this initiative, the Education Ministry would consider replacing the taylor frame with the cubarithm set, thereby helping blind students to cope with Mathematics more effectively.

Unfortunately, the new idea had not been whole-heartedly embraced by the education authorities in this country. As a consequence, no one in Malaysian education today seems to have heard or know about the cubarithm set and its advantages for the blind in learning Mathematics.

A team from MAB had firsthand experience concerning this ignorance of the device when they paid a visit to the Princess Elizabeth School (PES) for the blind in Johor Baru some time last year in 2009. The team did a demo of the device and the teachers were amazed that this tool existed to help the blind. They immediately latched on to the idea of making the tool available to their blind students. Unfortunately, the idea did not receive positive response from the Ministry of Education.

## **5.2 The Abacus:**

We are all probably aware that several years ago there was some talk about the Ministry of Education introducing the abacus to the blind in school. Until today, however, this has not happened yet.

In the year 2007, MAB decided to collaborate with a private company, UC MAS, to introduce the abacus to the blind. In this case, the idea was not just to introduce the abacus as a mechanical device for mathematics but also to help the blind develop the skills of mental Arithmetic. It had traditionally been assumed that blind students were generally backward in Mathematics because of their poor visualisation skills. UC MAS has found a way for ordinary sighted students to develop mental Arithmetic skills by using the abacus and the company was interested in extending this amazing method of calculation to the blind.

So it was in 2007 when MAB and UC MAS started a pilot project at Sekolah Jalan Batu in Kuala Lumpur. Through this initiative, the teachers at the school underwent a two-day workshop in learning how to use the abacus to develop mental Arithmetic skills. The abacus was a specially modified instrument to enable the blind to manipulate the tool easily.

After the workshop, specific teachers were assigned to coach certain blind students for a period of six months. Subsequently, during the closing ceremony at the end of 2008, it was found that those students involved in the project were able to use the abacus quite well in performing fast calculations. In order to show that the racial factor had no bearing at all on mental or mathematical capability, the three students chosen for the demo included one Malay, one Indian and one Chinese.

At this demo performance, the three students had to use the abacus physically in order to perform the calculations. With a bit more time and additional training, according to UC MAS, they would probably have been able to perform the calculations even more speedily just simply by referring to the image of the abacus in their minds. In other words, the objective of this course is to enable a blind student to use visualisation skills to perform speedy mental calculations just as well as a sighted student.

Notwithstanding this, however, the assistant director of Special Education present at the demo was greatly impressed with the performance of the three blind students. He himself admitted that this was indeed an amazing skill as exhibited by the blind students and he promised to bring back the idea to the Ministry of Education.

### **5.3 Braille:**

Braille, of course, is another important skill that needs to be upheld and maintained as an educational and literacy tool for the blind in school. It has long been acknowledge that for sighted students, the pen will always be a necessary foundational tool for educational and literacy development and it cannot be replaced by the computer or technology. In the case of the blind, there needs to be recognition by the relevant authorities that Braille is equivalent to the pen or pencil. Braille is a basic tool for the blind in

developing educational literacy and cannot be replaced by the computer or audio technology although it can be complemented by them. Unfortunately, the belief persists even today among the sighted, especially those in authority whether at NGO or government level, that braille will become obsolete in the future. On the other hand, do they believe that the pen will become obsolete?

SBM, therefore, should be a strong advocate in favour of Braille for the blind in school. SBM should advocate for policies that would protect the position of Braille. SBM should be in the forefront in advocating for a National Braille Authority which would be able to deal effectively with issues pertaining to Braille.

Indeed, I believe SBM can and should be playing a more significant role in advocating for policies and programmes that would encourage schools and institutions for the blind to provide opportunities for the blind to develop all kinds of skills, including how to use the cubarithm set, mastering the abacus and mental Arithmetic, learning Braille, ability to read embossed maps and interpret diagrams, mobility and travel, social graces and positive attitudes. All these skills will ultimately be of great advantage to the blind when they venture forth into the world of work and employment.

In order to pursue these ideas effectively, SBM must be willing to provide not only the finances but also the expertise. This means that opportunities should be made available to the blind and to take up such courses. The trained blind should, in turn, be able to pass on the skills to the blind in school and other institutions.

(To be continued)

## **A POINT TO PONDER: I AM NOT JOKING THIS TIME**

*By Wong Kow*

It was a beautiful morning on February 14th when I accompanied my wife to the bank for some banking transactions. When her number was called, she went to the relevant counter. I remained in my seat and the place where my wife had sat also remained vacant.

A few minutes later, my wife came back and sat down beside me, without verifying, I felt quite sure that it was my wife who was beside me. I, therefore, assumed that she must have completed her banking business and we were ready to leave the bank.

It was Valentine's day, of course, and so I thought I should be a little more romantic that morning towards my loving wife. Thus, I gave her a warm pat on her back and said in a low voice, "Shall we go for a nice lunch now, Honey?"

I heard no response. Instead, I suddenly realised that she had got up and was walking away quickly – Out of the bank, probably! Oh dear, I was puzzled! What wrong had I done to have caused her to behave in this strange way? Why was she so offended?

Suddenly, I heard my wife's familiar voice from the bank counter, saying, "Hey, I am still here at the counter. Just wait there."

Well, I guess the lesson for me, or for anyone else, is to be more careful and always to remember that we should not presume. I should not presume that just because I heard someone sitting down beside me, that must be my wife. A tactful verification of who the person is sitting next to you would certainly prevent unnecessary embarrassment or frustration.

Truly, I am not joking this time – I have faced the real and embarrassing moment. You can be sure I am not going to let it happen a second time.

# TAKING CHARGE OF YOUR TIME (FROM THE BOOK, “STAYING OK”)

*By Amy Bjork Harris and Thomas A. Harris, M.D.*

Here are ten timely ways to take charge of your time by challenging old habits that waste time.

## **1. Things:**

Don't buy or acquire unnecessary things because they demand attention like dusting, storing and protection: Only have things which are worth the long-term price we pay in time. It is not what we have but what we enjoy that makes us happy.

## **2. Saying No:**

Don't say “yes” on the spur of the moment. In this way, you will have time to get out of tasks you should not have taken on because of other commitments.

## **3. Unmade Decisions:**

Narrow your choices and achieve simplicity in certain areas of your life. In this way, you will not have the same unresolved problems months or years later in which you have spent energy-sapping hours worrying about.

For example, have only three outfits of clothes to choose from when travelling.

## **4. Not Interrupting:**

Excuse yourself if someone is keeping you from an appointment perhaps by a one-way communication on the phone. This is better than listening impatiently, angrily and everlastingly: So avoid being over polite.

## **5. Television:**

Carefully choose those programmes you wish to watch, giving thought to how you might spend the time in a more rewarding way.

## **6. Lack of Planning:**

Are you trying to do too much? How long will it take for you to get a degree or to finish a project? How large a garden do you have time for? Better planning is the key to saving time and aggravation.

## **7. Clutter:**

Clutter means unfinished, time-consuming business. You need systems to keep things in their places and our lives in order. For example, have the stapler in the proper place.

The adage goes, “A place for everything and everything in its place.”

## **8. Ignoring Maintenance:**

Constant maintenance saves time and money. For example, caring for your teeth.

## **9. Idle Waiting:**

See waiting time as a gift, an extra moment away from life’s usual demands. Get into the habit of carrying a pen, postcards and stamps. For example, when in a doctor’s waiting-room, you could write to friends or read a book. If you have a note-book, you could be writing your own book while others are reading old magazines.

## **10. Agonising About the Future:**

So much of our life is spent preparing for distant tomorrows that we often forget this moment, which will not come again. Perhaps we are most alive when we are so consumed by awareness of the present that the past and future cannot put parenthesis around it. At such moments, it is enough to say, “Thank you for today.” And live in celebration of the moment.

Recognise that time is our most valuable gift – For we have only so much of it and it cannot be increased substantially. However, we can reduce the demands on our time and use our free time in more rewarding ways.

Often our free time is not “free” because we have left ourselves vulnerable to someone else’s agenda, or we blindly follow what is expected of us whether rewarding or not.

To avoid this, we must take charge of our life, which means taking charge of our time.

By treasuring our time and using it well, we will like ourselves and our lives much better. We will have breathing space in an impossibly crowded life.

## QUOTATIONS FOR REFLECTION

I expect to pass through this world only once. Any good I can do, let me do it now. Let me not defer it for I shall not pass this way again.

### **Mahatma Gandhi:**

A nation's greatness is measured by how it treats its weakest members.

### **Charles Carlson (Giving Advice to President Nixon):**

When you have them by the balls, their hearts and minds will follow.

### **Charles Lamb:**

Not many sounds in life, and I include all urban and all rural sounds, exceed in interest the sound of a knock at the door.

### **Abraham Lincoln:**

You cannot bring about prosperity by discouraging thrift. You cannot strengthen the weak by weakening the strong. You cannot help the wage earner by pulling down the wage payer. You cannot further the brotherhood of man by encouraging class hatred. You cannot build character and courage by taking away a man's initiative and independence.

A government cannot keep out of trouble by spending more than is received.

### **Royce Righton:**

In the book, "Nicholas II", Trotsky says, "We are granted freedom of assembly but our meetings are surrounded by troops. We are granted freedom of speech but censorship remains intact. We are granted freedom of education but our universities are occupied by the police. We are granted inviolability of the person but our prisons are full. We are granted everything but we have nothing."

### **Ray D. Everson in THE Indiana Farmers' Guide:**

The philosopher who said that work well done never needs doing over never needed a garden.

## **Albert Camus in Resistance, Rebellion and Death:**

Freedom is nothing else but a chance to be better.

## **Tryon Edwards:**

If you would thoroughly know anything, teach it to others.

## **Mother Teresa:**

Duty is a very personal thing. It is what comes from knowing the need to take action and not just a need to urge others to do something.

## **Joyce Brothers:**

Familiarity, truly cultivated, can breed love.

## **Gen. George S. Patton:**

There is a time to take counsel out of your fears, and there is a time to never listen to any fear.

## **Storm Jameson:**

It is an illusion to think that more comfort means more happiness. Happiness comes of the capacity to feel deeply, to enjoy simply, to think freely, to be needed.

If being right is your goal,  
You will find error in the world  
And seek to correct it  
But do not expect peace of mind.

If peace of mind is your goal,  
Look for the errors in your beliefs and expectations,  
Seek to change them, not the world  
And be always prepared to be wrong.

**PRINCIPAL OFFICE-BEARERS AND COUNCIL  
MEMBERS OF NCBM  
FOR 2010 - 2012**

Dato' S. Kulasegaran, President, NCBM

Mr Wong On Fook, Hon. Secretary, NCBM  
Sabah Society for the Blind

Mr James Lau Kung Wuong, Hon. Treasurer, NCBM  
Sarawak Society for the Blind

Dato' Dr Hsiung Kwo Yeun  
Sarawak Society for the Blind

Mdm Rosalind Chew  
Sabah Society for the Blind

Mr William G Brohier  
St. Nicholas Home

Bishop Andrew Phang See Yin  
St. Nicholas Home

Puan Maziah Abu Bakar  
Society of the Blind in Malaysia

Prof Datuk (Dr) Abdullah bin Malim Baginda  
Malaysian Association for the Blind

# **CHAIRPERSONS OF COMMITTEES OF NCBM FOR 2010 - 2012**

Committee on Access to Information, Communication & Technology  
Mr. Ooi Chee Khoon

Committee on Education  
Mr. Kway Eng Hock

Committee on Employment & Economic Empowerment of Blind Persons  
Mr. Stephen Hsu Wee

Committee on Braille & Library Services  
En. Saifuddin Mohamad

Committee on Wellness & Prevention of Blindness  
Dr. Dennis Kong Ket Ming

Committee on Sports & Recreation  
En. Rosham bin Sidek

Committee on Social & Community Development  
Mdm. Clarice Irine Moiji

## **REPRESENTATIVES OF NCBM TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS, 2010 - 2012**

National Council of Welfare and Social Development Malaysia  
(NCWSDM)  
Ven. Canon Samuel D. John

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

Auditors 2010 – 2011  
Inpana & Associates, Kuala Lumpur

# NOTES

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## **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.)