

THE NCBM OUTREACH



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VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT OF NCBM

To ensure blind people will receive appropriate training and enjoy quality services regardless of where they live in the country.

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REPORT ON NCBM WORKSHOP TO BRAINSTORM ON JOB PLACEMENT AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES FOR THE BLIND

*by Ivan Ho Tuck Choy
Executive Director*

National Council for the Blind, Malaysia

The NCBM Workshop on Job Placement and Employment Support Services was held at the Crystal Crown Hotel, Petaling Jaya from November 28-29, 2012. The Workshop was attended by 38 participants from NCBM, its five member-organisations and one representative each from AGRO branch, Jabatan Tenaga Kerja, and the Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat.

One of the highlights was the launching and distribution of the forms on the NCBM Job Pioneering Scheme by Dr. Wong Huey Siew, Chairman of the Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment.

According to the press statement by NCBM, in order “to further encourage would-be employers to employ more BVI persons, and to motivate BVI persons to explore new fields of employment, NCBM is today launching the “On-the-job Training Scheme for Pioneering New Employment Opportunities”. Under this Scheme, NCBM will partner with prospective employers who are willing to give employment opportunities to BVI persons, and NCBM will pay the BVI persons monthly allowances of RM1,200.00 per applicant for a total period of between three to six months. It is hoped that by the end of the specified period, the prospective employers would be convinced of their capabilities, and the BVI persons would have gained sufficient experience and confidence to be fully employed.

There were five sessions with four speakers and four moderators. In the first session, “My Concept of a Placement and Employment Service for the Blind and How I Intend to Move Forward”, Dato’ Dr Hsiung Kwo Yeun from the Sarawak Society for the Blind stated that the three areas where SKSB would be focussing its attention would be to build up a database of BVI’s

in Sarawak, to locate job availability and conduct analyses, and identify job opportunities that could be performed by the BVI's with proper training.

In her presentation, Mrs Rosalind Chew from the Sabah Society for the Blind recounted the development of the Job Placement Unit which was sponsored by NCBM between 2000 and 2012. She stressed that collecting and updating relevant data would be most useful for job placement, setting up of an advisory committee to liaise with government and private bodies, and to have appropriate job training programmes in order to showcase the talents of the BVI's.

Mr. Daniel Soon from St. Nicholas said that due to the rapid technological advances taking place, many factory jobs that used to be performed by the BVI's had become redundant. Also, less than

10 % of the BVI's used the training that had been given to them by St. Nicholas. Therefore, training should now move to a higher level to embrace information technology and to provide more support services for those wanting to join the open market. For the others, entrepreneurship, cooperative setups and sheltered employment should be seriously looked into. Thus, the role of NCBM should be to advocate for the necessary changes in the education programme to meet current demands.

En. Faizal said that SBM with eleven branches would give its fullest cooperation to other member-organisations in whatever they do to improve the prospect of employment for the BVI's. Although SBM had no Job Placement Unit, it supported its members in entrepreneurship and training, particularly in certain aspects of massage. He said that as the present job market demanded multiple skills, all organisations serving the blind must gear their programmes towards that objective.

Prof. Datuk (Dr.) Abdullah Malim Baginda from MAB said that not only did the BVI's need to be trained, they should also be retrained to keep pace with changing job demands. He wondered which modality would be better – for one institution to do the training and another body to do the placement; or for an organisation to undertake both the tasks. He said that member-organisations should update the data on the number of BVI's trained and

where they had been located. NCBM should scout around for new job opportunities, new equipment and find out what qualifications and skills are required.

The second session was on the topic, “Our Expectations from Employees and Their Supporting Organisations”. The panel of employers comprised En. Ahmad Nizam, Deputy Under-secretary from the Kementerian Perumahan dan Kerajaan Tempatan, Ms. Marion Manuel, Manager of Human Resources from Price Solutions, and En. Mohd Hafiz bin Halim, Pegawai Psikologi dan Penolong Pengarah from Jabatan Pembangunan OKU, Kementerian Pembangunan Wanita, Keluarga dan Masyarakat.

They emphasised the need for productivity, creativity and innovativity. The employees must have skills in communication and decision-making, have integrity and be disciplined, be equipped with sufficient knowledge and information. In other words, they must go for retraining.

They stressed that employers want value for money. They suggested that unions, such as CUEPACS, be approached in helping to find employment-related solutions.

The third session was on the topic, “Our Satisfaction, Frustrations and Limitations: What Are the Solutions?” The panel of speakers comprised Ms. Lee Cheng Imm, Vocational Training Executive of SNH, Pn. Farah Jori Abdullah, Assistant Placement Officer of MAB, and En. Mohd Shamsuri, Lecturer at Universiti Malaya.

Some of the views expressed were that some BVI’s adopted irresponsible behaviour after they had been found employment, some employers had negative attitudes towards hiring BVI workers, some BVI job-seekers did not have proper training, and placement personnel were expected to know everything.

Their suggestions were that formal and informal education should be given from young, there should be sharing of experiences among personnel of member-organisations, career counselling on job preparation, the reintroduction of the NCBM Career Motivation Camp, training for Placement

Officers, setting up of successful BVI's Support Group, tapping experiences of blind university post-graduates, and setting up of OKU cooperatives and sheltered workshops.

The fourth session was on the topic, "What Ought to be Done by the Placement and Employment Service?" The panel of successful BVI employees included Cik Norlita Hanim bt. Md. Taha, Custom Relations Management Executive of Bank Rakyat, Mr. Lim Tien Hong, Ph.D. student from UKM, and Cik Siti Huraizah, Public Relations Assistant of MAB. Some of the opinions expressed were that BVI's should be encouraged to build self-confidence and learn to overcome problems by themselves, they must have communicational skills as the first contact at interviews would determine the outcome, successful BVI's should be role models, and there must be a paradigm shift for BVI's to make their own career choices with support assistance from member-organisations.

At the final session to formulate an Action Plan, the Workshop agreed to the following actions:

1. Set up a task force to implement the Plan of Action. Each member-organisation should appoint a representative connected to job placement to help monitor the progress.
2. The Employment Committee will draw up a draft of the Action Plan to be adopted at a meeting of the task force.
3. The role and commitment of NCBM and member-organisations should be determined for effective implementation of the Workshop recommendations.

Recommendations of the NCBM Brain-storm on Job Placement and Employment:

1. Role of Government

Request the Government to set up a Job Placement Unit for the OKU under the Jabatan Tenaga Kerja to:

- 1.1 Implement the 1 % Employment Policy of the Disabled.
- 1.2 Encourage career development among the blind while they are in school by matching training opportunities with their aspirations.
- 1.3 Promote Employment of the disabled with the private sector by highlighting the incentives offered by the Government.
- 1.4 Create and maintain a database of blind job seekers and those in employment in the public and private sectors.

2. Role of NCBM

- 2.1 Highlight best practices and to address to challenges in employment of the blind by appointing successful blind workers in the public and private sectors as ambassadors. These ambassadors should be tasked to promote employment for the blind by engaging with Government agencies, private sector employers, trade unions, and blind job-seekers. They will be members of the panel of mentors to be set up by NCBM to provide the necessary advice and support for the blind wishing to venture into a particular field.
- 2.2 Design a module to train Job Placement Officers, facilitate their training, and promote the exchange of experiences and ideas of personnel engaged in Job Placement of member-organisations.
- 2.3 Sponsor gatherings of blind university graduates to get inputs on their successes and challenges in securing employment. The findings will be useful for future students wishing to further their studies. In particular,

work with certified blind counsellors to design a Career Counselling Module for the Blind. This Module will be used to motivate the blind students in school by reintroducing the motivation camp.

- 2.4 Collaborate with member-organisations to set up support services in providing the necessary assistance for blind job-seekers in securing and remaining in their jobs. The support services shall include but not be limited to O. and M., accessible technology, counselling, etc. Blind persons with the necessary qualifications and expertise should be given the opportunity to take up responsible positions in this area.
- 2.5 The NCBM Employment Committee should design a Job Readiness Programme for member-organisations to assess whether the blind job-seekers are sufficiently equipped before taking up employment. This Programme will include do's and don'ts at interviews, resume writing, social skills, knowledge in ICT, O and M., etc.

3. Role of Member-organisations

- 3.1 Foster a conducive working environment so that the Placement Officers will be motivated to carry out their duties well.
- 3.2 Set up social enterprises to provide sheltered employment to the blind with additional disabilities such as the laundry service, sub-contract work, handicraft-making, etc.

4.Role of Blind Individuals

- 4.1 Give their time and expertise to serve in the “Panel of Blind Mentors”.
- 4.2 Blind Counsellors be recruited to provide career counselling to the blind while in schools or in training centres.

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 :

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SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

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.

Also please note that if the article is accompanied by at least two relevant photographs and if they are accepted for publication, you will be paid an additional RM25.00 fee.

You should include your address, telephone number and bank account number so that the money can be sent to you easily.

For details of payment, please see the last page.

First Time in Vietnam

By Anna Loo Soon Nyo

Vietnam Cultural Village



Lunch at the Vietnam Ancient House



A fish caught at Ha Long Bay



Sing-along session on the boat



The Tourist Boat at Ha Long Bay



Anna Loo kayaking in Ha Long Bay



Anna Loo and Siew Ling in the boat cabin



Ha Long Bay Fishing Village



When the organiser first invited me to join the Vietnam tour, I was quite hesitant until I discovered that several of my blind friends were also going, which included Godfrey Ooi, Violet Kok and the very jovial Moses Choo himself. Unfortunately, Moses suffered from sudden cardio-vascular arrest just a few days before the trip and had to undergo an angioplastomy operation. Thus, there were only fifteen of us who boarded the bus from K.L. Sentral to the LCCT terminal in Sepang to take the Air Asia flight to Hanoi at 3 a.m., Saturday morning, March 9, 2013.

We landed at the Noi Bai Airport three hours later at around 6 a.m. (which was about 5 a.m. Vietnam time, one hour behind Malaysian time). We checked into Nova Hotel and waited for the Hanoi Kids to arrive at around 11 a.m. They were the undergraduates from the University of Hanoi who

provided services free of charge as volunteer guides. We were divided into groups of four or five persons and my group included Godfrey and two of our sighted friends, Nancy Pow and Cheoh Siew Ean.

We then adjourned to a restaurant for lunch. One of the dishes you could select was fried pork noodles known as Boon Cha in Vietnam. It consisted of a plate of warm noodles and a small bowl of fish sauce. To enjoy the meal, you had to scoop the noodles bit by bit into the bowl to be eaten with the sauce. Those who did not know the style of eating found the noodles to be bland and tasteless. Godfrey said that it was one of the best meals he had in Vietnam. He was lucky because our Vietnam guide had shown him how to eat the noodles. By the way, our guide introduced herself as Vanh and she was probably about eighteen years of age.

After the meal, our group decided to walk to the supermarket to buy some of the goodies which had been requested by our friends in Malaysia. After walking about forty-five minutes, we were nearly approaching the supermarket when the organiser phoned to say that we had to be on time to take a ride on the electric car. However, Godfrey reasoned that after walking so far and feeling so tired, we should carry on to the supermarket rather than be in a rush for the electric car and ultimately lose the opportunity to get what we wanted. Fortunately, we all agreed because soon after we received another call from the organiser saying that the bookings could not be made because the electric car was full.

Thus, we were able to buy our goodies which included Vietnamese candies, the special durian cake which came from Ho Chi Minh City (formerly Saigon) in South Vietnam, and their version of Maggie mee as well as some charcoal—roasted salted cashew-nuts. On the way to the supermarket, we also managed to drop in at a shop selling all kinds of coffee powder. Especially fragrant was the Weasel Coffee, something akin to the Musang Coffee of Indonesia. The Weasels and Musangs would eat the coffee-beans which are partly digested and then released with the faeces. The beans are then collected by humans, cleansed, roasted and then packed for the market.

On Sunday, March 10, we had breakfast at the hotel. We could choose either beef or chicken noodle soup or western breakfast consisting of a lovely

crispy toasted bun with egg and mushroom omelette or with fried egg. We then made our way to the Van Phuc Silk Village where we could buy silk products. The factory was full of noise as the weaving looms automatically and incessantly spun the silk threads into mats to be sewn into products such as handbags, purses and clothing.

Then we took a walk in the ancient village of Duong Lam. There we saw a 400-year old house which was made from the abundant laterite soil available. Strangely, as the house grew older, the colour of the brick walls improved in quality so that the house was gradually assuming a better and newer appearance.

We then walked around the market area and tasted some of the local cakes. We then visited the Va Temple located in the Ironwood Tree Forest where Tan Vien-son Thanh, the Four Deathless Ones, were worshipped in the folk religion of Vietnam. Then we adjourned to the oldest ancient house in the village for a delicious Vietnamese lunch.

On Monday, March 11, we took a two-hour bus trip to the sea-port city of Hai Phong. On the way, one of our Blind lady friends had an urgent call from nature. However, we had difficulty in communicating with the Vietnamese driver and the tour guide was not with us on the bus. Moreover, we were in a rush to catch the hydrofoil speedboat to Cat Ba Island and there seemed to be no toilet in sight. Earlier on in the trip, the driver had disembarked and pissed at the wall of a building and so someone suggested showing that sign to him while others cautioned that he might take this as an insult. Eventually, after so many suggestions, the Blind lady agreed to relieve herself in a plastic bag surrounded by the ladies. Then the bus stopped and everyone announced that the toilet was there. But she had done it and the driver was protesting his annoyance and unhappiness although we could not understand what he said. Then the organiser expressed her anger that so many others had gone down to the toilet as we were just about five minutes away from our destination. But she calmed down when it turned out that we were, in fact, more than twenty minutes away from the port. Actually, among the group, there were only two Blind men – Ben from Singapore and Godfrey.

At Cat Ba Island, we got on board the junk where we would sleep for the night. Some of us then took the taxi boat while the more adventurous ones rowed in the kayak to see the Narrak Lagoons and tunnel caves called Hang Ca (or the Bat Caves). Back at the junk, we anchored at a calm water area for dinner followed by a sing-along session. Our guide, Tien, and the four other staff on the junk, joined the singing session. Tien said that so many of the songs we sang seemed to be so sad and full of goodbyes but in the end there were some happy songs.

Then it was a truly peaceful night that we experience on the junk. We were far away from the noise of Hanoi which was full of motor-cyclists sounding their horns to signal that “I am here! Don’t come near me!” This is the same traffic law that is being practised in India. Fortunately, in Malaysia, our motorists only sound their horns to warn of danger so that our streets are much more peaceful, relatively speaking.

Next morning we woke up early. However, we were disappointed, especially our sighted friends, because there was no sunrise to be seen in the early dawn. Nevertheless, we all went up to the top deck to enjoy the cool breezes, the song of the birds, and the smell of the sea.

Before lunch on the junk, we cruised to Ha Long Bay where we saw the fish farms. These farms were managed by military personnel as part of their training. Conscription into the army was compulsory for the men and they had to serve for at least two years. As we stood on a foot-wide wooden bridge, the fisherman threw in the bait and caught a 2.3 kg fish which we had for our meal. Indeed, our sighted friends were astonished that some of the blind were daring enough to stand on the narrow wooden bridge. In fact, one of our blind friends almost stepped over the bridge on to the nets in the water!

Finally, we bought some pearl necklaces and bracelets from the only shop that was open on Cat Ba Island. Apparently, many more shops would be open during the summer season when there would be more tourists visiting the place. We then boarded the speed-boat and then the bus to Hanoi without much incident.

On the fourth day of the trip, which was Wednesday, March 13, we visited the Ho Chi Minh Complex, Mausoleum, Presidential Palace and Museum. The grounds were very wide and spacious and every day there would be many visitors. As we approached the place where the body of Ho Chi Minh lay, we had to keep silent and no photographs were allowed to be taken as a mark of respect. Ho Chi Minh was a revered leader because they say that “Without Ho Chi Minh, there would be no Vietnam”. He led the struggle to free Vietnam from the French from 1886 to 1954 and then liberated Vietnam from the Americans in the 1960’s. He lived a simple life (as shown by the three houses where he lived during the different stages of his life). He had a brother and sister and all three of them did not get married because they spent much of their time in the struggle and in prison. Ho Chi Minh died in 1969 at the age of seventy. He loved the mango tree (and many were planted in the grounds) because he shared the folk belief that the mango trees were the favourite haunt of the spirits. There was also a pond with many fish because Ho Chi Minh, out of concern for his staff, had allowed them to catch fish from his pond for food during his lifetime.

On Thursday, March 14, we visited the Industry of Folk Paintings, the Bat Trang Ceramics Village, the Bat Trang Museum of Ethnology and the thousand-year old temple of literature. At the Bat Trang Museum, the Blind were especially interested in the different kinds of houses of the fifty-four ethnic groups in Vietnam. We climbed up the narrow steps of two of the houses to explore what was inside the dwellings. The steps were made small and narrow so that animals would not find it easy to get into the houses, thereby keeping harm out of the way. And there were gongs in the longhouse which would be sounded and which could be heard far behind the house to warn of danger. In one of the houses, the two breasts of a woman were carved on the top of the staircase which symbolised womanpower in that particular ethnic group.

At the funeral house, the guide told us that about ten bodies could be buried at a time. The folk belief that there was an after-life filled with joy and peace was symbolised by couples standing facing each other with the sexual organs of the woman and man given prominence.

At the Temple of Literature, we were impressed with the musical presentation on native musical instruments. One instrument in particular caught our attention – it was similar to the angklong but instead of beating on the pipes, the woman would clap her hands at each hole of the pipes to make the musical notes. We tried clapping our hands at the bamboo holes but could not produce any sound but she did it so easily and apparently without much effort!

Finally, on Thursday evening, we had our last meal (which was Vermicelli with baby eel). This was certainly much better than the meal we had the previous evening which consisted of a big bowl of cold noodles with fish and vegetables which were cooked on the spot and served in the small bowl with fish sauce. The cold noodles, when put into the bowl a bit at a time, was made a little more palatable with the fish, vegetables and sauce.

After the dinner, we left for Noi Bai Airport to board the Air Asia flight for home sweet home in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. We arrived at around 1.30 a.m. on Friday morning.

Free Movie Screening for the Blind

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



Blind persons registering for the movie



Godfrey Ooi, MAB Deputy Executive Director, receiving a cheque



Blind and sighted audience watching the movie in the dark

Editor's note: on October 20 2012, 988 Radio collaborated with a number of companies to carry out an experimental project. For the first time in Malaysia, an audio descriptive film (in Mandarin) was screened in a public cinema. At least twenty blind persons and some sighted persons were invited to experience firsthand watching a film in the dark and relying on an audio narration to imagine the scenery being shown and to comprehend the events taking place.

Here is the message from MAB's Deputy Executive Director, Godfrey Ooi Goat See:

If a person was born blind more than two centuries ago, he would have no hope and no future at all. This is because blindness was considered to be a curse, a taboo or even an infectious disease. Thus, the blind child would often be cast aside or he would simply be abandoned to die by the wayside or in the deep forest or jungle. Today, on the other hand, there is hope for the blind child and he can have a bright future provided that he is able to have proper training and equal opportunities.

However, society's view and perception of blindness is still a very important factor today in determining whether or not the blind person has any hope or future even though we are living in this modern age of computers and advanced technology. In fact, over 200 years ago, Braille was invented and this helped to open the door to education for the blind. This was followed by the introduction of the white cane about 100 years ago which enabled the blind to move freely from place to place, thereby opening the door to economic participation for the blind through gainful employment. Then came the audio-book followed by adaptive equipment fast on its heels within the next fifty years or so of rapid technological advancements.

Today yet another bridge has been crossed with the introduction of audio narration or audio descriptive films. No longer need the blind person feel lost when watching a film, especially when he is watching with a sighted friend or companion. With audio narration, the blind person will be able to have a fuller comprehension and much better insight into the dialogue, events and even scenery being dramatised or exhibited in the film. Now he will be able to get involved in more meaningful communication and discussion with family and friends after watching a show on TV or in the cinema.

Truly, the landmark developments of Braille, cane travel, audio technology and adaptive devices are a great help in bridging the gap and even levelling the digital divide between the blind and the rest of society. All these developments have today given the blind the power to choose between remaining at home doing nothing and just sitting around in sadness and self-pity or he can decide to go out into the world to face life that may be challenging and risky but which is so sweet and too beautiful to be wasted away with just this one and only great opportunity of a lifetime in this vast universe of ours.

Nonetheless, empowering the blind to lead a normal life that is productive, meaningful and that has dignity still depends on a crucial factor in our modern age – can Society let go of the idea that Blindness is a curse, a taboo or an infectious disease? Can the community at large accept that the Blind are capable of contributing towards nation-building and economic development? Indeed, how well the Blind man fair in Society will depend on how much the people care.

And so I want to take this opportunity to express our heartfelt thanks and deep appreciation to 988 Radio, to the Truly Loving Co. to City Chain and to the Golden Screen Cinema for caring by making today's event possible. I have no doubt that with audio narration, the blind will find "Watching by ear" to be a new and exciting experience in the movie cinema or on television. I believe that many more blind persons will surely be able to benefit from this landmark development in the near future.

Once again, we thank you sincerely from the bottom of our hearts!

The Lantern Festival Parade

by Dr Tan Tok Shiong

Editor's note: In September 2012, Dr Tan Tok Shiong organised the Lantern Festival Parade for the Blind. He managed to obtain financial support from the Malaysian Association for the Blind for the activity.

He writes about the event as follows:

The Lantern Festival is a Chinese tradition to celebrate the middle of the autumn season. In the evening, children and adults will carry beautifully coloured candles and lanterns as they walk around the village.

In September 2012, a Lantern Festival Parade for the Blind was held in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. Two weeks before the Parade, a police permit had to be obtained for the function and this was granted by the Brickfields police only after the necessary paperwork and interview had been carried out.

When registration was announced, all the 110 places were taken up within three days. However, 150 persons turned up for the dinner given by the MAB prior to the Parade. Fortunately, the caterer was not unfamiliar with this problem and was thus able to provide for everyone.

After the dinner, the participants proceeded to the Gymnasium where the lanterns had been stored. There were sixty-five battery-operated lanterns costing RM10 each and sixty-eight candle lanterns costing RM1.50 each. The money for the lanterns was donated by Mr. Fong Kui Lun, Member of Parliament for Bukit Bintang (which encompassed the Brickfields area) and by a customer of one of the blind masseurs.

Although the Parade was scheduled to begin at 8.30 p.m., everyone started moving out of Kompleks MAB by 8 p.m. However, the drummer, Abu Bakar Asmuni, who was supposed to lead the Parade, arrived at 8.20 p.m. He sat down at the guard-house to smoke a cigarette, thinking that no one was ready yet. A traffic policeman also arrived at 8.30 p.m. in order to assist in the traffic control. They were both caught in surprise when they were told that the procession had started on its way.

In fact, the Parade was very orderly and peaceful and no untoward incident occurred. Everyone walked along the pedestrian path which had very clear tactile markings for the blind. Only the totally blind and the children were allowed to carry the battery lanterns.

Our walk included circling around the centre of Brickfields once which encompassed the area called Little India and the Monorail Station opposite K.L. Sentral. The path along which we traversed was about two kilometres long and it took us about one hour to complete the walk.

Everyone was in high spirits as they enjoyed the walk and comradeship. Alex Lee Guan Hock, who was semi-paralysed, was very cheerful as he was being pushed along in a wheelchair. Some of the participants recently became blind and this was their first time joining such an activity. Many of the participants came with their families and it was most touching to see the young children with their blind parents having so much fun.

After the parade, the participants returned to the cafeteria at Kompleks MAB for supper. Egg burgers and packet drinks were served while Mrs. Yam Tong Woo, a volunteer, provided halal mooncakes and Chinese tea. Some kind donors had made some contributions in cash and kind for the celebration. Thus, there was enough money and goodies to provide angpows and hampers for all the participants.

There was a journalist who joined the Parade. She was so inspired that she wrote a story of the Parade which was published in the newspapers the very next day.

Dato' Ganesan Supayah himself, the Executive Director of MAB, was so impressed with the success of the Parade that he promised to hold a similar event in the year to come. He would also raise the number of participants from 110 to 300 blind persons.

The Clubs and Interest Groups of MAB



Yam Tong Woo teaching Mr George Wong an elderly blind how to use the computer laptop.



Yam Tong Woo viewing accessibility at the Penang Heritage site

The Clubs and Interest Groups of MAB

by Yam Tong Woo

Editor's note: Yam Tong Woo was on a business trip in China about five years ago when he suffered from eye infection and became totally blind while still in his early fifties. After some rehabilitation training, he adjusted fairly quickly to his new condition and began to play an active role in the programmes of MAB, eventually being elected as the Chairman of the Cyber Club of MAB.

When he heard that MAB intended to move the clubs and interest groups out of Kompleks MAB, he joined a group of concerned blind individuals in voicing their views to the President of MAB. Here is what he says:

When we heard that MAB had the intention of moving the Clubs and Interest Groups out of Kompleks MAB to make way for the development of the Education and training Programme, we requested for a meeting with the MAB President, Datuk (Dr.) Abdullah Malim Baginda, in January 2012. He confirmed that MAB was in the process of expanding its Education and Training Programme which would require that many of the rooms (including those used by the Clubs and Interest Groups) to be converted into classrooms.

While the group did appreciate what MAB was trying to do for the benefit of the blind, they felt that it would have been very helpful if MAB could have consulted them first before taking any decision so that their needs could be adequately addressed by The Association. With the Clubs and Interest Groups actively pursuing their programmes in Kompleks MAB, they have actually been playing a very important role in drawing the attention of the general public to the work of MAB being carried out at the complex. This has also helped to create much greater public awareness regarding the blind and their capabilities and it has given a boost to the process of social integration of the blind with the sighted community.

The idea of the Clubs and Interest Groups actually began in 2001 with the formation of the Elderly Blind Club. With this Club successfully carrying

out its activities, other blind persons were inspired to set up new Clubs and Groups which included the Recreation Club, Youth Club, Cyber Club, Blind Women's Club, Massage Club and various Groups interested in pursuing such activities as photography, line dancing, yoga, and akido. Music skills such as choir singing, karaoke singing, blowing the harmonica, and band performances are also being actively promoted by the Clubs and Groups.

However, we do recognise the fact that with the limited space and facilities at Kompleks MAB, the needs of the blind cannot be adequately met. Therefore, if the Clubs and Interest Groups have to move out of the complex, they would be happy to do so if MAB could provide a suitable alternative with adequate and better amenities.

Firstly, accessibility and safety are very important aspects to be given consideration. This means providing facilities such as tactile guides, covered drains, fire escape and security guards.

For effective operations, other amenities required include a multi-purpose hall with auditorium and good p.a. system, an intercom system and Wifi connectivity, adequate number of rooms for the Clubs and Groups to run their activities, and even a cafeteria. Some of these facilities could be privatised in order to generate income which would help to meet the administrative costs incurred.

We would, therefore, urge that before anything is done, the blind should be involved in the consultation process. This would help to ensure that the needs of the blind are factored into any future undertakings of MAB that are meant to benefit the blind.

In doing so, MAB would be putting into practice the exhortation of the United Nations, "There is nothing about us without us".

The Special Programmes of MCR

*by Dato' Khatijah Sulieman,
President
Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation*

Editor's note: The Malaysian Council for Rehabilitation has more than twenty affiliate members, including MAB and NCBM. When MCR's Constitution was revised in 2010, it took the initiative to have its three Special Programmes enshrined in the constitution. They are the Abilympics, Very Special Arts, and the Rehabilitation Conference.

In 2012 Dato' Khatijah was elected as the President of MCR after having served as Secretary-general for more than ten years. She reports as follows:

The Abilympics, Very Special Arts, and the Rehabilitation Conference have been adopted as the Special Programmes of MCR by having them enshrined in its Constitution when it underwent the third revision in 2010. The Abilympics and VSA will be the vehicles through which MCR will promote skills development and employment opportunities for the disabled. The Rehabilitation Conference will help in laying down the groundwork for the development of Disabled people's talents through dialogues, discussions and forums.

In fact, the future focus of MCR will be on "Collaboration" rather than on "Coordination". This means that MCR will prefer to be working with affiliate members as equal partners in achieving the goals rather than behaving as a "Big Brother".

1. The Abilympics

The next International Abilympics will be held in 2015. In view of this, MCR has to start initiating the groundwork by meeting with all stake-holders at the national and state level. The stake-holders include the Ministry of Human Resources, the National and State Welfare Departments, and the Non-governmental Bodies.

The State Welfare Authorities have kindly agreed to set up the State level

Abilympic Committees which will help prepare the contestants by holding State Level competitions in 2013. The State champions will then take part in the National level competitions in order to select the final champions for the International Abilympic event. The National Welfare Department and the Ministry of Human Resources will act as advisors to MCR.

Twenty-four items have been identified for the International Abilympic competition. However, MCR will only choose ten to fifteen items for participation by Malaysia. Two new items are Cooking and Pottery.

Three contestants in the last International Abilympics of 2011 in South Korea have been recognised for their achievements. Lim Anwar (deaf) won the Gold award for Silk Painting and he received RM3,000 from MCR and RM5,000 from JKM. Sumitha Ramasamy (blind) was given the Special Award for English text-processing and Ismail Rakib (deaf) was given the Special Award for Basket-making. Both received RM1,000 each from MCR and RM3,000 each from JKM.

2. Very Special Arts

While the NGO's have indicated interest in promoting the Arts among the disabled, many lack the resources to do so. Some of the organisations, however, have been playing an active role in implementing programmes for their clients.

Cheshire Home (Selangor), for example, has set up a Gamelan Orchestra for its disabled clients. Training classes are also held and disabled persons from other NGO's are welcome to participate in the programme.

The Malaysian Association for the Blind is also actively promoting the Arts among its clients. The programmes include harmonica classes, choir singing, line dancing, music BPS, basket-making and even photography.

Other Arts activities include the Dancing Troupe of Beautiful Gate, dancing classes by the Malaysian Federation of the Deaf and classes in creative writing and story-telling by Challenges Magazine.

The role of MCR is in helping to put things together and getting people in touch with one another. MCR, in fact, is actively seeking to provide opportunities for the disabled to develop their skills to the professional level with the view to carving a career for themselves in the field of Arts and the entertainment industry.

As En. Shahrim Buang, a music trainer at UITM, has put it: “The disabled should be able to create the “wow” factor so that their talents will be sought after or be in demand. For this to occur, reliance on volunteers will not be enough – professionals have to be engaged; this means money has to be spent on expertise to train the Disabled”.

It should not be forgotten, however, that the majority of the disabled are only interested in the Arts as a hobby or merely for personal fulfilment. These disabled persons should not be frightened off by compelling them to become professionals.

Events such as practical workshops, arts festivals, talent congregations and competitions will be held in order to attract the disabled to the Arts. Ultimately, however, the decision to develop a profession or simply taking up a hobby will be left to the disabled persons themselves. After all, the idea of “Arts for All” is just as important as the idea of career development for a few talented persons.

3. Rehabilitation Conference

At the Incheon Rehabilitation International Conference of 2012 in South Korea, the decision had been made to have the Fourth Decade of Disabled Persons 2013-22 in the Asia-Pacific Region with the theme, “Make the Right Real for the Disabled”. Ten goals and strategies have been outlined for implementation.

In this connection, MCR will be holding its Fourth Rehabilitation Conference in 2013. The issues raised at the Incheon Conference will be dealt with at the Rehabilitation Conference of MCR. It is hoped that as many stake-holders as possible will be able to take part in the programme. Besides the affiliate members of MCR, the stake-holders include other NGO’s, Government agencies, the private sector and even concerned individuals.

Indeed, the three special programmes will keep MCR busy in the next few years. I hope all the stake-holders will be able to join us in making a success of the endeavours to bring about a better future for the Disabled in Malaysia.

Technology Update: The BrailleTouch

By Moses Choo Siew Chong

Assistant Executive Director

National Council for the Blind, Malaysia

Since the introduction of Touch Screen Technology, there has been mixed feelings among the blind regarding this technology. Some have adapted well while others have found the different hand gestures to be difficult to master.

Georgia Tech researchers have built a prototype App for Touch-screen mobile devices that is to be a complete solution for texting without the need to look at a mobile gadget's screen.

According to Mario Romero, Post-doctoral Fellow in the School of Interactive Computing, "Research has shown that gesture-based texting is a viable solution for eyes-free written communication in the future, making obsolete the need for users to look at their devices while inputting text on them."

The App, known as BrailleTouch, incorporates the Braille writing system used by the visually impaired. In fact, it was conceived as a texting tool for any of the millions of Smartphone users worldwide.

Early studies with visually impaired persons proficient in Braille typing have demonstrated that users can input at least six times the number of words per minute when compared with other research prototypes for eyes-free texting on a Touch Screen. Users were able to type up to thirty-two words per minute with 92 % accuracy using the prototype App for the iPhone.

Romero said, “BrailleTouch is an out-of-the-box solution that will work with smartphones and tablets and will allow users to start learning the Braille alphabet in a few minutes. It also reduces the need for expensive proprietary Braille keyboard devices, which typically cost thousands of dollars.”

The researchers have designed BrailleTouch in order to address the limitations of soft keyboards which do not provide tactile feedback as well as physical keyboards which often use small and numerous fixed buttons. BrailleTouch is the only iPhone App in existence that uses a six-finger chording process that replicates the traditional Braille keyboard.

The App uses a gesture-based solution by turning the iPhone’s touchscreen into a soft-touch keyboard programmed for Braille requiring only six keys, thereby making it a practical solution for the limited screen real estate on Smartphones.

The main feature of BrailleTouch technology is the use of the six-key configuration so that the keyboard fits on the screen and users keep their fingers in a relatively fixed position while texting. This design allows users to hold their device with the screen facing away from them (cradling the device with their palms or pinkies and thumbs) and to type with a majority of their fingers, identical to typing Braille on a standard keyboard.

The team behind BrailleTouch is led by Romero and IC Professor Gregory Abowd, co-principal investigator. Former IC affiliate, Brian Frey, conceived the original idea and developed the first prototype while Southern created an improved design. They are conducting useability studies together with James Clawson, a Ph.D. candidate in IC, and Kate Rosier, a Master’s graduate in Digital Media and Bachelor’s graduate in Computational Media.

The research group has developed the iPhone and iPad versions of BrailleTouch and they are currently working on the Android versions. In fact, the App recently won the Mobile HCI 2011 competition for design at the MobileHCI Conference in Stockholm, Sweden.

How Does BrailleTouch Work?

To use BrailleTouch, hold the iPhone with both hands and the screen facing away from you. The first three fingers of your left hand will fall on the left side of the screen. The first three fingers of your right hand will fall on the right side of the screen. To type, you simply tap the screen with the same fingers as you would use on a standard Braille keyboard.

For best results, it has been recommended to use a case with your iPhone or iPod touch. This will help you grip the phone with two hands. In addition, a case will keep your hand from covering the speaker under the Home button on the iPhone. If you use headphones, the researchers recommend either using a Bluetooth wireless headset, or using a right-angle headphone jack so you can grip the phone comfortably.

BrailleTouch works seamlessly with VoiceOver. It is compatible with the iPhone 3GS through the iPhone 5, iPod Touch models since the third generation, and it requires the iOS 5.0 or a later operating system.

By the time you read this article, the App may already be available at the Appstores.

A Point to Ponder: Mr. Godfrey Works His Way Up

by Wong Kow

The Traxx FM interview with Mr. Godfrey Ooi and Datin Fauziah Ramly broadcast on January 4, 2013 attracted my attention. Among the various interesting topics touched on, Godfrey reviewed the MAB's Mission and Objectives in bringing about a society where the blind can have full participation and equal opportunities to live as independent and productive citizens among the sighted community. Godfrey has been working with the MAB for more than twenty years and he has gone through thick and thin in the Organisation. Indeed, he has gained much experience in holding various executive positions over the years and he is currently the Deputy Executive Director.

Talking about challenges faced as a blind person, Godfrey strongly believes that it is very important for the general public to understand blind people and to know what blindness really means. Prejudices have been built up against the blind because of misconceptions and misperceptions about blindness. At this juncture, Godfrey mentioned an incident which really shocked me.

From 1997 to 2000 when Godfrey was Principal at the Gurney Training Centre, he made a phone call to a swimming club to request permission for the blind trainees to go there for a swim. However, his request was flatly rejected by the person in charge, the reason given being that "If the blind swim in the pool, others who use the pool later will become blind".

The stupid and ridiculous answer almost knocked me off my chair! How could anybody in his right mind have uttered such an irresponsible statement?

Godfrey then emphasised the importance of using the White Cane correctly in order to move along safely for the blind person. He recalled the past years when most of the drains in town were uncovered and he had fallen into drains, both big and small, more than twenty times. In fact, I was chilled to hear that on at least two occasions, they were frightening experiences as he almost lost his life.

Once when he was a form six student at St. John's Institution in Kuala Lumpur, he took a bus to the Gurney Training Centre and almost fell into the Klang River because he lost his sense of direction. Fortunately for him, a Good Samaritan saw him; she alerted him to the great danger, led him to the bus-stop and pointed him in the direction of the bridge across the river.

On another occasion, he was in a fast-moving night train and he decided to walk to the next coach to see his friends. Being over-confident, he did not use the White Cane and he almost fell off the train through the open coach door! He would have been crushed to death under the heavy wheels of the train. He was so lucky to have another narrow escape because the train guard saw him and shouted to him in time, "Hey, mahu mati kah?" or "Do you want to die?"

He brought out another important point – since the blind are asking for equal opportunities, they must also be willing to shoulder equal responsibilities in all undertakings. Godfrey demonstrated exactly this principle when he was a young teacher in Penang. One morning as he was walking to school for work, he tripped over a kerb and fell into a fairly deep drain. He managed to climb out of the drain by himself but his shoes were wet and he had a painful backside and scratches on his legs. After debating with himself whether to take medical leave, he decided that he should not abandon the young students who were waiting for their lessons. If he did not go to school, the students would be wasting their precious time and they were eager to know the results of their homework – he was carrying three bags of exercise-books!

Godfrey became a close friend of mine in the mid-1970's when he was an Executive Trainee at the MAB. Indeed, his outstanding academic achievements in secondary school and his successes in tertiary education are a real source of inspiration for me and other blind persons.

He certainly knows that "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" – so he divides his time fairly well between work, family life, leisure and countless other activities. Despite his rather small size and apparently not so physically tough, he managed to climb to the peak of Kinabalu in 2011 at

the age of sixty-three.

Furthermore, he is a great entertainer. He plays the guitar and sings in English, Malay and even in Mandarin, Hokkien and Cantonese. He is also a joker and you can share with him your ideas, worries and even criticisms. Truly, I have enjoyed lots of fun with Godfrey on excursions and other activities.

I shall never forget Godfrey's message at the end of the interview – "It's not what you have; it's what you do with what you have!"

Community Responsibility – Shift in Focus

by Mr. Westway

Editor's note: This article by Mr. Westway was prepared for the Souvenir Magazine of the Asian Region Conference on Visual Handicap held in Singapore from December 4-9, 1983. The article was published in the St. Nicholas Annual Report of 1984. The issues discussed still have relevance to the work for the blind today in Malaysia. Here is what he says:

Progress is being made in many parts of Asia towards the community accepting responsibility for the rehabilitation of disabled persons. New ideas and approaches put forward during the International Year of Disabled Persons in 1981 have helped to bring about changes in various countries.

The part played by consumer groups (which became very vocal during the IYDP) has been quite significant. They have been able to influence their governments as well as the communities of traditional agencies to bring about change.

An important issue raised during the IYDP was the need to introduce staff training programmes. This message was emphasised at many conferences and there are now many examples of staff training programmes functioning throughout Asia. In the long term, the graduates of these staff training programmes will be able to bring positive changes in the quality of services offered to the disabled.

Of considerable significance will be a change of method in service delivery. This means that trained personnel will no longer be restricted to working within the confines of traditional agencies but they will be sent out into the community to teach skills which will enable vision-impaired persons to remain in their home setting whenever possible, rather than segregating them in an institution.

When this method is pursued, good coordination of all services, both government and non-government, will be essential in order to avoid overlapping and duplication. If, on the other hand, segregation is continued, then the community will never have the opportunity to observe competent blind persons or interact with them in the general community.

Idealistic as this may be, it will not just happen. In fact, it will require a great amount of work, especially by those in the field, to make it happen.

There have been some achievements but many organisations are still unwilling or they do not know how to make the changes to come into line with the ideas of today. Some people fear change, others are unwilling to change and yet others think there should be no change at all. Sometimes this may be due to the Community wanting to retain the tangible in the form of buildings, equipment and dependent blind inmates, as evidence of their “good work” to be shown to potential donors. community-based Services or fully integrated programmes are less tangible and therefore often considered less attractive to the fund-raising arm of the Organisation.

Thus, what can be done to persuade and to change in the best interest of the clients? Basically, there must be someone in the Organisation who is determined and prepared to do something. There must also be at least one person who knows something about the theory of what is involved in organisational structures so that conflict is kept to the minimum.

It does, of course, make a difference which individual in the organisation tries to initiate change. For instance, a senior staff member may be well informed about organisational structures but if the committee does not seek his suggestions for change, then no benefit will result. If the committee is willing to look at recommended solutions from the staff, the resulting

decision made by the committee would probably be more in line with reality and would certainly ensure staff commitment through participation in the decision-making process.

Two sociologists, Burrell and Morgan in their book, “Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis”, have set out to show why there is conflict when human beings make major changes in organisational structures. They suggest there are four philosophical bases from which all thinking is developed.

Two of them, functionalists and humanists, will serve to illustrate my point in this article. Functionalists typically set out to acquire material things such as buildings, vehicles and equipment, to name a few. They usually provide services which can be empirically measured or counted so that losses or gains may be indicated. In fact, functionalists are often found on committees and the staff establishment of charitable organisations because the approach has been good from a fund-raising point of view. In simple words, there is plenty to show the people who are being asked for donations.

During the seventies, there was a noticeable move in welfare and rehabilitation circles towards seeing the client as an important person in the total operation and the services were there for his benefit. When the change was set in motion, mainly by professional workers such as the social workers and consumer groups, it tended to throw up a new type of worker or helper in the field; they fit the Burrell and Morgan classification of humanists. These individuals, often young concerned people wanting to do things differently and with their education, could see how to do it. They know how to observe organisational structure and how to initiate change and how to document it by writing good reports in a field where charitable workers were not used to such techniques. These early “radical humanists” read books such as “Pedagogy of the Oppressed” by Paulo Freire.

It was inevitable there would be conflict between the two groups in charitable agencies and it is still going on today. The humanists consider the whole of the organisation’s reason for existence is to serve the clientele for whose benefit the organisation was established. Therefore, meeting the needs of the client takes priority over everything else.

It is also useful to know a little about the historical background and events leading up to the International Year of Disabled Persons. So much of material published showed that radical changes at the philosophical level were essential if the needs of the Visually Impaired in the future are to be met effectively. Going back a step further, back as far as the 1960's and through the 1970's, more and more professional workers were being trained and employed in the field of Welfare and Rehabilitation of Visually Impaired Persons.

During the IYDP, consumer groups became vocal claiming that professional service rather than traditional welfare programmes would be more appropriate to the needs of the Visually Impaired in today's world. Governments in almost all countries legislated to recognise the recommendations from various groups which were made during the IYDP. Perhaps one of the reasons why governments acted as they did was because many of the ideas for change were being put forward by consumers and young radical workers. However, the implementation of the recommendations relied on the committees of agencies, who in effect were being asked to make changes which were often contrary to their traditional beliefs.

Many committee members of blindness agencies then and now still resist that notion as they believe their charitable endeavours are appropriate and that blind persons should be grateful for what is being given in the way of free service. Let me hasten to say, however, that this is not meant to imply that traditional agencies have not done a lot of good work; they have, but in today's setting, there is the need for change at the philosophical level. In other words, the blind person is entitled to services as a right. Each blind person should have access to professional assistance which will enable him/her to reach goals of his/her own choice. This means the rehabilitation programme ideally is individually tailored to suit the needs of the blind person rather than having the blind person to "fit" the Agency's Programme.

In order to update its management structure, a traditional agency usually has to make three major changes at the top level. Firstly, the Board or Committee must delegate some of its power to the team of professionals who are gradually appearing in the blindness field. The second is recognising the need for the client to be credited with being responsible for his own programme with assistance from the professionals.

The third is accepting the long-term goal of transferring responsibility to the community for seeing that appropriate services as required by disabled people are included in the normal development of services in the community. No longer should specialist agencies be allowed to go on giving the impression that they, and they alone, know how to deal with individuals who have a particular disability or impairment. No longer should these agencies think that all cases should be referred to them.

My experience has shown me that all the fears held by the Members of a conservative agency about modernising their activities are unfounded. Every agency should have the long-term plan to make itself redundant but very few go out of business, I notice. When an agency sees its role as a resource unit or service to the community rather than looking after people with blind eyeballs, the scene is then set for healthy growth within the community framework.

If full participation and integration into the community is the goal being pursued by blind people, then demystifying blindness is essential. This means that the former agency for the blind will open its library and other sources of expert knowledge to doctors, social workers, personnel managers, politicians, the press and university lecturers who are seeking information about services to blind people which they will use in the course of their daily work. In other words, the entire community should be “serviced” with the view to having every citizen know enough about blindness to be of practical assistance to those integrated blind people who are functioning in their midst.

While blindness is surrounded in mystique and exclusive services are provided by segregated organisations, the general public will remain ignorant of the abilities of blind people because they meet them so seldom. When every sighted child growing up can remember a competent blind child who went to school with them in an Integrated Programme, they will be ready to accept new positive attitudes about blind people in general. When those same sighted children become adults and employ people, the chances are much better that they will accept blind people as members of their staff because of their earlier experience with blind people.

Now with regards to the techniques of making change, opinions differ about how it is best done. Let me cite one example of how an organisation for blind children in the Asian region went about the process of change.

One member of the Board of Management was a keen reader of all the literature about what was happening in various countries. He came to the conclusion that what their organisation was doing for blind children was not consistent with the most advanced thinking as shown in the literature. So he recommended that a review of their services be made and that the Board Members should have an open mind about what they might hear from the evaluating team. The Board agreed and set up an evaluation which included a workshop for past students of the school, and the views of an international expert.

The recommendations of the evaluation team, if implemented, would necessitate reorganising the entire structure of the residential school. The Board decided to go another step further and held a ten-day technical workshop which was attended by every staff member, some Board Members and some outsiders with special skills or experience in the field. The purpose was to initiate a participatory process to produce a document setting out what changes ought to be done, how to do it, when to do it, what personnel would be involved, and some indication of estimated costs.

At the end of the workshop, all the recommendations were put together in the form of a small booklet and placed before the Board. The Programme, as adopted by the Board, represented the views of almost everybody in the Agency, which meant there was full commitment to the new ideas.

Some of the highlights included the development of professional staff to do the work in collaboration with a group of honorary officers serving mainly on the Board. Emphasis was placed on the need for staff training, either through in-service schemes or by sending staff away for training – overseas if necessary.

Two new committees would be established which would consist of board members, experts from the field and senior staff. One of the committees would be responsible for the quality and quantity of client services while the other committee would be responsible for administrative and financial matters.

In addition, the documentation was there for all new staff members to study in order to understand the Plan. The main thrust of the new thinking was to achieve a community which would accept responsibility for the blind who were members of the population within the target area. There would be a well organised resource team to help the community learn the skills necessary for it to fulfil their obligation.

Some Reflections

In a letter from Albert Einstein to Sigmund Freud, he asks if there is any way of delivering mankind from the menace of war.

Einstein goes on to explain that the quest for international security involves the unconditional surrender by every nation, in a certain measure, of its liberty of action ... no other road can lead to such security.

However, all such efforts have not been successful because of strong psychological factors which include:

1. Craving for power which characterises the governing class in every nation which is hostile to any limitation of national sovereignty. This political power-hunger of a small but determined group, active in every nation, regard warfare simply as an occasion to advance their personal interests and enlarge their personal authority.
2. How can a small clique bend the will of the majority, who stand to lose and suffer by a state of war, to the service of this clique's ambitions? The majority includes soldiers whose belief is that they are serving to defend the highest interests of their race, and that attack is often the best method of defence.

Thus, the minority or the ruling class, with its control of the schools, the press and the religious institutions, is able to organise and sway the emotions of the masses, and make them its tool.

3. How is it this clique can succeed so well in rousing men to such wild enthusiasm, even to sacrifice their lives?

Only one answer is possible – because man has within him a lust for hatred and destruction. In normal times, this passion exists in a latent state. It emerges only in unusual circumstances. However, it is a comparatively easy task to call it into play and raise it to the power of a collective psychosis.

4. Is it possible to control man's evolution to make him proof against the psychoses of hate and destructiveness?

Experience proves that it is the so-called "Intelligentsia" rather than the so-called uncultured masses that is most apt to yield to these disastrous collective suggestions, since the intellectual has no direct contact with life in the raw, but encounters it in its easiest, synthetic form – upon the printed page.

In conclusion, can we render all armed conflicts impossible? Recognising the actual state of affairs or the psychological factors is the first step in that direction.

(The letter was written in Caputh near Potsdam on July 30, 1932)

(Taken from "UNESCO Braille Courier, September 1985")

The Difference (a poem)

I got up early one morning
And rushed right into the day,
I had so much to accomplish
That I didn't have time to pray.
Problems just tumbled about me
And heavier came each task,
"Why doesn't God help me," I wonder,
He answered, "You didn't ask."

I wanted to see joy and beauty,
But the day toiled along, grey and bleak,
I wondered why God didn't show me
And he said, "But you didn't seek."

I tried to come into God's presence,
I used all my keys at the lock,
But God gently and lovingly chided,
"My child, you didn't knock."

I woke up early this morning
And paused before entering the day,
I had so much to accomplish
That I had to take time to pray.

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3. Articles on funny or unusual experiences (250 - 500 words) - RM35.00 - RM75.00
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(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.)

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