

NCBM OUTREACH



Issue No. 89

October - December 2017

Permit no. PP 7594/08/2012(030560)

President

Jasmine Khoo

Editor

Godfrey Ooi Goat See

B.A. (Hons.), Dip. Ed.

Produced by

**NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND,
MALAYSIA**

Unit 13-8, Menara Sentral Vista, No 150, Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad,

Brickfields, 50470 Kuala Lumpur

(Locked bag 11009, 50990 Kuala Lumpur)

Tel : 603- 2276 2973

Fax : 603-2276 1653

Email: info@ncbm.org.my

Contact person - Administrative Assistant

A quarterly
publication of NCBM

Printed by: Sylog Print Systems Sdn. Bhd. (166439-T)

19 & 20, Block C, Lot 757, Jalan Subang 3, Perstaran Subang, 47610 Subang Jaya, Selangor

Tel : 603 - 5632 1302 / 1307 Fax : 603 - 5632.4190 / 8011 2773 Email : sylogprint@gmail.com

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.

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 and vision-impaired.

It cost the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia RM 30,000.00 a year to produce both print and Braille.

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 :

**NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA OR MAJLIS
KEBANGSAAN BAGI ORANG BUTA, MALAYSIA**

MAYBANK ACCOUNT NUMBER : 5145 9813 0410

Postal address :-

Unit 13-8, Menara Sentral Vista,
150 Jalan Sultan Abdul Samad,
Brickfields,
50470 Kuala Lumpur.
(Locked bag 11009, 50990 Kuala Lumpur)

Tel. 603-22762973

Fax: 603-22761653

Email: info@ncbm.org.my

** NCBM has not appointed any agent to collect cash on our behalf.*



CONTENTS

Vision And Mission Statement Of NCBM	2
Support Our Cause	2
Editorial Board	4
Special Announcement	4
Announcements	5
Message From NCBM Dealing With The Book Famine	6
The Treaty Of Marrakesh Explained	8
The Marrakesh Treaty Ratification Campaign <i>by Moses Choo</i>	13
Hopes And Aspirations Of The Blind For Budget 2018	15
My First Time Flying High At Age Eighty <i>by George Wong</i>	19
News From The Organisations Serving The Blind	22
Betty Ling – New Beginnings	28
Postbag : From Barnabas Lee Ah Guan – Will the Blind be Prized Out of Brickfields?	30
What Are The Hopes Of The Deafblind In Malaysia?	31
Technology Update: Audio Alert In Silent Cars	36
The Elbraille – A Device For The Blind And Deafblind <i>By Moses Choo</i>	38
A Point To Ponder: Facing The Challenges Of Losing One’s Eyesight Gradually <i>By Wong Kow</i>	40
The Voting Process For People With Disabilities	43
Tips For Running An Organisation <i>By Barnabas Lee Ah Guan</i>	46
The Two-Letter Word “Up”	50
Quotes By Andy Rooney	51
Principal Office-Bearers And Council Members Of NCBM For 2017- 2018	53
Chairpersons Of Committees Of NCBM For 2017- 2018	54
Auditor 2017- 2018	54
Representatives Of NCBM To Other Organisations, 2017- 2018	54
Earn Some Extra Cash	55
Notes	56



SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Readers are reminded that their contribution of articles, suggestions, poems and jokes are most welcome for inclusion in NCBM Outreach.

Please note that it would be helpful to the editor if such contributions could be submitted on a thumb drive or similar mode or in Braille. If the article is in Braille, it should be on single-sided pages in order to facilitate editing.

You should include your full name (as in the Identity Card) with your address, telephone number and bank account number so that the money can be banked into your account.

For details concerning payments, please see the last page.



EDITORIAL BOARD

Moses Choo Siew Cheong

Wong Kwee Heong

Chin Yew Cheng



ANNOUNCEMENTS

NCBM's Support Schemes for The Blind

1. NCBM's Job Pioneering Scheme:

This scheme was launched in 2012 whereby NCBM collaborates with prospective employers in providing employment opportunities for the blind. The blind person will work for a period of **three to six months** and be paid a monthly allowance of **RM1,200 by NCBM**. At the end of the period, it is hoped that the employer will be convinced of the blind person's capabilities and give him permanent employment.

Please contact the NCBM secretariat for the application form.

Tel. 03-22762973.

2. Equipment Loan Fund for the Blind:

NCBM would like to see significant improvement in job opportunities for the blind in Malaysia. Therefore, blind persons in employment who face the difficulty in obtaining adaptive equipment to help them in their work can get in touch with NCBM for such assistance.

For more details, please call the NCBM secretariat at 03-22762973.

3. Research Grant:

Anybody, blind or sighted, interested in carrying out research on employment for the blind or on blindness prevention can make application to NCBM for a research grant. The amount to be provided can range from RM3,000 to RM5,000.

Please contact NCBM at 03-22762973.



MESSAGE FROM NCBM DEALING WITH THE BOOK FAMINE

Reading is indeed a human right and everyone should have the access to books. In the current situation, nonetheless, there are still many people who are unable to have access to reading materials.

In fact, over 90% of all published materials cannot be read by blind or print-disabled persons. This has thus resulted in the "book famine" for these people. Because of the lack of reading materials, blind students, for example, face great difficulty in obtaining reading materials in order to further their studies. Hence, there is the serious need to be able to reproduce published materials in alternative formats that will be accessible to this group of people. The formats could be in Braille, large print, the audio medium or other computer formats. In order to overcome this famine, the current copyright rules within most countries must be addressed.

Certainly, it is heartening to note that the World Blind Union (WBU) is, in fact, leading the international campaign to explain and uphold support for the Treaty of Marrakesh. WBU is working in partnership with WIPO in order to achieve the development of the Marrakesh Treaty, thereby putting an end to the current thirst for books by the blind and print-disabled persons.

The Treaty of Marrakesh was thus entered into force on September 30, 2016. Exactly three months after the treaty had been triggered into force, it was ratified by twenty countries. Hence, the ratifying countries and their citizens can now benefit from the increase in accessible materials through cross-border sharing and with the greater production of books and reading materials under the treaty's provisions.

The Treaty of Marrakesh was actually signed in Morocco on June 28, 2013. To date, it has been ratified by many more countries as follows – India, El Salvador, United Arab Emirates, Uruguay, Mali, Paraguay, Singapore, Argentina, Mexico, Mongolia, Republic of Korea, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Australia, Brazil, Peru, Israel, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Canada, St. Vincent and Grenadines, Tunisia, Botswana, Sri Lanka, Liberia, Panama and Honduras. Indeed, over sixty countries have signed the treaty!

Well, what have we done in Malaysia? To move forward in our country, our Government needs to sign and ratify the treaty. Only then will we be able to be a member of the consortium whereby materials for the blind in other countries like Singapore, Britain, Australia and America can be made accessible to the blind in Malaysia.

Truly, it is our earnest hope that every blind and print-disabled person in every country will be able to benefit from the Treaty of Marrakesh. For this to come to fruition in Malaysia, each and everyone in the country is needed to help in bringing this dream to reality.

THE TREATY OF MARRAKESH EXPLAINED

Editor's Note: The purpose of the Treaty of Marrakesh is to facilitate access to published works for the blind, visually impaired and the print-disabled. This document has been written in order to explain the treaty in layman's language and there is no intention at all to provide an in-depth legal analysis of the treaty.

Here is the explanation:

What's the Goal of the Treaty?

Ultimately, the goal of the treaty is to help end the "book famine" being faced by those who are blind, visually impaired or otherwise print-disabled. Currently, only 1 to 7 percent of the world's published books ever make it into any of the alternative accessible formats. This is partly due to the access barriers in copyright laws. The purpose of the treaty is to help remove these barriers in two ways:

Firstly, by requiring countries which ratify the treaty to have an exception to domestic copyright law for visually impaired and print-disabled people. It means that these countries must ensure that their laws allow the blind and their organisations to produce accessible formatted books without the need to ask for prior permission from the copyright holder, i.e. the author or publisher.

Secondly, to allow for the import and export of accessible versions of books and copyrighted materials without permission from the copyright holder. This will help to avoid the duplication of transcription efforts in different countries. It will also allow those with larger collections of accessible books to share them with visually impaired people in those countries with fewer resources.

While only the so-called "authorised entities" such as blind people's organisations can send accessible books under the treaty's terms, the treaty does allow for accessible books to be imported or received by the "authorised entities" or directly by the visually impaired or print-disabled individuals.

Here is an outline of what the most relevant articles in the treaty mean:

Article 2 (a) Works Covered

This refers to the type of publications which can be transcribed or distributed under the terms of the treaty. They are:

"Literary and artistic works ... in the form of text, notation and/or related illustrations, whether published or otherwise made publicly available in any media".

The definition therefore covers books, periodicals and other similar textual works, as well as sheet music. It does not cover films, however.

The treaty does not allow for the contents of a work to be changed (e.g. to "easy read"). It can only be transcribed into an accessible format.

Article 2(b) Definition of the Term, "Accessible Format Copy"

This is a broad definition which does not limit the format or the technique used to make a book accessible. It allows for whichever format that will provide access to the work (as feasibly and comfortably as possible for a person with visual impairment or other print disability".

Article 2 (c) Definition of the Term, "Authorised Entity"

The role of the authorised entity is critical in the treaty. It means that a non-profit or government agency that makes accessible copies of the Works must limit their distribution only with bona fide disabilities, which it calls "beneficiary persons".

It also covers for-profit entities that provide services to beneficiary persons using public funds on a non-profit basis.

There is no specific process or approval mechanism to qualify as an "authorised entity". Meeting the "broad" criteria in article 2c is sufficient.

Article 3. Definition of "Beneficiary Persons"

This is a broad definition that includes just about any disability that interferes with the effective reading of printed materials. It includes the blind, visually impaired, and the reading disabled (e.g. dyslexia or any physical disability that hinders the holding of a book, turning of a page, or focussing on a page).

Article 4. Ratifying the Treaty

Countries which ratify the treaty must enact a domestic copyright exception. This will allow the Authorised Entities to make accessible copies of Works without having to ask permission from the rights-holder.

Articles 5 and 6. Cross-border Exchange of Accessible Formatted Books

The treaty permits cross-border exchange of accessible formatted books between authorised entities and directly to individuals in other countries.

Article 7. Technological Protection Measures (TPM's)

This refers to the Digital "padlock" that publishers (or even blind people's organisations) put on a digital book, thereby preventing it from being passed on or accessed illegally. However, it should be legal to circumvent (or break) such TPM's so that a blind or print-disabled person can gain access to these books.

Article 8. Respect for Privacy

Privacy must be respected when using the treaty.

Article 9. Respect for the Interests of the Copyright Holders

Accessible books must be solely for the use of "beneficiary persons". The "authorised entities" must take "due care" when handling these books so that they discourage the reproduction and distribution of unauthorised copies.

Commercial Availability of Accessible Formatted Books

Countries are allowed to choose to have a commerciality requirement in their national copyright law, which some countries like Singapore and Australia do have. Such countries must formally inform WIPO that their domestic law requires the commerciality test, and whether they intend it to affect imports of accessible materials into that country from elsewhere.

There is no "commercial availability" requirement for exports of accessible books.

The "Three-step Test"

This is a concept which is well known to international copyright law experts, but to few others. The advocates were greatly concerned that it might be a Trojan horse for more extensive commercial availability requirements. It appears all over the treaty but the feeling is that it is not likely to get in the way of helping blind people except in rare situations.

The Treaty Across the World

With concerted effort to bring about widespread ratification and implementation of the treaty, it will have a huge impact on the accessibility of books to the blind and print-disabled persons. It will help to promote the domestic production of accessible materials in each country as well as provide access to books produced elsewhere.

This will be very important for books in languages that cross national boundaries. Such languages include English, Spanish, French, Portuguese, Russian, Chinese, Bengali, Indonesian, Swahili, and so on.

It will be especially important for countries that traditionally do not have robust services for people with disabilities. These less wealthy countries will be able to benefit greatly from access to the extensive book collections available in the wealthier and larger countries.

Conclusion

In plain language, this is a treaty that should begin to remedy the book famine. It provides a crucial legal framework for the adoption of national copyright exemptions in countries that lack them. It creates an international import/export regime for the exchange of accessible books across borders.

While this treaty is necessary for ending the book famine, just having the treaty is not sufficient. Countries need to sign, ratify and implement its provisions.

The government as well as non-profit organisations, libraries and educational institutions must take advantage of the treaty to deliver accessible books and reading materials to the blind and print-disabled persons. This will be a great help in meeting their needs for education, employment and full social inclusion.

The World Blind Union (WBU) will support efforts all over the world in implementing the treaty, thereby bringing an end to the "book famine" for people with print disabilities.

THE MARRAKESH TREATY RATIFICATION CAMPAIGN

By Moses Choo Siew Cheong

While signing a treaty is a great step forward, it is not worth very much without ratification. Actually, ratification requires much more from a country than what the signature does.

However, ratification can only happen if a country's internal copyright legislation is aligned with the requirements of the Marrakesh Treaty. Thus, the organisations in each country need to work with each other and with their governments to steer through whatever legislative changes that may be necessary.

In order for the campaign to be successful, there must be input on the ground from a broad cross-section of interested parties. The parties include the blind and persons with print disabilities government ministers, officials, MP's and senators public libraries and other organisations concerned with accessible information and, of course, the rights-holders themselves.

In the Asia-Pacific region, four countries have been identified as being the priority countries for the campaign. They are Australia, China, Mongolia and New Zealand. Nevertheless, this does not preclude working with other countries where it might be possible to get a strong campaign going; hence, representatives in those countries are strongly encouraged to assist.

Mongolia has signed the treaty and it has updated its own copyright legislation quite recently. Several organisations have been identified to play leading roles in the campaign. They include the Mongolian National Federation of the Blind (MNFB), the DAISY Talking-Book Centre, Blind People's Association of Mongolia, and the Mongolian Library Consortium.

Key government departments and ministers engaged include the Mongolian Intellectual Property Office, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Minister of Education and Science, Minister of Population Development and Social Welfare, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

The MNFB has good connections with the ministers and government departments and it is working on a TV broadcast about the treaty. It also has an excellent relationship with the Mongolian Libraries Consortium and they are keen to be actively involved.

In New Zealand, both the Blind Foundation and the Blind Citizens New Zealand are leading the campaign. They have had consultations with the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment so that there is now clarity about what legislative changes and what minor regulatory changes will be necessary to make the copyright laws in New Zealand compatible with the Marrakesh Treaty.

In Australia, there is a strong team based at Vision Australia. There are indications that Australia is prepared to sign the treaty in the near future. However, it is not clear how soon this might lead to ratification.

In China, the Hong Kong Society for the Blind is assisting in the organisation of the campaign.

Singapore is in the process of amending its copyright legislation to bring it into line with Marrakesh, and this will eventually lead to ratification. The updated law will widen the range of permissible alternative formats beyond the "traditional" non-electronic ones.

Lastly, a very promising connection has begun with Kazayuki Ugi at the United Nations Development Programme, Asia-Pacific. Kazayuki Ugi is based in Bangkok and the UNDP has built very good networks in countries such as Cambodia, Myanmar and Indonesia. In fact, both Cambodia and Indonesia have signed the treaty. The UNDP is working in those countries to build capacity among the community organisations and bring about awareness among the legislators.

What has been done in Malaysia? To move forward, our Government has to sign the treaty and ratify it. Only then will Malaysia be able to join as member of the consortium whereby materials for the blind in other countries be made accessible to the blind in our country.

HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS OF THE BLIND FOR BUDGET 2018

Editor's Note: In responding to the call by the Ministry of Women, Family and Community Development for recommendations to provide for the needs of the blind in the 2018 budget, NCBM drew up a memorandum for the Government's consideration. The recommendations are as follows:

1. EDUCATION

Technological developments in the field of education have brought about a paradigm shift in society. However, to ensure that the blind and visually impaired are not left behind, the inculcation of values, application of technology and Braille literacy among the blind in education should not be neglected.

In this connection, we would like to request the Government to provide a programme that will equip blind students with technological and Braille literacy skills at every level of education. This means also providing the equipment and tools necessary for training.

2. HIGHER EDUCATION

We would like to request for the establishment of a special unit under the Ministry of Higher Education in order to manage, administer, coordinate and implement matters pertaining to the development and welfare of the disabled in tertiary education. This unit will be able to complement the efforts of the Special Education Division in meeting the needs of the disabled in higher education.

3. EMPLOYMENT

Access, equity and job opportunities are important factors that determine the quality of life of every individual in society. Therefore, we call for the establishment of a job placement centre in the Ministry of Human Resources and in all the state departments in order to harness

all resources in creating job opportunities for the disabled in both the public and private sectors.

We also request that the Government provide a support system that will complement the efforts of the job placement centres by coordinating the programmes for orientation and mobility training, making available assistive technologies with the necessary training, and so on. Such efforts will enable the Government to bring to fruition the policy of at least 1% employment for the disabled, particularly in the public sector, by the year 2020.

4. ENTERPRISE

We are aware that not all disabled persons will be able to find employment in the open job market and that there is a need, therefore, to help open up opportunities to them in the field of enterprise. In this connection, we recommend that provision be made in order to encourage the disabled to play an active role in business and industrial enterprise. Such provision means introducing programmes for training, coaching and mentoring, and availing of business grants.

5. ACCESS TO BANKING

Access to banking that is efficient, safe and conducive is imperative for everyone. However, those who are visually impaired are still being denied their right to fully access such banking services.

We, therefore, urge the Government to require our local banks to provide ATM machines that can be accessed by all customers, including the blind.

6. ACCESSIBILITY

The built environment in Malaysia, irrespective of any geographic location, should be accessible to all disabled persons. In this connection, we request that the Government require the local authorities all over the country to provide amenities of universal design such as audio traffic

lights, tactile walkways, navigational touch systems and even handphone applications.

7. PUBLIC TRANSPORT

There is the need for an accessible transport network for the disabled in Malaysia. In this connection, we would like to request that the Government require the building of transport terminals and stations based on the universal design, with audio signals for the numbers of passing buses, audio announcements concerning the destinations of buses and trains, as well as awareness and training programmes for relevant personnel.

In addition, we would like to recommend the establishment of a special unit under the Jabatan Pembangunan Orang Kurang Upaya (JPOKU) which will be responsible for dealing with the issues on access.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF A BAHASA MELAYU SCREEN READER

Technology has certainly provided persons with disabilities with the means for independent living. Therefore, the time has come for a text-to-speech engine in Bahasa Melayu to be developed for the use of the blind and visually impaired.

9. ADDITIONAL GRANTS FOR VOLUNTARY ORGANISATIONS

In the past, the Government has been providing for the organisations serving the disabled in the form of grants for administration and food expenses. However, these organisations are compelled to look for financial resources in order to cover expenditure for developmental programmes and services for the disabled. In view of this, they are very much hampered and are unable to improve and expand their programmes for the disabled.

We, therefore, urge the Government to increase and expand the scope grant for the organisations serving the blind and visually impaired as follows:

- i) Operational costs for habilitation, rehabilitation and vocational training;
- ii) Operational costs for ICT and Braille literacy programmes;
- iii) Operational costs for the production of alternative reading materials to the blind (such as audio books, electronic texts as well as Braille materials);
- iv) Implementation of career guidance and economic development programmes.

10. CARE FOR SENIOR CITIZENS

Finally, we should not neglect the welfare of senior citizens with disabilities, particularly those with visual impairment. Many of them do not have their own families or homes.

In view of this, we would like to request that provision be made for the implementation of home care and health care programmes with social activities for the elderly blind.



MY FIRST TIME FLYING HIGH AT AGE EIGHTY

BY George Wong

Editor's Note: George Wong is totally blind and, at age eighty, he has never had the opportunity in an aeroplane. So he jumped at the opportunity when it came.

Here is his story:

On the evening of February 15, 2017 (Wednesday), I attended the Chinese New Year dinner at the Thean Hou Temple at 65 Persiaran Endah, Taman Persiaran Desa, Kuala Lumpur. On the way to the toilet, I met our faithful old volunteer, Edward Solomon. He said that he had overheard me informing my friends at the dinner table that I would be sleeping overnight at the Brickfields bus-stop as it would be too late for me to go back to Semenyih where I lived. He kindly offered to let me sleep over at his place for the night at Scott Villa in Brickfields which I accepted with very grateful thanks.

In the morning at the breakfast table, I told Mr. Solomon that my 81st birthday will be on April 23 and that in my 80 years of life on this planet, I have never yet had the opportunity to fly in an aeroplane. He was very sympathetic and told his wife, Padmini, about it. So Padmini looked up the internet and found a cheap Air Asia 7.15am flight to Langkawi on March 28 (Tuesday). I was told that the flight together with breakfast and lodgings at the sit-in hotel would be about RM200 only. Without hesitation, I immediately decided that I would go with them to Langkawi.

In the plane en route to Langkawi, we were served breakfast for which we had made prior booking at RM6 per head. I had chicken rice which I found did not really suit my taste as there were only pieces of meat without even one piece of cucumber or any other vegetable.

However, on our return flight to Kuala Lumpur, Mr. Solomon came across the menu and he read it to me. I found that there were so many interesting

items – Chinese, Indian, Malay and Western food – costing RM15 per head. I just simply could not make up my mind what to choose from such a wide variety of dishes. Fortunately, the nasi lemak suddenly turned up and we were told that it was free of charge. I really enjoyed the nasi lemak as there were so many tasty ingredients in it.

Before flying in an aeroplane, I had always imagined that such a journey would be very bumpy and unpleasant. To my surprise, it was a very smooth flight both going to Langkawi and returning to Kuala Lumpur. It was certainly much better than travelling in a car, bus or train. At one juncture, however, I began to feel some bumps and I was wondering what on earth was taking place. After a while, I asked Mr. Solomon and he told me that the plane was flying through the clouds.

We landed in Langkawi at 8.15 a.m. and we went to look for a car for hire. We had to pay a rental fee of RM70 a day, which I think was quite cheap or reasonable, because we could stop at any place we liked without any fear of the cost going higher. In fact, on the last day, after driving the car to the airport, we waited for the people from the company to come and take back the vehicle. However, they made us wait for so long – for one hour at least – before they came. Because of that, we did not have to pay the RM30 for that day (which was actually for half day).

I found the beaches to be most interesting. One of the beaches that I visited was Pantai Chenang. There were so many hot springs there – I sat on the wall above and soaked my feet in the water for about half an hour. We were told that this was very good for our skin.

Another beach that we visited was the Beras Bakar Beach. We were told that the beach got its name from a historical event that took place here. Some people from Thailand were trying to conquer Langkawi. In the process, they burnt the rice in the fields and the grains got buried deep in the soil. Hence, the beach got its name – the "Burnt Rice" beach.

In fact, there were so many private beaches in Langkawi as there were at least 90 smaller islands (mostly of limestone) surrounding the main island

of Langkawi. Most of these islands are small and uninhabited without any beaches but some have a hotel on them.

One of the private beaches that we saw was so beautiful and calm and very clean! They used a machine, something like a motorcar, to clean the beach.

And there were plenty of sea-scooters for rental. So because of the competition, the prices are quite affordable.

At the bee farm, we saw a very small type of bee without any sting and these bees even build their nests on the ground. In fact, many of the bee-boxes were placed on the ground and they were being looked after by an Indonesian man. He showed us how you could poke through a small hole in the box with the straw to suck the honey – wow! The honey was so sweet and very thick!

Then I saw a tree which was very unique – all the leaves had fallen but the whole tree was covered with golden flowers. However, the seed-pods were high up in the tree and my white cane was not long enough to pull them down. Fortunately, we eventually found some of the pods on the ground – they were at least 20 inches in length. We also found some rubber bands on the ground which I used to tie one of the pods to my cane so the cane was long enough for us to pluck the flowers. I kept one pod of seeds with the hope of scattering them along the roadside near my home. I did not think of planting the tree in my garden as it was too big and would take up too much space.

The best and most wonderful thing for me was the Wonder Food Restaurant which was quite nearby to our hotel. To me the food was really special which you cannot even get during the Chinese New Year! You could have crab, prawn and fried egg in so many different styles for only RM6 per dish. The most expensive dish was only RM8! To enjoy properly, we called the dishes without the rice. Oh, it was really so good that I would love to go again, even if I have to go by myself!

Truly, I am so happy that my dream of flying in an aeroplane has been realised at long last!

NEWS FROM THE ORGANISATIONS SERVING THE BLIND

Booklet Aims to Make Voting Easier for People with Disabilities

National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) is producing a booklet to ensure that Persons with Disabilities will be better able to exercise their right to vote.

The Project Manager, Mr. Wong Yoon Loong, said that the booklet is aimed at educating the personnel at the polling stations. "It is more about how they can help a person with disabilities to vote rather than about the procedure of voting," said Wong.

He added that during the last general election, most of the polling stations were not accessible to the voters with disabilities. "Most of the personnel are not trained on how to handle Persons with disabilities and in helping them to cast their vote. For example, many of the polling stations are located in community halls and schools that do not provide barrier-free access. The lack of ramps for Persons using wheelchairs to get around is a big problem. People might say why not just lift the wheelchair but we do not encourage people to carry the wheelchair. This is why the booklet on how to handle a person with disability will be helpful," said Wong.

He hoped that the booklet entitled "Panduan memberi sokongan dan berinteraksi dengan Orang Kurang Upaya" will be out before the next general election. "The content is ready and we are in the midst of getting the visuals inserted. Once everything is in place, we hope to train the Election Commission officers on the do's and don'ts," Wong said, after presenting the Star Media Group Bhd and Sinar Harian with Awards for publishing the most articles on persons with disabilities.

Wong said that the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia had conducted research on the media reporting on Persons with Disabilities in Malaysia between January 2012 and December 2013 before and after the 13th General Election for the purpose of producing the booklet. The study was funded by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES).

The National MBPJ Datuk Bandar Goalball Opening Challenge Trophy

The Seventh National MBPJ Datuk Bandar Goalball Open Tournament took place from July 13 – 16, 2017 at the Bandar Utama Sports Complex in Petaling Jaya. MAB sent a team of five blind men and a manager to take part and they managed to occupy third place in the event by defeating the Santau Team 13 :12.

MAB Charity Walk

A charity walk was organised by the MAB H.T. Ong Library on June 17, 2017 in collaboration with the Lions Club of Sri Petaling and the OCBC Bank Malaysia Bhd. The objective was to raise funds in support of the library and the Braille Production Unit.

About 100 people took part in the 1 Kilometer walk starting from Kompleks MAB, along Jalan Tun Sambanthan 4, Jalan Tebing, Jalan Padang Belia and Jalan Scott. Mr. Wong Suey Tah, General Manager of OCBC, presented a donation of RM36,800 to En. Thavasothy S.M. Pillai, Chairman of the Library Committee.

Mr Thavasothy is totally blind and holds a B.A. (Hons.) degree from University Malaya. He is a member of MAB and was elected into the MAB Council some years ago and was recently appointed as the Chairman of the MAB Library Committee.

Before the programme ended, a group of blind persons gave a demonstration of Laughing Yoga.

Exhibition of Assistive Gadgets for the Blind

The Assistive Gadgets Exhibition was organised by the MAB Sales Unit in collaboration with the Wed Pasudev Pratishtan India on May 20, 2017. The exhibition was held at the Dewan Dr. Ismail of MAB and it was officiated by Y.B. Senator Bathmavathi Krishnan. The main objective was to expose the blind to new technological gadgets from India and to show them how to use the gadgets.

The programme began with an explanation of the PLB product by a company representative and about fifty blind persons were in attendance. The items exhibited included a white cane with a roller, a magnifying glass enhancer and a Braille display.

Earlier on May 6, the Sales Unit had also organised the auction sales in conjunction with the 65th anniversary celebrations of MAB. At least 27 items were sold to the blind at a 65% discount rate.

Help Buttons at the MRT Station Line 1

After carrying out an access audit of the Semantan MRT Station (which is the model MRT Station Line 1) some months ago, Cik Siti Huraizah, the Accessibility and Advocacy Executive of MAB (who is totally blind), was able to identify some of the weaknesses with regards to the access facilities such as the Braille signage on the help buttons at the station.

She then raised the matter with Mr. Yap and Miss Kavitha from the company which supplied the buttons so that corrections could be made to the Braille signage. Several discussions were held subsequently and the company was able to provide the Braille buttons in accordance with the given specifications before they were reinstalled at the MRT Station Line 1. In fact, more than 500 buttons had to be ordered from China for reinstallation.

In this connection, the Accessibility and Advocacy Unit of MAB held a course on the barrier-free environment with Universal Design on May 18, 2017. Ten staff from Ging Distributors Sdn. Bhd. were in attendance and the main objective was to show them how tactile guides and other access facilities for the blind are to be installed.

As a supplier, Ging Distributors Sdn. Bhd. was very keen to know about the methods and specifications of access facilities as prescribed in the Malaysian Standard MS1184 so that they could get the contractors to be responsible for providing such amenities accordingly. In appreciation of the efforts of MAB, Ging Distributors made a donation of RM3000 to the Association.

The Lions Club Social Responsibility Programme

The rehabilitation centre of MAB in Ipoh, Perak was chosen by the Lions Club to run a social responsibility programme on May 20, 2017. The visit of the Lions to the centre also had the aim of preparing the trainees for participation in the study visit to Teluk Batik as well as to carry out the campaign to eat vegetables for a more healthy diet among the rehabilitation trainees. This was followed by a quiz on the environment and successful participants were given souvenirs from the Lions Club.

Subsequently, 24 persons (including staff, trainees and volunteers) made their study visit to Teluk Batik from May 24 - 25. The main objective was to promote the integration of the blind into society, thereby preparing them for entry into the world of work after completing their training at the Centre.

To help the blind build up self-confidence, they took part in a number of activities which included a treasure hunt and putting up a campaign to create public awareness of the environment.

Shining Together

To commemorate its 90th anniversary in 2016, St. Nicholas' Home organised several events, including "I can see clearly now" and "let there be light" charity concerts. Worthy of note was the fact that the blind and visually impaired trainees and staff of the Home performed together with sighted artistes and musicians in both concerts.

The dance piece featured in "I can see clearly now" especially broke new ground with the dancers of the Penang Arts Link and blind performers from the Home performing an emotionally powerful dance choreographed by renowned choreographer and dancer, Ms. Aida Redza.

There was also Samantha Khoo (totally blind) performing on the keyboard and Robert Maidin (visually impaired) playing on the guitar in collaboration with well known musicians such as Fred Cheah and Lee Chong Hin. In "let there be light", Samantha Khoo performed on the flute as a member of the Penang Philharmonic Big Band led by Jerome Quah. By involving the blind and visually impaired in such collaborative performances and well as with established performing groups, St. Nicholas' hopes to encourage budding BVI musicians and performers to explore the creative arts as a channel of expression, and perhaps as a potential career choice.

Beyond the celebratory events, St. Nicholas' continues to develop several initiatives which had started in 2015, namely the Music Literacy Centre for the Blind, the Online Learning Resource Programme and the Indoor Navigation System Project.

Ageing Gracefully

St. Nicholas' has been "Home" to five senior citizens who live together as a family. Thanks to rapid progress in medical care technology, the five seniors in the Home are enjoying longer lifespan as the result of a remarkably improved quality of life coupled with love and care.

Introducing the seniors:

- Elizabeth Lew is known as the Abba Queen as she enjoys listening to the evergreen Abba songs.
- Joy Choy is a quiet lovely lady who loves to listen to soft music of the oldies.
- John Lee Kow Chye knows the best food in town. His regular routine is to survey cheap local delicacies, be it Malay, Indian or Chinese. He knows the best in town and is always the guide for Elizabeth and Joy who love and enjoy the delicacies of Penang.
- Robert Wah (also known as Robby Seng) is soon to be eighty and he is still going strong. Even at his age, this gentleman loves to say "thank you" repeatedly after his meals until he hears the voice of the housemother who always attends to him. He is polite and well known for his quirky personality and his great knowledge of the history of St. Nicholas' Home.
- Andrew Mok (also called Moh Weng San) is a thoughtful person who always likes to say, "worrying will not lead you to anywhere but only makes you busy for nothing". Another popular saying from him is "time is your friend and not your enemy".

Truly, there is much to learn from these wise older residents of the Home.

Three of these lovely senior citizens help in the Appeals Department. Their weekly activities are reading, listening to music and attending church services.



BETTY LING - NEW BEGINNINGS

(This article is taken from the Annual Report 2016, St. Nicholas' Home, Penang)

"I want to be a role model to others!" exclaimed Betty Ling in an inspiring manner.

Betty is one of the IT trainees of St. Nicholas' Home and she hails from Sibu, Sarawak.

She went on to say, "I am one of four siblings and I am the youngest. I am also the only one who is blind."

Betty explained that her family has genetic diabetes, which brings with it the risk of blindness. Betty only discovered this in 2013, when she had a medical check up. She had diabetes and within one year she lost her sight. Though she had suspected that she might possibly lose her vision, she did not realise that the blindness would progress so quickly. Not surprisingly, it was a rather depressing time for her. But this young lady has a very strong will, a resolute faith in God and the strength to overcome this setback in life.

In January 2016, Betty joined the IT training programme at St. Nicholas' Home. She explained, "I re-learnt basic computer skills, re-familiarised myself with the computer keyboard, and learned shortcut keys because I cannot use the mouse now. With the help of screen reader software, I re-learnt how to use a word processor, spreadsheets and the internet. And that is why I took six months' leave from work to come here to be retrained."

Betty is an occupational therapist by profession. She had only been working for a short while in a government hospital in Sarawak before she lost her sight.

"When I complete my training, I will go back to work," she explained. "I may be given a new job, most probably to join the public education team to give talks and presentations on health-related topics. In the long run, I hope to expand my work experience so that I can help more people and be a contributing member of society. After all, I still have a contract with the Government, so I will continue serving the community, my state and my country."

Betty feels that from now on life will be more challenging, but she is determined to make the best of it. She said, "I hope to try new things and develop new interests to prove to myself and my family that I am still a capable individual."

When asked whether she had mastered Braille, Betty humbly explained, "I am just a beginner, so I'm still not very good at reading by touch. It's going to take some time and a lot of practice for me to sharpen the sensitivity of my fingers."

She said further, "This is another challenge, but I know I can cope. There will be more challenges to come, but I'll face them head on, too."

Betty returned to Miri, Sarawak and resumed her work at the health clinic in Tudan, Miri, after completing computer training at St. Nicholas'. She is in the occupational therapy department where she uses her newly learnt IT skills to prepare talks and presentations. She has also been teaching basic computer skills to other visually impaired clients and one of them has joined the ICDL class in St. Nicholas'. With the help of a sighted colleague, Betty also conducts baby massage classes for new parents.

As you can see, Betty is not letting any grass grow under her feet!

Letter to the Editor from Barnabas Lee Ah Guan
Will the Blind be Prized Out of Brickfields?

With the increase in the cost of living, the rising rental rates for accommodation and office space, and with the great probability of changing job opportunities and prospects, I fear that the blind will one day be prized out of Brickfields. My concern is that the day will come when the blind in Brickfields will be faced with the issue of dislocation and they will not be able to make a decent living for themselves and their loved ones, especially for those who are in the massage business and profession.

The question to be asked is this: "As there are so many organisations serving the blind, is it not time for them to come together to look for solutions, thereby being a game-changer in helping the blind to cope with the challenge of likely dislocation?"

As I reflect, I feel that no one is thinking of what's coming in the future for the blind. When the rentals are so high, the blind masseurs will no longer be able to work in Brickfields and it will no more be the place of attraction known by tourists who come to enjoy a massage at a blind massage centre.

As we all know, the stenography job has already been lost to the blind many years ago with the introduction of computers and related technology. And of course, the telephony job is following fast in its tracks.

It is good to know that NCBM is trying to do something – in fact, it is doing the right thing in funding research programmes in the blindness field. I suggest, however, that not only the organisations but blind individuals and others in the blindness community as well should come together for round-table discussions on issues concerning the future of the blind.

Indeed, the blind may have no choice but to be prized out of Brickfields in the future. However, with preparation by being equipped with skills through capacity-building programmes, they need not be prized out of reality!



WHAT ARE THE HOPES OF THE DEAFBLIND IN MALAYSIA?

Editor's Note: Timothy Mok Kam Yin, who is blind and partially deaf, wrote a letter to Ivan Ho Tuck Choy, the former Executive Director of the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM), to express some of his concerns for the deafblind community in Malaysia. As the concerns and issues raised are very pertinent to the work for the blind in this country, both the letters are being produced herein for the interest of readers.

From Timothy Mok to Ivan Ho

Hi Ivan,

Just wondering, are you using a Braille display with your iPhone? I bought an iPhone recently and honestly, I find the method of touch-typing for inputting messages painstakingly slow. For people like us, there's nothing like Braille because even the most natural voices that can be installed in the phone cannot give one the same measure of accuracy and satisfaction. As a person with hearing impairment, I really wish something could be done to speed up the availability of the Orbit Braille Display. Would you be able to use your influence in the World Blind Union to throw more light on this issue?

Actually, I was very excited when I heard about this relatively inexpensive and revolutionary Orbit Braille Display that was much touted about for the past few years. Well, you may say that there are several models of Braille display that can be sourced from the market, but they are not affordable to the average blind person. For instance, for the price of one Braille Edge Display, one can buy four or five Orbit Displays.

Ivan, it's not an understatement to say that the deafblind group is a marginalised lot in our Malaysian disabled society. To my knowledge, except for what is being done at St. Nicholas' Home, as well as the awareness workshops that have been organised by NCBM, virtually nothing much has happened. It's really sad to note that our country, which is almost reaching the "developed nation" status, still doesn't seem to have a registry of the deafblind community. The idea of having a registry was put forward some time ago.

So sorry, Ivan, if it seems I'm venting my frustration on you, but the fact of the matter is that no blindness organisation of or for the blind in our country is taking serious notice of us – maybe because we're just an insignificant minority. But I do fervently hope that some people and some organisations will spare some time to champion the cause of the deafblind community.

**Warm regards,
Tim.**

From Ivan to Timothy Mok

Dear Timothy,

It's so nice to hear from you and to know that you have started to use the iPhone. I started using one back in 2012 and I must admit that it's a wonderful piece of equipment, especially for blind people to keep in touch with all the happenings taking place around the world via the internet and the many fantastic apps that are being developed with each passing month and year. At first I thought the email feature was fantastic, but now we have Facebook, WhatsApp, YouTube and numerous other networks which enable us to receive broadcasts from around the world and to listen to music and audio books until we can't find time to do other things.

I agree with you that inputting data to the iPhone is time consuming, especially as I am not tech-savvy, but there are blind people who can do it speedily. For this reason, I'm using a "Rivo" keypad (costing around US\$100) which was introduced to me by Mr. Kua Cheng Hock. Although it's still slow, but with some practice, it's manageable. I also use an ordinary USB keyboard for the same purpose.

For someone who grew up using Braille, I totally agree with you that nothing can replace the Braille system, particularly when checking for accuracy and unpronounceable words. However, I must point out that there's a feature in the iPhone (and also in other software) for checking each character, word and sentence, although with braille it's much faster and more reassuring. For a person with the additional disability of hearing impairment, listening must be most taxing if not impossible. I'm so grateful to Mr. Moses Choo for having introduced me to the Focus Braille Display which is paired with Bluetooth to the iPhone. I can read the texts appearing on the screen with the Braille display or I can input data with it. Alas! It's expensive!

Like you, I was quite excited when I was shown a prototype of the 20-cell Orbit Braille Display in 2015, which should have hit the market by March 2016 with a price range of US\$500. Recently, I learned that the Orbit Braille Displays are being distributed in the developed countries, especially by the organisations which sponsored its research. In fact, the units will be put on sale at the July convention of the National Federation of the Blind of USA. Mr. Moses Choo told me that he had already ordered 20 units of the Orbit and that he had been communicating with the company concerned, but to date nothing much has happened. Perhaps you could try appealing to NCBM to lend you a Braille display while waiting for the order to arrive.

You will probably have heard of my retirement from NCBM at the end of 2013, and that I had finished serving as the Secretary-General of WBUAP in August 2016. Therefore, using my influence to speed up the distribution of the Orbit Braille Display is out of the question. Moreover, to be frank, WBUAP actually has no leverage on this matter as the hiccup, I suspect, is over its production and distribution costs.

Sadly, I also totally agree with you that the supportive services for the deafblind group in the country are very lacking, and I don't blame you for feeling so frustrated. I admit to sharing the blame for not doing anything for this group or even for the elderly blind while I was the Executive Director of NCBM for 18 years. During those years we were concentrating mainly on issues concerning education, employment, computer training, youth empowerment, the teaching profession, and even actively promoting sports. We did however briefly touch on the needs of the multiple-disabled and the elderly blind, never pausing to think that we ourselves were slowly but surely heading for old age.

One could quote the proverb, "nothing ventured, nothing gained", and in this context, the blind have been the losers. We in NCBM did organise some workshops and seminars on those interests you mentioned, and we did arrange some costly visits to overseas institutions with the hope that, upon

returning, the representatives would be inspired to give more serious thought to implementing some of the programmes visited that were not existing or properly structured in our country.

Having said that, we were fortunate to have been able to undertake an important project. With the moral support of En. Mohd. Amin, then the President of the Society of the Blind in Malaysia, NCBM did manage to establish the Malaysian Braille Press. Although it did not develop into the setup that we had envisaged originally, it did produce many of the Braille textbooks needed for the Integrated Programme and we were able to put into Braille many helpful documents for blind employees of companies. Certainly much more could have been done by the Unit if the representatives had not spent the years of precious time trying to close it down.

Timothy, it's also my fervent hope that the policy-makers of NCBM, as well as its member-organisations which are now well established and financially strong, will have the time and the conviction to give serious thought to helping the deafblind community and to put in place a service for the elderly blind of which we can be proud.

Let us continue to use the "NCBM Outreach" to put forward constructive ideas for the building up of a brighter future for the blind in Malaysia.

**With best wishes,
Ivan Ho.**



TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: AUDIO ALERT IN SILENT CARS

by Moses Choo Siew Cheong,

Executive Director,

National Council for the Blind, Malaysia

According to a news report, "THE NEW REQUIREMENT TO INTRODUCE THE AUDIO ALERT IN SILENT CARS WILL HELP PREVENT 2400 PEDESTRIAN INJURIES A YEAR JUST IN AMERICA ALONE."

The U.S. Department of Transportation's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) announced that it will be adding a sound requirement for all newly manufactured hybrid and electric light-duty vehicles in order to help protect pedestrians.

The new federal safety standard will help pedestrians who are blind or who have low vision as well as other pedestrians. The blind will be able to detect the presence, direction and location of these vehicles when they are travelling at low speeds. This will help to prevent about 2400 pedestrian injuries each year once all the hybrids in the fleet are properly equipped.

"We all depend on our senses to alert us to possible danger," said U.S. Transportation Secretary, Anthony Foxx. "With more quieter hybrid and electrical cars on the road, the ability of all pedestrians to hear as well as see the cars coming becomes an important factor of reducing the risk of possible crashes and improving safety."

Under the new rule, all hybrid and electric light vehicles with four wheels and a gross vehicle weight rating of 10,000 pounds or less will be required to make audible noise when travelling in reverse or forward motion at speeds up to thirty kilometres per hour (about 19 miles per hour). At higher speeds, the sound alert is not required because of other factors such as tyre and wind noise, which can provide adequate audible warning to pedestrians.

"This is a common sense tool to help pedestrians, especially folks who are blind or who have low vision. It enables them to make their way safely," said NHTSA Administrator, Dr. Mark Rosekind. "With pedestrian fatalities on the rise, it is vitally important that we take every action to protect the most vulnerable road users."

Manufacturers have until September 11, 2019 to equip all new hybrid and electric vehicles with sounds that meet the new safety standard. Half of the new hybrid and electric vehicles must be in compliance one year before the final deadline.

"We commend NHTSA on bringing this process to completion," said Eric Bridges, Executive Director of the American Council of the Blind (ACB). "This is new safety standard moving forward will not just make our streets safer for blind and visually impaired Americans. It will also serve as an additional safety cue for all pedestrians who share the streets with hybrid and electric vehicles."

The new standard, Federal Motor Vehicle Safety Standard No. 141, responds to Congress' mandate, in the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act stipulating that hybrid and electric vehicles meet minimum sound requirements to provide an audio alert for blind and visually impaired pedestrians.

Says Mark A. Riccobono, President of the National Federation of the Blind, "Having raised concerns on behalf of blind Americans about the dangers posed by silent hybrid and electric vehicles, the National Federation of the Blind is extremely pleased that technical specifications for a safe level of sound to be emitted by such vehicles have now been issued."

He said that the full implementation of the Pedestrian Safety Enhancement Act of 2010 will protect all pedestrians, especially the blind, as well as cyclists. This regulation will ensure that blind Americans can continue to travel safely and independently as they work, learn, shop and engage in all facets of community life.

A sportsman for the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia gave his comment. "We in Malaysia are aware that under the leadership of the World Blind Union (WBU), efforts are being made to ensure that such standards will be introduced worldwide. We are also aware that they are lobbying for the frequency being emitted by vehicles to be beyond the control of the car driver, thereby making it possible for silent cars always to be heard by those who cannot see as well as by those who do not see!"

THE ELBRAILLE – A DEVICE FOR THE BLIND AND DEAFBLIND

by Moses Choo Siew Cheong

The ElBraille is a portable device designed for users who are blind or deafblind and who want to stay connected at school, at work, in the home or even when on the go. The ElBraille combines the power and flexibility of a modern mainstream computer with the Windows® 10 operating system, JAWS® screen reader and a Braille display with a full Braille keyboard.

With JAWS, ElBraille provides the best screen reader experience with either Eloquence Speech output or the highly responsive and life-like Vocaliser Expressive Compact voices as well as full Braille output. You can type text into documents or perform the JAWS and Windows® commands right from the Braille display's keyboard. You can run any Windows application such as Microsoft Word®, Excel®, PowerPoint® or Outlook®. You can use the FSReader to read DAISY books from sources such as Bookshare.org or browse with the Microsoft internet Explorer® or Mozilla® Firefox.

ElBraille also includes a set of specially designed apps for performing popular actions such as the creation of voice or text notes, listening to audio content, and much more.

The ElNotes application developed by the Elita Group is designed to create, store and manage text and voice notes on the ElBraille Notetaker. ElNotes allows the user to quickly create text and voice notes by using a set of special keystrokes, thereby exporting them to TXT or MP3 files respectively as needed. These files are saved to a user-specified folder so that they can be made available for reading or listening by using other ElBraille applications. For those who have invested in such products as Focus 14, Focus 40 or even the latest version of JAWS, you can save up to a certain amount as this is a piece of hardware which is compatible with these solutions.



Features of the ElBraille are as follows:

- Runs Microsoft Windows 10
- Braille display: 14 refreshable Braille cells, an 8-dot Perkins-style Braille keyboard
- Microprocessor: Intel® Atom™ x5-Z8300, Quad-Core 1.84 GHZ CPU
- 160 GB of internal memory, 2 GB RAM
- 2 stereo speakers
- Built-in Microphone
- An additional system speaker with sound and vibration feedback
- Wireless WLAN802.11 A/B/G/N/AC networks support (2.4 and 5 GHz)
- Bluetooth V4.2
- A built-in 4G LTE modem supporting 7 cell networking standards: TDD-LTE, FDD-LTE, TD-SCDMA, WCDMA, CDMA1X/EVDO, GSM/GPRS/EDGE. Download speed up to 150 Mbps, upload speed up to 50 Mbps
- GPS 1/8" (3.5 mm) headphone jack
- Memory card slot supporting SD, SDHC, SDXC up to 256 GB
- USB 3.0 port
- Mini HDMI port
- Rechargeable 10,400 mAh battery
- Approximately 17 to 20 hours on battery, even with wireless networking turned on
- Powered with an AC adapter (110 to 240 V) or from battery; adapter includes replaceable plugs (UK, US, EU, AU)
- ElBraille-14 dimensions: 7.4×4.7×1.5 in (189×118×38 mm)
- ElBraille-14 weight: 27 oz. (750 grams) with battery

The ElBraille will be available by the end of 2017.



A POINT TO PONDER: FACING THE CHALLENGES OF LOSING ONE'S EYESIGHT GRADUALLY

By Wong Kow

In 2008 I met Wu Mun Kun (known to the blind community as Hu Wan Chuan) at a function organised by the Singapore International Radio Service in Kuala Lumpur. Being a low vision person himself, Hu Wan Chuan was delighted to have been able to meet some new blind and visually impaired friends there. Indeed, the three of us who were there, i.e. Liong Teck Yau, Sek Yee Siong and I myself, were also very happy to make our acquaintance with him and I took the liberty of asking for his contact number so that we could keep in touch.

We found out that Wan Chuan was born in Ampang, Selangor in 1943. After completing Chinese primary education, he had to leave school in order to lighten the financial situation of his family. So he joined a privately owned machinery company as an apprentice and then worked with the company for a number of years.

Having gained the necessary working knowledge, Wan Chuan then joined the Public Works Department (later known as Jabatan Kerja Raya) as a government servant. However, in the year of 1982 when Wan Chuan was at the age of 39, he began to realise that he was having some visual problems. His visual field had become quite narrow although the central vision still remained satisfactory.

Wan Chuan consulted some eye specialists in private eye clinics but they did not seem to be able to help bring improvement to his eyesight. He heard the doctors mentioning some medical terms which sounded rather foreign to him. Moreover, he was unable to ascertain from them the actual cause of his eye problem. Thus, his eyesight continued to deteriorate until, in 1995, his vision was so bad that he could no longer drive a car.

Wan Chuan learned from a relative about the services for low vision persons at the Eye Department of the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM). Wan Chuan went to UKM for further checkups by the eye specialists and optometrists there. He felt hopeful of securing some low vision equipment which could help to improve his vision. Unfortunately, nothing much happened to improve his eyesight.

One day, on the recommendation of a low vision equipment supplier, Wan Chuan decided to attend a dialogue session in Hong Kong in 2005. The dialogue was organised by the Equipment suppliers for Low Vision Support Committee. From the speeches given by experts on various relevant subjects, Wan Chuan was able to gain some useful knowledge on coping with low vision and how to face the challenges of further deterioration of eyesight in the years to come.

After our first encounter with Wan Chuan in 2008, we managed to keep in touch with him through telephone calls every now and then. Liong Teck Yau would keep him informed whenever Chinese oldies sing-along sessions were being organised at the MAB Senior Citizens' Club. In addition, both Wan Chuan and his wife would join us on many outings.

Wan Chuan was also able to occupy his leisure time listening to the radio, telephoning friends and loved ones, watching tv, karaoke singing with friends and listening to talking-books borrowed from the MAB library. Moreover, with his limited vision, he still managed to travel by the LRT train independently.

"Whenever eyesight is needed, my wife is ever ready to assist. She is most helpful," Wan Chuan made the remark with a broad smile of satisfaction.

Wan Chuan and his wife are blessed with three married children and two grandchildren. At the end of my conversation with him, I asked if he would like to share his experience with his own words – from the first time of consulting with eye specialists, the deterioration of his eyesight, until meeting with the blind and making good friends with many of them.

He was most eager to share as follows: "I strongly believe that the eye specialists should know more about the activities of the visually impaired, the organisations for and of the blind, the possibilities of rehabilitation and training, and so on. If I had been given the right information and proper guidance at the time of consulting the eye specialists in 1982, I could have acquired the necessary rehabilitation and training, gained useful blindness-specific skills, and so much more. I would have been able to cope with my visual problems more effectively.

"I am, however, most grateful to have had the opportunity to meet up with the blind in 2008. With the guidance and support that they have given to me and my family, I am now better prepared to accept and face the challenges in life."

It is most heartening to know that Wan Chuan and his wife are now able to spend their time wisely and meaningfully. Besides meeting up with relatives and friends as well as visiting places of interest, they also find time to spend many happy hours with their grandchildren.

THE VOTING PROCESS FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

There are now four methods of voting for disabled people in the voting process. They are as follows:

1. The disabled person who is unable to make a mark on the ballot paper but brings a trusted person to help him mark the ballot paper at the voter's request and choice.
2. The disabled person who is unable to make a mark on the ballot paper but does not bring a trusted person will be assisted by the presiding officer of the polling centre to mark the ballot paper at the voter's request and choice.
3. The disabled person whose polling stream is on the upper floor and can request and offer to bring his/her voting ballot to the ground floor for him to mark his/her choice and then insert his/her ballot in the ballot box at the upper floor.
4. The disabled person who can mark his or her own ballot paper.

WHAT IS THE PROCEDURE?

1. For the first method, the polling clerk 1 (KP1) refers the situation to the presiding officer of the Polling Centre (PO)
 - a) The voter goes in with the trusted person and submits his identification documents to KP1.
 - b) The PO is satisfied that the voter is a person with a disability.
 - c) The PO checks the identification documents of the trusted person to ensure that he or she is a Malaysian citizen and 21 years and above.
 - d) The trusted person completes form 10 (identity declaration) before being allowed to make a mark on behalf of the voter. The trusted person and the PO sign the form.

- e) The trusted person marks the ballot paper at the voter's request and choice.
 - f) KP1, KP2 and KP3 carry out the voting requirements and hand over the ballot paper to the PO.
 - g) The voter and the trusted person move away from the identification area.
 - h) The trusted person puts the ballot paper into the ballot box.
2. For the second method, KP1 refers the situation to the PO
- a) The disabled voter goes to the polling centre with the help of the polling centre directions guide.
 - b) The PO is satisfied that the voter is disabled and informs KP1 to issue the ballot paper.
 - c) KP1, KP2 and KP3 carry out the voting requirements and hand over the ballot paper to the PO.
 - d) The PO informs the voter of the contesting candidates and asks the voter to make his or her choice by whispering his or her chosen candidate.
 - e) The PO marks the ballot paper.
 - f) The PO helps the voter to insert the ballot paper into the ballot box and helps him or her to exit the polling stream.
3. For the Third Method,
- a) The PO (upper floor) checks the identification documents of the voter and checks the electoral register. The PO goes downstairs to verify the voter.

- b) The PO (upper floor) informs the polling stream agent (PCA-upper floor) of the voter with a disability who will vote at the polling stream on the ground floor.
- c) KP1 (upper floor) confirms the voter based on identification documents and says out loud the name of the voter and makes a mark on the electoral register while KP3 (upper floor) issues the ballot paper and hands it over to the PO (upper floor).
- d) The PO (upper floor) puts the ballot paper into a special envelope (not to be glued) and brings it together with form SPR.765 and form 11 to the polling stream on the ground floor where the voter is waiting.
- e) The PO (upper floor) informs the PO (ground floor) that there is a voter with a disability who will vote at his polling stream. The PO (upper floor) hands over the envelope containing the ballot paper to the PO (ground floor).
- f) The PO (ground floor) helps the voter to fill in form 11 and asks him or her to sign the form. The PO (ground floor) informs the PCA (ground floor) to carry out the voting process for the voter.
- g) KP2 (ground floor) imprints the voter's finger with the election ink. The PO (ground floor) submits the ballot paper brought by the PO (upper floor) for the voter.
- h) The voter marks the ballot paper at the polling booth and puts it into the special envelope and hands it over to the PO. The PO asks the PCA to complete form SPR.765. The special envelope and form SPR.765 are submitted to the PO (upper floor).
- i) The PO (upper floor) then brings the special envelope to the polling stream on the upper floor and opens the special envelope in front of the Polling Centre Agent (PCA) and insert the ballot paper into the ballot box. The PO shows Form SPR.765 to each of the PCA's present.

TIPS FOR RUNNING AN ORGANISATION

By Barnabas Lee Ah Guan

Editor's Note: Barnabas Lee Ah Guan is low-visioned and in the early years of his working life, he was employed first in East Asiatic, Penang and later in the Malayan Tobacco Co., Kuala Lumpur as telephone operator. In the last few years of his working life, he was employed as the Low Vision Assistant at the Low Vision Clinic and Resource Centre of the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB). Ultimately, he was put in charge of the centre.

In his youthful years, Barnabas loved to read magazines on Hifi equipment, fast cars and the latest fashions with the help of magnifying glasses. Then, as he mellowed in life, he turned to reading books on leadership, management and professionalism in the business world. In the process, he has been able to accumulate a fantastic reservoir of knowledge and ideas on effective leadership and management.

Here he is to give us some tips for running an organisation:

Well, reading books on leadership and management has been a favourite hobby of mine. I really loved reading those books by such reputable management practitioners and professionals as John Kotter on Leading Change, Ken Blanchard on The One Minute Manager, and Peter Drucker on The Frontiers of Management. From my readings, I have been able to glean some very interesting tips and inspirational insights on running an effective organisation.

Here they are:

Firstly, what do we mean by "values and forms"? Values refer to what you think is good and bad. As for norms, they refer to what society regards as being right and wrong and they are backed up by laws or by customary practice.

Now what actually drives an organisation? Generally, government agencies are driven by mere mechanical practice. For example, money is spent for the sake of spending without any goal in mind. As for the private companies, they are driven by profit. For the non-governmental organisations, they are driven by self-esteem.

What about attitude and productivity? Time is productive if it is used to enhance the goals of an organisation. Therefore, helping others instead of finding fault will be much more productive.

On the question of morality and ethics, morality is actually based on the principles which guide our behaviour. As for ethics, they are the principles which we stand for.

Concerning staffing, the organisation is only as good as the staff that it employs.

What do we mean by success? Well, successful people become successful because they have an ambition.

And what about the vision and mission of an organisation? The vision of an organisation has no time frame and it is not static. As for the mission of an organisation, it has a time frame, i.e. what do you want to do in order to create and achieve?

What is meant by strategy? It refers to the activities that will help an organisation fulfil its objectives.

What is leadership? There are various types of leadership – they can be autocratic, consultative, participative, democratic, free region, persuasive or paternalistic. It is difficult to say what is the best type of leadership as this depends on certain factors and variables at the time. Nevertheless, many are of the view that the best kind of leadership would have the elements of being consultative, participative and democratic.

In actual fact, an important aspect of leadership is discipline. A good leader sets the standards by example rather than by punishment.

What is the ideal organisational structure? There are generally three levels in an organisation – they are the operatives who report to others but nobody reports to them; on the second level are the supervisors with one or more staff reporting to them; on the top level is the management or group of people who help to ensure the survival of the organisation.

However, there is actually one more level which is often overlooked – they are the policy-makers. Indeed, as someone has said, "quality is made in the boardroom where the policy-makers meet to discuss and formulate the policies of the organisation".

What is the driving force of an organisation? In actual fact, it is the people or the individuals acting in a concerted effort who become the driving force of an organisation. However, nobody should serve the values of any one person but rather the values of the organisation.

What about the rules and regulations of an organisation? Indeed, it is very important to consider that the rules and regulations of an organisation are meant to help facilitate rather than control an organisation. Extend this to the idea of running a country!

Now imagine going into an organisation and you only see displayed on the wall the history of the organisation; then you should be worried. This is because the organisation is merely glorifying and gloating on its past which it has no longer any power to make a difference.

Whereas on entering an organisation and you see displayed what the future might be, then you will surely be filled with excitement. This is because we are able to share in the feeling that what is to come is something that is within our power or which we can help to shape in time to come – we can rethink the future!

And so to conclude, let me present you with some words of wisdom in a poem by Ann Landers entitled, "My Father When I Was!"

Four years old: My daddy could do anything.

Five years old: My daddy knows a whole lot.

Six years old: My daddy is smarter than your dad.

Eight years old: My dad doesn't know exactly everything.

Ten years old: In the olden days when my dad grew up, things were sure different.

Twelve years old: Oh, well, naturally, father doesn't know anything about that. He is too old to remember his childhood.

Fourteen years old: Don't pay any attention to my father. He is too old-fashioned.

Twenty-one years old: Hm....? My father? He's hopelessly out-of-date.

Twenty-five years old: Dad knows a little bit about it; but then he should because he has been around so long.

Thirty years old: Maybe we should ask dad what he thinks. After all, he's had a lot of experience.

Thirty-five years old: I'm not doing a single thing until I talk to dad.

Forty years old: I wonder how dad would have handled it. He was so wise and had a world of experience.

Fifty years old: I'd give anything if dad were here now so I could talk this over with him. Too bad I didn't appreciate how smart he was. I could have learned a lot from him.

THE TWO-LETTER WORD "UP"

There is a two-letter word that perhaps has more meanings than any other two-letter word, and that is "up".

It is easy to understand "up", meaning toward the sky or at the top of the list. However, when we awaken in the morning, why do we "wake up?"

At a meeting, why does a topic "come up?"

Why do we "speak up" and why are the officers "up for election" and why is it "up to the secretary" to "write up" the report?

We "call up" our friends and we use it to "brighten up" a room, "polish up" the silver, and we "warm up" the left-overs and "clean up" the kitchen.

We "lock up" the house and some guys "fix up" the old car.

At other times, the little word has real special meaning. People "stir up" trouble, "line up" for tickets, "work up" an appetite, and "think up" excuses.

To be dressed is one thing, but to be "dressed up" is special.

And this "up" is confusing: A drain must be "opened up" because it is "stopped up". We "open up" a store in the morning but we "close it up" at night.

We seem to be pretty "mixed up" about "up". To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of "up", look the word up in the dictionary. In a desk-sized dictionary, it takes up almost one-fourth of the page and it can add up to about thirty definitions.

If you are up to it, you might try building up a list of the many ways "up" is used. It will take up a lot of your time, but if you don't give up, you may wind up with a hundred or more.

When it threatens to rain, we say it is "clouding up". When the sun comes out, we say it is "clearing up".

When it rains, it wets the earth and often "messes things up".

When it doesn't rain for a while, things "dry up".

One could go on and on, but I'll "wrap up" here, for now my "time is up", so it is "time to shut up".

Oh, one more thing – what is the first thing you do in the morning and the last thing you do at night? U-p!



QUOTES BY ANDY ROONEY

Andy Rooney had the gift of saying so much with so few words. Subjects covered in his quotes affects us all on a daily basis. Take the time to read them and you will walk away with an enlightened perspective. Enjoy:

I've learned that –

The best classroom in the world is at the feet of an elderly person.

Just one person saying to me, "you've made my day!" makes my day.

Having a child fall asleep in your arms is one of the most peaceful feelings in the world.

Being kind is more important than being right.

You should never say no to a gift from a child.

I can always pray for someone when I don't have the strength to help him in some other way.

No matter how serious your life requires you to be, everyone needs a friend to act goofy with.

Simple walks with my father around the block on summer nights when I was a child did wonders for me as an adult.

We should be glad God doesn't give us everything we ask for.

It's those small daily happenings that make life so spectacular.

To ignore the facts does not change the facts.

No one is perfect until you fall in love with them.

Life is tough, but I'm tougher.

Opportunities are never lost; someone will take the ones you missed.

When you harbour bitterness, happiness will dock elsewhere.

I wish I could have told my mom that I love her just one more time before she passed away.

One should keep his words both soft and tender because tomorrow he may have to eat them.

A smile is an inexpensive way to improve your looks.

When your newly born grandchild holds your little finger in his little fist, you are hooked for life.

Everyone wants to live on top of the mountain but all the happiness and growth occur while you are climbing.



**PRINCIPAL OFFICE-BEARERS AND
COUNCIL MEMBERS OF NCBM
FOR 2017-2018**

Mdm Jasmine Khoo,
President, NCBM

Dato' Dr Hsiung Kwo Yeun
Vice-President, NCBM/President, Sarawak Society for the Blind

Mr Ng Kich Sheng @ Jimmy
Secretary, NCBM/Secretary, Sabah Society for the Blind

Dato' Kulasegaran A/L Sabaratnam
Treasurer, NCBM/Council Member of Malaysian Association for the Blind

Datuk Rosalind Chew Bee Koh
President, Sabah Society for the Blind

Rt. Rev. Bishop Charles Samuel
Chairman, St. Nicholas' Home, Penang

Dato' Dr. Sharom Ahmat
St. Nicholas' Home, Penang

Dr. Ahmad Shamsuri Bin Muhamad
Society of the Blind in Malaysia

En. Mohd Mustaza Mohamad Zin
Society of the Blind in Malaysia

Ms. Annie Soon Nyin Yin
Sarawak Society for the Blind



CHAIRPERSONS OF COMMITTEES OF NCBM FOR 2017- 2018

Committee on Education (COE)
Dr. Kway Eng Hock

Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment (CEEE)
Dr. Wong Huey Siew

Committee on Public Awareness (CPA)
Datuk Rosalind Chew Bee Koh



AUDITOR 2017- 2018

Inpana & Associates,
Kuala Lumpur



REPRESENTATIVES OF NCBM TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS, 2017- 2018

World Blind Union/ World Blind Union Asia Pacific -
(WBU/WBUAP)
Dato' Dr. Hsiung Kwo Yeun and Mr Moses Choo Siew Cheong



EARN SOME EXTRA CASH

Readers are invited to write for our publication, NCBM Outreach. For articles published, Payment are as follows:

1. Original articles on the achievements of blind people or of an inspirational nature (about 500 words) - RM80
2. Articles containing ideas and suggestions for the improvement of NCBM or its Member-Organisations (about 500 words) - RM80
3. Articles on funny or unusual experiences (250/500 words) - RM40/RM80
4. Poems which are personal compositions depicting experiences of a blind person (about 50/100 words) - RM40/RM80
5. Articles of an informative nature written in your own words (about 500 words) - RM80.

Note: Articles submitted by officials of NCBM or its Member-Organisations will not qualify for payment unless the submissions have nothing to do with their daily office duties.

Also, full payment will be made if the article requires little or no editing.



NOTES