NCBM OUNTREACH!



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VISION AND MISSION STATISMENT OF NOBM

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:

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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.

4. Be My Eyes

Be My Eyes is an app that connects blind and visually impaired with sighted volunteers from around the world via live video call. You may download through Google play and may choose the choice of our language. Bahasa Melayu is also available.

The blind or visually impaired person can need help with anything from knowing the expiry date on the milk, to making sure that their clothes match.

Note* We encourage blind and visually impaired users to be patient, when making a request, because we rely on real people to help you. Most calls are answered within 60 seconds.

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

ARTICLES FOR THE MAGAZINE

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.

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MESSAGE FROM NCBM TACTILE GRAPHICS PROFICIENCY

In the past, Braille information has not been as readily available as print information. However, with changes in refreshable Braille technology, this is changing

For example, it is very easy for a blind person to read or touch an embossed map of the world or a map of Malaysia. But we know from experience that it is very difficult to get hold of such maps, especially for the use of blind students in school. This is because it takes much time and effort and the requirement of specially crafted materials in order to produce the maps. Even if they can be obtained by purchase from overseas countries, they are not readily available and they are quite expensive.

With refreshable Braille technology, all this will probably change in the near future. An embossed map, which is so difficult to obtain, can now be produced in an instant with the help of refreshable Braille technology.

Much work, however, still needs to be done in order to drastically improve the technology of tactile graphics. Once this previously insurmountable problem has been overcome, it will be possible for blind people to become much more fluent in tactile graphics and they will be able to expand their options for how information is presented to them.

Refreshable tactile graphics technology may provide significant assistance for many blind persons. This would be optimal when these graphics can be generated on-the-fly and quickly, such as with a camera connected to the Graphiti or a similar device. When tactile graphics hardware has an instantaneous refresh rate and can show multiple frames per second, this will allow blind people to have a video that can be felt. This may be years away but this is a hope and perspective. When blind people can spontaneously gather necessary and meaningful information by touch, we will be able to

circumvent or go round many of the obstacles currently faced when sound is not available, not helpful, or too loud. Advances in tactile graphics technology could be extremely helpful to the deaf-blind as well.

In spite of technology, nonetheless, personal competence, good skills, and a positive attitude about blindness are absolutely essential to true independence for the blind. We need to understand that technology is not the foundation of independence for the blind but it can make life more convenient and enjoyable.

Thus, it is important to bring about change in the built environment so that blind people may more fully live the lives they want-through audible pedestrian signals and other tactile aids.

At the moment, the Graphiti and the possibilities it offers will not be available until at least the end of 2017. Let us all look forward to a changing and more interesting life for the blind

THE 2018 BUDGET PROVISIONS FOR THE POOR AND DISABILED

By Ooi Hock Tiam

The 2018 budget was tabled in Parliament by the Finance Minister, YAB Dato' Sri Mohd. Najib Bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak, on Friday, October 27, 2017. The provisions in the budget for the poor and disabled are highlighted as follows:

1. Education

- 1.1 RM100 one-off payment for poor students will be maintained. About three million students are expected to benefit from this provision.
- 1.2 RM250 book vouchers for Form six and Tertiary level students will be maintained.
- 1.3 RM6,000 income relief for parents who invest in the national educational scheme will be maintained.

2. Housing

- 2.1 Three thousand houses are to be built in 2018 by the National Housing Agency. The disabled can qualify for a 20% discount on any of these houses.
- 2.2 Another 25,000 houses will be built for the poor under the One Malaysia National Housing Project.

3. Welfare

- 3.1 The Disabled Workers Allowance will be increase from RM350 to RM400 with effect from January 2018. This will benefit about 160,000 disabled persons throughout the country. The disabled have been waiting for this increase for quite some time.
- 3.2 The allowance for senior citizens, i.e. those aged 60 and above, will be increased from RM300 to RM350 with effect from January 2018.

4. Taxation

- 4.1 Companies which employ disabled persons can claim additional income tax exemption if the disabled workers suffers from another form of permanent disability. (the amount was not mentioned in the budget speech)
- 4.2 Everyone paying income tax will have a 2% reduction right across the board. Thus, if a person qualifies for 10% income tax exemption, this will be reduced to 8%. This will benefit many disabled tax payers, especially those who are earning between RM7,000 and RM8,000 monthly.

5. Salaries

- 5.1 All civil servants will be given RM1,500 as cash incentive for 2018. RM1,000 will be paid in January and RM500 will be paid during the Hari Raya.
- 5.2 All pensioners will be given RM800 in 2018. RM500 will be given in January and RM300 will be given during the Hari Raya.

Comments

- 1. Against all these goodies, the GST of 6% on almost all goods will be maintained.
- 2. The Welfare Department was given an allocation of RM1.9 billion in 2017. However, no mention of any allocation for 2018 was made in the budget speech.
- 3. The total budget allocation for 2018 is RM280.25 billion, out of which RM234.25 billion has been allocated for management and operations while the remainder will be for development.
- 4. No allocation has been made for the NGO'S which are serving the disabled. Actually, these organisations deserve such assistance as they are not government-funded. Many of these organisations provide extensive services for the disabled all over the country and the amount of funds that they can raise for the public is quiet inadequate for them both to maintain as well as develop programmes for the benefit of their clients.

AJONG SIDIM — EXEMPLARY MODEL OF THE BUIND IN EMPLOYMENT

By Godfrey Ooi Goat See

From a poor Kampong boy to a rewarding Law career in the prestigious Sime Darby company-Ajong Sidim, totally blind, is at the pinnacle of success

In the year 2000, Ajong was appointed to the post of In-House Legal Service as a legal executive. Upon retirement in 2010, the management decided to extend Ajong's service for another five years, thereby testifying to the fact that they had recognised his capabilities and that they had much confidence in his ability to perform effectively in the organisation.

Nevertheless, it was not by mere chance that Ajong managed to rise to the top - it was with great effort and with sheer dogged determination that he mustered in facing and overcoming the challenges and hardships in his life, including poverty, lack of facilities, and the negative attitudes of society.

Blinded at age four as the result of a high fever, Ajong was brought up by his aunt as his mother had been killed by her husband. In fact, his mother had separated from his father some years earlier and she was shot dead by a jealous brother-in-law in a boat on the way to her second wedding in another kampong one fateful evening. Thereafter, his uncle shot himself in the head through his mouth.

Thus bereft of his parents and despite his tender age, Ajong had to rise early in the morning to help his aunt with the grating and drying of tapioca in the sun as feed for the chickens. He also helped to cook pig food every day while his aunt and cousin sisters tapped rubber or worked in the paddy-fields.

One day the District Officer happened to visit their home and, on hearing about the possibility of education for the blind, Ajong seized the opportunity to join the first ever integrated programme which was opened for blind students in a normal sighted Methodist Primary school in Kapit, Sarawak. When Ajong realised that he was overaged, having entered school at age nine in 1965, he persuaded the Principal to let him skip Standard Three in order to meet the allowable age of 14-years old to be in Form One.

"What if you can cope and fail your exam?" The principal asked with concern. Ajong's reply was that he had nothing to lose in failing the examination but that he would face greater loss if he could not go to Form One even if he passed the examination. He thus convinced the principal otherwise.

Ajong got through his primary education by using very simple, non-tech tools such as the humble Braille writing-board and the Taylor frame for Arithmetic. Where the Standard Six Common Entrance Examination was a killer exam for many because of English and Maths, Ajong did well and qualified for admission into secondary education. He went to Penang in 1970 to join the Integrated Programme at St. Xavier's Institution. Ajong found the studying conditions to be very challenging as the facilities were inadequate and there was no proper assistance being given. For instance, they had many arguments amongst themselves over the Braille textbooks because, for most of the time, only one or two sets of the books were available to be shared between three or four students. Consequently, many of the blind students did not do very well for the Malaysian Certificate of Examination (MCE). As for Ajong himself, he only managed to obtain grade 3 for the MCE exam.

So in 1974, he returned to Sarawak where he taught at the Methodist Primary School for one year in 1975. The following year he was admitted to the Gurney Training Centre (GTC) of the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) where he took up the stenography course. In the same year, however, he also studied the telephony course all by himself. Thus, he sat for the telephony examination along with the other students who had done the course and he passed the exam. The telephony certificate fitted him nicely into the post of telephonist in a Government department as there were not enough stenography positions for the blind in the public sector.

In fact, joining the Government Civil Service was most timely for him because of the "Isi Penuh" policy to fill in the vacancies in the government departments which had been introduced by the late former Prime Minister, Tun Dato' Hussein bin Dato' Seri Onn. Ajong was placed in the Department of Civil Aviation (DCA).

Ajong commented "As there were two female telephone operators already employed there, I had little to do and I felt very bored. So I asked for another posting and the management agreed but nothing happened. So exactly after one month in the job, I took the bold decision to quit without pay."

Ajong spent the next couple of years or so joining the ranks of the blind in selling tidbits from door to door. Undaunted, he carried the heavy load of peanuts and other dried stuff, going round to the various neighbourhoods, weathered by the hot sun and drenching rainfall, ascending and descending staircases, and braving fierce barking dogs, in order to sell his wares.

Meanwhile he made applications to various corporations and finally landed himself as a telephone operator with Sime Darby, one of the biggest multinational corporations in Malaysia in 1980 with a salary of RM270.

However, Ajong did not remain merely contented with his lot as he had higher aspirations. He explained, "I felt inspired by the blind pioneers in education such as Peter Chin and Godfrey Ooi and I decided to pursue further studies. In 1982, I spent the evenings pursuing the one-year course in Marketing from Stamford College and I obtained a diploma in marketing when I sat for the examination. But then I was not allowed to do the degree course just because I was not holding an executive position in marketing. When I approached the Sime Darby Management for the position of the marketing executive, they interviewed me and made me prepare the business report which I did. But I was still ignored and to shut me up, they raised my salary by RM120 and, by that gesture, I knew that I would never be given a marketing position in the organisation."

Greatly disappointed, Ajong got involved with the National Union of Commercial Workers (NUCW) and became one of the leaders. He helped to set up a committee which negotiated salary raises and benefits for the non-bargainable staff.

Ajong said, "Soon everybody was coming to see me for advice. This made me realise that I should be studying law and legal matters. So I applied to the University of London to enrol as an adult student for the correspondence course. First I had to pass the 500-word essay test, then the A-Level education examination, followed by the one-year intermediate course in Law. At long last, I was allowed to take up the four-year degree course which I managed to get through and was awarded the LLB Hons. 2nd class lower."

Thus equipped, Ajong approached the Sime Darby Management once again, and he was referred to the forward-looking Dato' Othman, the Director of Human Resources. Ajong was asked to choose the department where he wanted to be placed.

"Of course, I chose the Legal Department," Ajong said triumphantly.

Indeed, it is with sheer determination and with such great effort in facing up to the struggle and challenges that have helped Ajong in fulfilling his aspirations. Undoubtedly, the policy of positive discrimination for bumiputeras have had little bearing on Ajong's achievement and success.

UNIFORCE TRABLE WATERING ADVENTIGES

By Dr. Gordon Tan Tok Shiong

Editor's Note: Dr. Gordon Tan Tok Shiong has been vision-impaired from childhood and he was an economics lecturer at University Malaya for many years. After retiring in the 1990s, he loves to spend much of his time observing how the blind in Brickfields live and work and share his thoughts with readers.

This time, however, he would like to relate his experiences in the unforgettable walking adventures. Here it is:

In my youth, I was very obsessed with walking and so I would walk every day. Sometimes, just in one day, I would walk for twenty to thirty kilometres.

Although I had only very limited vision, probably just enough to see the road, I was able with the help of a white cane to go on many adventures in order to satisfy my obsession. Sometimes during the lunch-break of my working days, I would deliberately take a walk to places which are a few kilometres away to eat, as for example, from University Malaya to the YMCA in Brickfields.

For about two years, I was obsessed with walking up the Genting Highlands. Thus, every week I would take a bus to Genting Sempah and from there I would walk right up to the summit of the Genting Highlands-a tortuous distance of eighteen kilometres.

On many occasions, I would make special trips to outstation destinations, and then I would walk from town to town. On one occasion, I took a flight to Sarawak and then I walked from Sarawak to Brunei. I went on to travel in this small kingdom for several days entirely on foot.

I have found that it is not always true that the more you exercise, the healthier you will be. In my case, I have walked so much that the ligaments of my two feet have been badly worn-out and for many a time I have had to go for

physiotherapy in order to lessen the pain. Moreover, I have discovered that as I become older, the distance that I am able to walk is becoming shorter. Frequently, as I recall those younger days, I marvel that I had so much energy to walk for kilometre after kilometre.

Let me share with you some of my unforgettable adventures. One day I decided to walk in Langkawi which took about ten days and I covered more than one hundred kilometres. I took a train from Kuala Lumpur and I disembarked at the Alor Setar Railway Station. From there I walked to the jetty in Kuala Kedah and caught the Langkawi ferry, which took me about twelve kilometres. I reached the island the next morning and began to walk for about one week.

I visited the Quah Town, some other villages, various beaches and the airport. After covering the entire island, I took a ferry to Kuala Perlis. From there I walked to Arau, the nearest train station nineteen kilometres away and returned to Kuala Lumpur by train.

I remember the day when I was walking to Datai Beach in Langkawi. It was late in the evening and I had to put up the night at the bus stop. Round about 2 a.m. in the morning, as I was lying on the bench unable to sleep, I heard a herd of cows walking along the road in my direction. Suddenly, one of the cows decided to enter the bus stop and it started sniffing at me. I felt rather scared and I got up immediately. However, the herd of cows seemed to be even more frightened of me and they ran off, leaving behind the calf which was crying for his mother. What amazed me was the fact that I could frighten away a whole herd of cows so easily just by getting up suddenly from a bench.

My second experience occurred in my walk from Golok to Tak Bai in Thailand. It was a short trip, over a period of two days and covering a distance of only thirty kilometres. In the olden days before the construction of the Gerik Highway, people from Kelantan would travel from Rantau Panjang to Pengkalan Kubor and take this Thai route as a shortcut. Using the Malaysian road would have doubled the distance.

On this trip, I travelled by bus from Kuala Lumpur and arrived at Golok in the morning. Then I walked for fifteen kilometres, which is the first half of the total distance.

At night I stayed in a hotel and I still remember very clearly having my coffee the next morning at a coffee-shop. The coffee was lukewarm and, after continuing my journey for about half an hour, I began to feel a tummy upset. Being blind, however, I had difficulty in locating a suitable place to relieve myself. So when I approached a quiet place with a few trees around, I did the necessary to ease my purging. I heard a few ladies mumbling nearby and so I moved out of the site as quickly as I could, feeling rather embarrassed.

I had my third adventure on Samosir Island, Indonesia. It was a long and challenging walk which lasted twelve days (including the six days on the island). This time I journeyed with another blind friend and our objective was to go round the whole island. We went to Indonesia by ferry from Port Klang and disembarked at the port of Tanjung Balai.

I was very touched when one of the Indonesian employees of the ferry took us out for dinner and even offered us accommodation in a spare room at his home. Then as we were walking around Samosir, another touching incident occurred. Rain started pouring down and two little children (between five to seven years of age) approached us and brought us to their house for a rest in their living room. Ten minutes later, their parents arrived home on a motor-bike and they were surprised to see us. But after we had explained what occurred and what we were doing here, they expressed amazement. Then they served us with coffee and biscuits and insisted on cooking lunch for us.

My fourth adventure occurred in Ulu Kuang, a Government Orang Asli resettlement area about five kilometres from the town of Kuang. I went to Kuang by commuter train from Kuala Lumpur and walked for about one and a half hours to this Orang Asli village.

Here I was amazed to see about one hundred children running wildly and playing happily entirely on their own. I think that this is something that children in the urban areas dearly miss.

I later went to an orang asli durian stall and I saw three orang asli women happily chitchatting with one another. The orang asli durian seller, probably in his forties, roughly scolded another orang asli man who was passing by for owing him money. He further chided the man for being lazy to go in to the jungle to pick durians.

Later, I asked the durian seller if he had been to Kuala Lumpur. Sounding sarcastic, he said, "I've been to the city countless times. I've gone by walking, cycling, by motor-cycle, by car, by bus, by lorry, and by commuter train. You name it, I've done it!"

On my fifth adventure, I took a 34 kilometre walk from Bentong to Raub in Pahang. It was really an exhausting journey as I had to walk for the whole day. I reached a hotel near the Raub bus terminal in late evening. While checking in, the hotel owner asked me what transport I use to come to Raub. I told him that I had walked all the way from Bentong and he was amazed. He said that while driving his lorry in the morning and when driving back to Raub in the late afternoon, he had seen a man walking with a white cane along the main road.

He asked how I could managed to walk as I was blind. I told him that it is possible to walk from town to town as long as you could see the white line at the edge of the road, which I did with my limited vision. He expressed surprise to know that there were people with such courage, determination, and strength to accomplish such a feat. Indeed, it made me proud to think that I was considered extraordinary in somebody's eyes in spite of my blindness.

Finally, I had a treat from a policeman on my sixth adventure from Kuala Krai to Patani. The walk took about ten days and I covered more than two hundred kilometres. I reached Kuala Krai in the morning by train from Kuala Lumpur. Then I walked to Tanah Merah, on to Rantau Panjang and enter Thailand through the Golok Immigration checkpoint.

It was late in the evening when I passed by one of the villages in Thailand and I could not find any hotel to spend the night. Fearing for my safety, a local man led me to a police station where I laid down on a bench to pass the night.

Next morning a friendly policeman came and asked me a few questions. I told him in broken Thai that I was on a walking adventure from Kuala Lumpur to Hatyai. He was full of admiration for me and he ordered for me a breakfast set. I was truly appreciative of his kind gesture.

Unfortunately, I did not make it to Hatyai. My two legs were totally worn-out when I reached Patani and I just could not go on. Anyway, I must say that I have really enjoyed my walking adventures.

If anyone of you does enjoy walking just like me, you can contact our leader, K.K. Goh, at telephone number 92219490.

Enjoy walking!

NEWS FROM THE ORGANISATIONS SERVING THE BUIND

Lim Yew Yi of Malaysia Wins the Otsuki Prize

For the 15th Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest (2017), Lim Yew Yi of Malaysia emerged as the overall winner with the Otsuki Prize of US.1,000. In his essay, Lim showed how the words of the well-known deaf-blind person, Helen Keller, had the power to inspire him to rise from a state of hopelessness caused by his blindness in order to appreciate life and bring meaning and hope to his own life.

He further showed how opportunities were created that enabled him to overcome the challenges in his struggle against blindness, thereby fulfilling his hopes and dreams and making him a source of inspiration to other people. With such inspiration, he dared to take risks with great courage which ultimately brought him sweet success.

The Excellence Prize of US.500 for group A (between the ages of 14 and 25 years) went to William Wu, 15-year male from New Zealand while the Fine Workers Prizes of US.200 each for group A went to Nguyen Dinh Hanh Nguyen, 22-year old female from Vietnam and to Nur Syarif Ramadhan, 24-year old male from Indonesia.

The Excellence Prize of US.500 for group B (26 years and above) was awarded to Pham Van Dang 37-year old male, from Vietnam.

The two Fine Workers Prizes of US.300each for group B went to Teow Cheng Poo, 57-year old female from Malaysia and to Tin Moe, 44-year old male from Myanmar.

The Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest has been running for fifteen years. It has been made possible with the generous sponsorship from the Onkyo Corporation and the Braille Mainichi Newspaper of Japan.

World Sight Day 2017

The Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) in collaboration with the Tun Hussein Onn National Eye Hospital (THONEH), the Lions and Rotary celebrated World Sight Day 2017 on October 28.

The programme was sponsored by the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) with a sum of RM20,000.

The organising chairman, Mr. K. Sundralingam, warmly welcomed everyone present and spoke about the precious gift of eyesight which should not be taken for granted.

The function was graced by YB Datuk Wira Dr. Abu Bakar bin Mohamad Diah, Deputy Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation. Commencing his speech in friendly joviality, he then spoke about the need to come out with tools and solutions that would be usable by the people concerned.

He drew the attention of the audience to his personal experience in which some bright students got the idea of producing a gadget to help guide the blind in moving about from place to place. However, the gadget had to be held with two hands, which meant depriving the blind user of the means to hold other things. Blind people in Malaysia especially were already accustomed to using and holding the white cane and they found the gadget to be quiet impractical.

He said that from his personal experience, the would-be users should be consulted right from the beginning of conceptualising such a gadget. He stressed that in this case, there were no consultations at all resulting in something that cannot serve the purpose as intended.

NCBM, when contacted by the press, disclosed that they were very happy that the issue had been raised by none other than the Deputy Minister of Science and Technology. In fact, the students had approached NCBM only when the gadget was almost ready for use.

The Executive director of NCBM, En. Moses Choo Siew Cheong, said that they are ever ready to collaborate with everyone and with any organisations in bringing improvement to the lives of blind people. However, they should pay heed to the call made in the wise words of YB. Datuk Wira.

Rotarians Honour K.L. Club's Past President, Tan Sri L. Krishnan

The Rotary Club of Kuala Lumpur di-Raja presented its honorary member and past president, Tan Sri L. Krishnan, with a Lifetime, "Service Above Self" award at its recent Deepavali open house. The club also celebrated his 95th birthday.

Tan Sri Krishnan has been a member of the club since 1973 and he was the President from 1977 to 1978. During his presidency, the projects undertaken included the construction of Pavilions in Taman Kuantan, Titiwangsa and the free production of a short film on drug abuse for PEMADAM.

Tan Sri Krishnan was also instrumental in the construction and establishment of Wisma Rotary.

At the event, the club president, Mohd. Ajmal Khan, presented the award to Tan Sri Krishnan, witnessed by past President, Dato' S. Kulasegaran. Mohd. Ajmal said that the club was fortunate to have such an illustrious member who had contributed so much to society.

The rotary club of K.L. is the oldest club in the country. It was instrumental in establishing the Gurney Training Centre for the blind and the Royal Commonwealth Society of Malaya, and it also contributed to the setting up of the Tun Hussein Onn National Eye Hospital (THONEH).

Tan Sri Krishnan has been actively involved in the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) for many years. He was the Deputy President of MAB as well as Chairman of MAB'S Executive Council (EXCO) and chairman of the Sports and Recreation Committee.

MAB Excellence Achievement Awards for the Visually Impaired 2016/2017

MAB presented excellence achievement awards to the blind and visually impaired on November 21, 2017 (Tuesday) at the hall of the Tun Hussein Onn National Eye Hospital (THONEH). Their achievements were being recognised in the field of education, entrepreneurship, sports and music and the awards were handed to the blind achievers by YB Datuk Hajah Azizah Binti Datuk Seri Panglima Mohd. Dun, Deputy Minister of Women, Family and Community Development.

Achievement awards or RM150 for the UPSR were given to Lee Xin Er, Nurnisriena binti Nasrul Anuar, and Muhammad Aiman bin Nordin.

Awards of RM300 for the SPM were given to Wong Sing Er, Michelle Kho Siew Zheng, and Muhammad Badrul Amin bin Nulkefli.

Awards of RM400 for the STPM were given to Teh Yong Shing, Chew Sui Teng, Nur'atipah binti Kamaruddin, and Muhammad Faiz bin Zainuddin.

Awards of RM500 for the Diploma of Education were given to Chen Qing Kang, Melvin Siew, and Mohamad Amirul Mahathir.

Awards of RM1,000 for the Bachelor's Degree were given to Amanda Kong, Muhammad bin Arrifin, Mohd. Hafizzudin bin Mohd. Faheli, and Afiq Ikhwan bin Abdullah.

Awards of RM2,000 for the Master's Degree were given to Nor Azlan bin Mohd. Mydin, Muhammad Syafiq bin Jasmi, and Tan Jian Shiang.

The award of RM3,000 was given to Dr Ahmad Shamsuri bin Muhamad.

Entrepreneur achievement awards were given to Muhammad Nadurin bin Hairuddin (selling accessories and spare parts for motor-cycles), Yusnani binti Md. Yunus (beauty treatment and packaging of traditional products), Haji Salim bin Salleh (Koko Minda food industries), and Lee Sheng Chow (pioneering massage business enterprise by the blind).

Music achievement awards were presented to Colin Ng Soon Beng, Khairul Azmi bin Saat and Alfred Ho.

Sports achievement awards were presented to 20 blind persons.

NCBM Braille Reading Competition 2017

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) held its Braille reading competition on November 23 at the National Library in Kuala Lumpur. A total of ten blind persons took part in the competition.

For the English Junior Category, the winners were Amanda Kong (MAB), Yak Bang Ling (SKSB), and Bredesley David Sotobi (SHSB).

For the English Senior Category, the winners were Chan Sau Yin, Wong Swee Foon, and Tan Chai Chin.

For the Malay Junior Category, the winners were Bredesley David Sotobi (SHSB) and Norhaslinda Hamdan (SKSB).

For the Malay Senior Category, the winner were Alfa Nur Aini Afendi (SBM), Abian Jambot (MAB), and Siti Jineh Jaimun (SHSB).

SIX STURS TO PLANNING

By Godfrey Ooi Goat See

Going back to the early 1980's, I will never forget the time when Dr. Knutsen, who was then the Executive Director of St. Nicholas' Home in Penang, carried out some brain-storming sessions in order to plan for the redevelopment of the home.

It was indeed a very unique and interesting way of planning which I have never experienced before or since that time. What I found to be even more amazing was that Dr. Knutsen involved only ten blind persons (who were exnicolites or old students of St. Nicholas' school for the blind) in the planning process. Other than Dr. Knutsen as the facilitator, and the secretary of St. Nicholas', there were no other sighted persons taking part in the planning.

The brain-storm was carried out in six stages, i.e. 1 the vision; 2 the contradictions; 3 the proposals; 4 the strategies; 5 the tactics; and 6 the time line.

Before proceeding with the planning, we were told of the things that should be noted.

- 1. This form of planning is open-ended, i.e. you can go back and add new ideas if you have missed them out. (you should never have to say, "I have forgotten to include that idea, I'm sorry!")
- 2. It is important to set the context and explain the meaning of each planning stage. Songs could be used for inspiration.
- 3. Putting the document together-having planned the different stages, you have to put them together with a summary of each of the planning stages.
- 4. A dedication could be made as the prologue to the document-this is especially useful for a big project such as this one.
- 5. The ideas should be displayed on the board for each session.

- 6. The document should consist of the summary and relevant chart of each planning stage. (To attract the attention of readers, a different colour can be used for each summary and chart).
- 7. For visual explosion, the Board Members (those who are to approve the proposal) should have the document in their hands. Charts of the different planning stages should also be put up around the walls of the meeting-room.
- 8. In fact, this is planning how to present the document to the Board of Governors in a convincing manner.
- 9. Half way through the planning project, you could pause to divert attention to a problem that may have cropped up, i.e. some problem that could have been overlooked during the main planning.
- 10. Indeed, with this kind of planning, almost everything is possible.

And now comes the proper planning for the write-up of the document. As mentioned at the beginning, the planning is done in eight stages as follows:

1. The Vision

We were all allowed to dream or let our imagination run wild as to what we would like the new St. Nicholas' Home or school to be like. In other words, we could dream up whatever amenities or facilities that we thought should be there if they were good for the blind.

The questions to ask could include "what needs to be done or should be done to help us achieve this vision? What do you expect to see when the vision has been achieved?"

The vision is actually your big dream and could include all kinds of ideas, be they wild or irrational. Probably, your own imagination will help to limit your dream automatically so that you need not worry about the vision getting out of hand.

You could work in smaller groups to bring out the ideas. Then we come back in to the main group to have a look at the ideas that have been dreamed up. If there are too many ideas, then they will have to be divided in to different areas. A check can then be made to see if any more new ideas could be added.

Then, as suggested by the facilitator, we could think of some incident or a song that could help in setting the context or in creating the mental set.

2. Contradictions

Now we had to think what would be the obstacles that would hinder our dreams from being realised. However, we should not get bogged down with questions like "what can we do?", "What are the possibilities?" or "what can be done?"

The facilitator explained that a contradiction usually meant a neutral object; it is our positive or negative attitude towards an object (which is the contradiction) that could render the object as a useful or useless tool.

For example, if there is a piece of wood blocking the traffic of timber down the river, then that piece of wood causing the jam will have to be located and removed.

In the second example given, an Indian villager excitedly suggested that if you should meet an elephant which is blocking your path, then you will have to get on to the elephant and make it carry you to the place where you want to go.

We were again divided in to smaller groups to look at the contradictions that could arise. We then came back in to the main group to present our findings and to divide the contradictions in to some main areas if necessary. The contradictions were then displayed on the board for us to check to see if any ideas had been left out.

Then again in order to set the context, we sang a song for inspiration.

3. Proposals

This meant putting up suggestions as to how we would carry out the ideas that had been raised. In other words, we could put up a sentence that would broadly suggest what was intended to be done.

There should be one proposal for each areas of the vision. For example, one of the proposal could be to carry out a fund-raising project for the development programme.

We then carried out group work to come up with proposals for each of the areas. The ideas were then displayed on the board to check for more proposals that could be included if necessary.

The session was then ended with another song of inspiration.

4. Strategies

Now came the time for us to map out the ways that need to be taken in order to carry out the proposals.

What does a strategy mean? It is a broad outline of what we intend to do. For example, one of the strategies would be to set up a committee.

We were then divided in to smaller groups and we had to draw up at least three strategies for each of the proposals made.

Subsequently, we came back in to the main group in order to check for more ideas or strategies to be carried out.

5. Tactics

What was the meaning of tactics? In fact, tactics meant the lines of action that need to be taken for each of the given strategies. For example, in order to set up the committee (as mentioned earlier), the lines of action to be taken include getting the members to form the committee, to appoint office-bearers in the committee, to discuss how the committee should operate, etc.

6. Time line

What is the meaning of time line? It means that the strategies to be carried out is planned according to a time schedule which could be in years, months, weeks, days, or even hours and minutes.

The projects needs to be planned out in phases as follows-laying the foundations, extension and development, consolidation, and evaluation.

One or more strategies could be implemented for each period of time allocated. However, the strategy need not stop after its time of implementation is over. For example, after the year for a certain strategy has run its course, the strategy could still go on being carried out.

If the project is a big one, then it will have to be divided into phases. We then go on in outlining the strategies for each of the phases.

In closing the whole programme, we sang the song of inspiration as follows:

When you are aware, the whole world is a mountain of care, Skies constantly weep over all of the tragedy here, Then your life belongs to all suffering men everywhere, When you are aware, the whole world is a mountain of care.

Bearing the weight of the world, And the dread of its crushing demands, Joyously burdened to know That there's no other world on your hands, and

Your heart starts to soar With the yonder that's filling the air, When you are aware, The whole world is a mountain of care.

Thus, we came up with a very beautiful document and we then decided to have a celebration even before our success. After all the effort and hard work, Dr. Knutsen felt that we deserved to have some relaxing time together. And

so we went to a bungalow on Penang Hill. This was also a great time for learning because we were encouraged to carry out whatever chores we could like laying the table, cleaning the table and washing the dishes and crockery. We also had some time to review the work that we had done in drawing up the document. After the enjoyable time together, we went down the hill to wait for the outcome.

Eventually, we received news that the Board was very impressed with the document. Unfortunately, however, there was no unanimity in the Board and the document was ultimately rejected.

Needless to say, we were all greatly disappointed. Nonetheless, I must say that it was a wonderful opportunity that had been given to me in carrying out the exercise. Indeed, it was such a fantastic and beautiful learning experience for us all, I believe! - something that I will never forget.

But I must leave the last word to Barnabas Lee Ah Guan, who was and is still known as our "Management Guru". He says, "in my opinion, it was and still is unfortunate that the 20-year plan of Dr. K.C. Knutsen and, indeed, all of us participants, had been set aside-this is because St. Nicholas' had lost the initiative to seize the opportunity to move forward and become great. I believe that even if 30 to 40 percent of the project could have been implemented, St. Nicholas' will have been in a much better position than what it is in today both financially and in terms of its services and programmes for the blind; certainly, the overall well-being of the blind would have been much better in our present time."

Barnabas adds on further, "according to the philosophy of the famous VMW car manufacturing company in Germany, 'he who dares wins'. The company's management dared and that is why the company is so up-front today. For them, of course, the opposite is true-if you dare not, then you will lose.

"Truly, I maintain that very strong feeling that it was most unfortunate it St. Nicholas' not to have been able to seize that golden opportunity to move forward and become great!"

THE POSITIVE EXPERIENCES AND OPPORTUNITIES THAT CAN COME PROMIDENCE BEIND

By Lim Yew Yi

Editor's Note: The WBUAP Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest was started in 2003 and it has gone on for fifteen years. For the 15th Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest (2017), the Otsuki prize of US.1,000 was awarded to the overall winner, Lim Yew Yi, 33-year old male from Malaysia who works as the computer trainer at St. Nicholas' Home, Penang. His essay won the Otsuki prize for the following reasons:

- 1. Lim Yew Yi shows how the word of the well known deaf-blind person, Helen Keller, had the power to inspire him to rise from a state of hopelessness caused by his blindness in order to appreciate life, thereby bringing meaning and hope to his existence.
- 2. He shows how opportunities were created that enabled him to overcome the challenges in his struggle against blindness, thereby fulfilling his hopes and dreams and making him a source of inspiration to other people.
- 3. With such inspiration, he dared to take risks with great courage which ultimately brought him sweet success.

Here is the winning essay:

"I seldom think about my limitations, and they never make me sad," said Helen Keller. These words inspire me every day as I live my life.

After becoming blind, I often asked myself, "will I get a job?" "How do I live my life as a blind person?" or "How can I support my parents?" Then, one day, I came across this quote by Helen Keller. I felt so inspired as it gave me a reason to keep on doing my best in life.

As a teenager, I was diagnosed for Glaucoma and I became blind at the age of twenty. I tried my best to carry on with my life and studies although I did not know how to read Braille. Fortunately, I had the opportunity to learn Braille and basic computer skills which enabled me to sit for my examinations in high school. However, I must admit that the lack of reading materials in Braille almost caused me to give up the struggle.

After leaving school, I stayed at home for almost a year without any purpose in life. It was during this time of hopelessness and despair when I came across the inspiring words of Helen Keller. I began to take control of my life and I wrote nearly 120 letters to apply for jobs at various corporations and Government agencies.

After one month of receiving negative responses, I was cheered up when a company asked me to go for an interview. This I did, but then I had to wait for another month for the company's decision. I was filled with joy when the company finally asked me to report for work. They offered me the position of a Junior Administrative Clerk at the factory since I had some computer skills. I could feel the happiness in my family upon hearing the good news.

Some months later I learned there was an advanced computer course that would enable me to attain the certificate of the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL). I sought permission from my bosses to attend the course but they did not consent as I would have to leave my job for six months. I was determined to upgrade my IT skills, and so I reluctantly resigned.

My family members were greatly disappointed with my decision as they feared that I would not be able to find another job even with the ICDL certificate. However, with the spirit and the words of Helen Keller urging me on, I was able to persevere and I successfully completed the course and received the ICDL certificate.

Although I now had the ICDL certificate, I was unemployed! While looking for employment, I joined St. Nicholas' Home (SNH) in Penang as a volunteer. After three months, St. Nicholas' appointed me as the DAISY (Digital Information System) Project Technician. With my interest for the project and with my IT knowledge, I managed to produce 1,200 audio books in spite of the many difficulties faced.

With the blessing of my new employer, I applied for and happily I was selected to attend the 14th Duskin Leadership Training Course and the Teruko Ikeda ICT Training Programme for ten months in Japan. While there, I was given the opportunity to gain further knowledge on the use of DAISY to produce audio books with digitised Braille texts which can be uploaded on to websites. Besides that, I also had the chance to learn making different kinds of handicrafts, and even making a white cane.

While in Japan, I also had the opportunity to share and participate in the cultural and social activities of other persons with visual disabilities. As English was not widely spoken in Japan, I had to master the Japanese language within three months in order to communicate with the teachers, friends and the general public. It was tough but I certainly learned a lot.

On completion of the course, I returned to Malaysia to resume my work at St. Nicholas' Home with more determination to share my new knowledge with other blind people in the use of the latest information and communication technology, and I was selected to join an Access Audit team which advocated to make tourist spots in Penang more accessible to the blind and other disabled groups.

In 2014 I was promoted to the position of a computer trainer. I am now teaching Windows, Microsoft Office, Internet Explorer, basic computer programming plus converting and editing of audio and video materials. I also given tuition to blind people who are not able to come to St. Nicholas' for the purpose. Altogether, I have already taught 120 trainees and they have successfully completed their courses. Frankly, I never dreamt of becoming a trainer, but here I am doing just that-amazing!

I am managing to live a normal and independent life even though I am totally blind. I find my life to be interesting and enjoyable-sometimes I go out to the beach for an hour or two to dip in the water and battle with the waves; on other occasions, I have dinners with friends to try out different kinds of food, or go to the cinema when there is a good movie showing. Sunday is the day when I set up my workload for the coming week. I feel thankful and proud to have the means to support my parents financially, and I could even afford to buy a small house.

With every challenge that comes my way, I make an effort to cope with my difficulties and learn from the mistakes and failures. Helen Keller did so and I want to follow in her footsteps. She said, "everything has its wonders, even darkness and silence. Life is either a great adventure or it is nothing."

I want to live my life as a great adventure, just like Helen Keller.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATES

by Moses Choo Siew Cheong, Executive Director, National Council for the Blind, Malaysia

While many of us are still moving into the challenging era of adapting to the touch-screen, the next new generation of tools is coming upon us - they seem to be very interesting and friendly tools because we can talk to them. Indeed, talking to a machine may sound rather frightening but this will be the reality in the not too distant future.

Anyway, for those of us who are using the IOS or even Android, there are already the applications that do allow us to talk to the phone or even to ask a question to which an answer may be given with reference to certain websites.

In fact, both Amazon and Google are now competing to make the best companion for mankind. Amazon is coming up with a device which is called Echo. In the case of Google, their device is called Google Home.

Amazon's Echo Dot is a 360-degree speaker that uses far-field voice recognition powered by the Amazon Alexa voice service. Among the abilities of Echo is its third-party skills such as Fitbit, Uber, Domino's pizza, and Capitor One that can be found in the Alexa App.

The Amazon Echo and the Echo Dot are far-field Alexa-enabled devices. How do they recognise the wake word? Both of these devices use the ondevice keyword spotting to detect the wake word. When they detect the wake word, they will stream audio to the Cloud, including a fraction of a second of audio before the wake word.

How do I know when Amazon Echo and Echo Dot are streaming my voice to the Cloud?

When you press the action button on top of both devices, or when you press and hold the remote's microphone button, the light ring around the top of your Amazon Echo turns blue, indicating that Amazon Echo is streaming audio to the Cloud.

When you use the wake word, the audio stream includes a fraction of a second of audio before the wake word, and it closes once your question or request has been processed. Within the sound settings in the Alexa App, you can enable a wake up sound, i.e. a short audible tone that plays after the wake word is recognised to indicate that the device is streaming audio.

You can also enable an end of request sound. It will play a short audible tone at the end of your request, indicating that the connection has closed and that the device is no longer streaming audio.

Can I turn off the microphone on Amazon Echo and Echo Dot?

Yes, you can do this by pushing the microphone on/off button at the top of your device. When the button turns red, the microphone is off. The device will not respond to the wake word nor respond to the action button until you reactivate the microphone by pushing the on/off button again.

However, even when the device's microphone is off, Amazon Echo or Echo Dot will still respond to requests you make through your remote.

Alexa and some frequently asked facts:

1. How do I use Alexa?

Alexa is a cloud service and it works differently based on the type of Alexa-enabled product. For far-field Alexa-enabled devices like the Amazon Echo and Echo Dot, you say the wake word to activate Alexa.

For devices like Amazon Tap, you activate Alexa by pressing the Talk or microphone button. Then ask Alexa a question such as "what is the weather today in new York?". Or you can tell Alexa to do something like "add batteries to my copping list" or "play jazz". Your question or request will be processed in the Cloud.

Alexa uses your voice recordings and other information, including from third-party sources, to answer your questions, fulfil your requests or improve your experience.

2. Can I review what I have asked Alexa?

You can review voice interactions with Alexa by visiting History in Settings in the Alexa Apps. Your interactions are grouped together by question or request. You tap an entry to see more details, provide feedback, or listen to the audio sent to the Cloud for that entry by tapping the play icon.

3. How do I delete Alexa voice recordings?

You can do this by going to History in Settings in the Alexa app, drilling down for a specific entry, and then tapping the delete button.

Or you can delete all voice recordings associated with your account for each of your Alexa-enabled products by selecting the applicable product at the Manage Your Content and Devices Page at www.amazon.com/mycd or by contacting customer service.

4. How do Alexa skills work?

Skills are voice-driven Alexa capabilities. You can view available skills and enable or disable certain skills from your Alexa app. Then you can start using enabled skills by saying specific phrases, called by invocation names, after you activate Alexa.

5. How does shopping work?

Prime members can ask Alexa to order eligible products as well as digital music tracks and albums.

Your default payment and shipping settings will be used to place your order. You can require a speakable confirmation code, turn purchasing off, and see the product and order details in your Alexa app.

6. Can I turn off purchasing?

Alexa has voice purchasing settings. Visit Settings/Voice Purchasing in your Alexa app to turn off purchasing by voice from Amazon. You can also require an optional confirmation code that Alexa will ask you to say out loud when you want to place an order from Amazon.

Google Home

This is another voice-activated speaker powered by the Google Assistant. Just start with, "Ok Google".

The product was released in the United States in 2016.

Google has its services integrated into the operating system. Supporting commands and features are similar to those in Amazon Echo such as streaming through Google Play Music, Youtube Music, TuneIn and iHeartRadio.

The intelligent personal assistant, i.e. Google Assistant, is included as the main and only primary assistant in the software and operating system of Google Home.

Google Home has home automation as a feature. It is able to control devices as a central hub.

Google Home is able to connect to multiple Home speakers wirelessly, reaching multiple rooms. It can control a Chromecast or any Google Cast enabled device to stream video or audio.

Google Home is 5.62 inches high and 3.79 inches in diameter. It weighs 16.8 ounces.

It has dual microphones. However, for privacy, concerns, it has a mute button for the microphone to silence all communications to it.

The cover over the base is available in various colours for the purpose of blending it around the home décor.

If you are keen In such devices, you have to start saving. These devices will be in the range of RM250 to RM400 (excluding other monthly charges).

BEMY EYES BRING SIGHT TO THEE BUIN AND VISUALISY INVENTED

by Moses Choo Siew Cheong

Be My Eyes is an app that connects the blind and visually impaired with sighted helpers from around the world via live video connection.

There are many situations in which a pair of friendly eyes can be helpful for those with visual impairment. Be My Eyes can be used to help solve a wide range of daily tasks - indeed, no request is too big or too small!

You can request help 24/7 as you are connected based on time zones and on language. For example, if you speak English but you are based in the U.S. and you need assistance in the middle of the night, you can be connected to an English-speaking helper in England, Australia or any other country where it is day-time.

People are always coming up with creative ways to use Be My Eyes. The following list provides some examples of different ways whereby you can use the Be My Eyes app.

- 1. Finding lost items
- 2. Describing pictures, paintings or other artwork
- 3. Matching or explaining colours
- 4. Reading labels on household products
- 5. Reading computer screens if the websites are inaccessible or the screen-readers are not available
- 6. Shopping in the supermarkets and stores
- 7. Identifying the expiration date on perishable food packages
- 8. Familiarising yourself with new locations
- 9. Distinguishing between products like canned foods, shampoos, soaps, spices, etc.

- 10. Determining if lights are turned on or off
- 11. Finding out when public transportation like buses and trains are departing or arriving
- 12. Resolving electrical or technical issues.

At the moment, there are over half a million sighted helpers in the Be My Eyes community who are ready and willing to provide assistance. Moreover, Be My Eyes is FREE no matter how much you use it and how often you decide to obtain its assistance.

Who are the sighted helpers?

They are the friendly citizens who have decided that they would be willing to lend their sight as they go about their daily lives. If a volunteer is busy when they receive a call, then Be My Eyes will find the next available helper right away.

There are many volunteers in the Be My Eyes community who are still waiting to receive their first help request. You can, therefore, and you should feel free to make calls as frequently as you wish without ever disturbing anyone.

Here are a few testimonials from the sighted helpers:

- 1. The feeling of usefulness when you answer a call and can successfully help someone cannot be described. I am always eagerly awaiting the next one.
- 2. I am so happy to have been helpful. Thanks for this application, and thanks for giving me this moment of joy it is great to feel useful!
- 3. I just helped for the first time and I was more than excited! This is awesome to be able to be someone's eyes in a time of need. Thank you for the opportunity to help.

- 4. My first opportunity to help went very well. What a wonderful way to connect with people. Thanks for making my day. I love this as it is so easy to help others. I look forward to more opportunities to help.
- 5. I was so thrilled to be able to help someone within a couple of hours of installing and signing up for the app. It was such a wonderful experience to be able to help someone.

Hans Wiberg is the founder of Be My Eyes.

He says, "it's my hope that by helping each other as an online community, Be My Eyes will make a big difference in the everyday lives of blind people all over the world."

So if you are a blind or vision-impaired person, why not give it a try?

If you are interested, you can look up http://bemyeyes.com/

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE PRINT AND PRECTRONIC MEDIA

By Ruth Yong Wang Theen

Editor's Note: Ruth Yong Wang Theen is totally blind and she studied journalism at Monash University, Kuala Lumpur from 2013 to 2016. For one of her assignments, she had to do a comparative study of the print and electronic media. Here she is to share with readers what she had discovered.

Relatively cheap and portable writing materials were already in existence before the invention of printing in the west. The writing materials were initially made of clay and stone which were eventually replaced by papyrus and parchment. This made it possible for written literature and a body of written knowledge to develop during the classical years. In fact, it was the motive power of printing that made it possible for the little peninsula of Europe to explode across the world from the 15th to the 18th centuries A.D., thereby making it into the dominant force in human society.

Later, print had to some extent changed in function during the time of the French and American revolutions towards the end of the 18th century and the beginning of the 19th century. Because of its durability, print has made history recordable and accurate. Moreover, the information provided in a print newspaper is usually quite genuine and authentic and it is in greater detail. And with the invention of the telegraph, news could be brought more speedily to the newspapers while the national network facilitated the distribution of books and magazines on a nationwide basis.

With the arrival of the electronic media, however the latest news could now be provided immediately by television, thereby posing a danger to the newspapers which could become irrelevant. In times past, the only communicational channels were the roads, waterways and railroads. In fact, the invention of the telegraph helped to bring about the first break between information and physical movement. The telegraph had made it possible for complex messages to be sent more quickly than a messenger carrying them by hand could. Thus, with the telegraph, the informational differences between different places began to be eroded.

One distinct difference between print and electronic media can, therefore, be seen in terms of physical and social space. For the print as well as the oral media, the close bond between physical and social space is quite perceptible. In contrast, the electronic media lead to a nearly total separation of physical and social space. For instance, when we communicate by telephone, radio or television, where we are physically no longer determines where or who we are socially.

Employees in the work environment do certainly have a strong preference for the electronic media. This is because they feel that the electronic media is better adapted in meeting their needs. They are inclined to reject the corporate print media as they are too often filled with pictures of the executives and managers of the company.

Nevertheless, there are some employees who do prefer the print media because they love to read the newspapers, magazines, as well as fiction and non-fiction books while at home. Notwithstanding this, however, it cannot be ignored that the print media do have physical volume and weight and they need to be transported by someone from place to place. In fact, for the early print media like clay and papyrus, the people had to go to a certain place in order to experience the objects as they were heavy and unmovable.

In the case of the electronic media, the audience has access to everything that is available via the television, telephone and telegraph. Through electronically mediated interaction, the definition of situation and behaviour is no longer determined by physical location. Intimate encounters can be modified when there are other people on the telephone or on television.

Prisons were once places of physical and social separation before the creation of the electronic media. Nowadays, with the existence of such electronic media, the prisons are no longer places of physical and social isolation as the prisoners are now able to communicate with the outside world via the telephone, radio and television and learn about events occurring by their prison walls.

Hence, it can be said that the electronic media have played an important role in reshaping social identities and situations by altering the informational characteristics of a place. Thus, a prisoner is now no longer limited by movement and communication because he has access to the environment outside his prison. The electronic media have enabled prisoners to continue remaining as part of society.

The impact of the electronic media have had similar effects upon women, children, the poor, and even the disabled whose social place was once shaped by physical isolation from the larger world. Their horizons have been broadened and extended considerably in gaining information and experience from place to place. No doubt, communicating via the electronic media is not equivalent to travelling and interacting physically, but it is much more similar to face-to-face and social communication when compared with information conveyed by books, magazines and letters.

Indeed, para-social interaction has been made possible by the electronic media (which is absent from the print media). The electronic media have thus brought about an important change by making possible live and mediated encounters. Through the electronic media, social performers are now able to go to places where they cannot travel and they can have face-to-face interaction without having to travel at all. This has led to the creation of a new type of relationship called "para-social interaction". Although the relationship is mediated, it psychologically resembles face-to-face interaction. The viewers feel that they know the people they meet on tv in the same way that they know their friends. They even begin to believe that they understand a performer much better.

Indeed, the electronic media is able to provide experience and interaction which were once only restricted to intimate live encounters. The have had the greatest impact upon those who have been physically and psychologically removed from everyday social interaction. Of course, many people are able to contact their real friends and share the intimacy with a para-social friend by using the telephone.

The print media, on the other hand, often involve a private, non-social activity. For example, reading is usually done in quiet areas alone, and when reading is done, other activities are excluded. In fact, special places are designed to separate people into single-person cubicles for reading. Even though a reader is supposed to be connected with others by reading what these other persons have written, the reader still tends to be removed from those who are physically present.

For instance, when someone hands me a greeting-card, I have to ignore it for a moment. This demonstrate that reading print is anti-social as it tends to isolate the reader from live interactions.

Electronic media may invade all areas of our life but they do not occupy them in the way books do. With print media, you cannot turn a private place in to public space but this is possible with electronic media because they are more accessible to the outside world by destroying the specialities of time and place.

Finally, the print media do depend on the self-selection process to gain advertisement readers while the electronic media rely on the self-selection process to produce commercial viewers. In this case, the print media have been proved to be more effective as the print-advertisement readers can spend more time choosing the advertisements while the viewer of TV commercials is limited to the running time for the commercials.

I can conclude that both the print and electronic media are equally important and both have their advantages. Indeed, they have both played a significant role in the development of communication in any country and for the betterment of mankind. Both forms of media should, therefore, be appreciated and neither should be forgotten.

APOINT TO PONDERS THE PROPESSORS WILL

By Wong Kow

When a rich professor, Robert (not his real name), passed away, he left behind eleven branded cars of the same value to be given to his three sons.

In the will, it was clearly stated as follows" "Half of all the eleven cars is to be given to the eldest son. A quarter of all the eleven cars is to be given to the second son. One-sixth of the eleven cars is to be given to the third son".

The three sons were puzzled as to how the cars could be divided by two, by four and by six without having to cut one or even more of the cars to pieces. While they were puzzling over the question, their appointed lawyer, who was also a mathematician, arrived in his own car.

As the sons explained the problem to him, the lawyer parked his own car alongside the eleven cars. He then said smilingly, "how many cars are there now?"

"Twelve," the sons replied unanimously.

The lawyer then executed the will accordingly. The eldest son got half of the total, which was six cars. The second son got a quarter of the total, which was three cars. The third son got one-sixth of the total, which was two cars.

Now, how can this be? Well, let us see how the cars had been given away to the three sons - 6 plus 3 plus 2 equals eleven! In fact, the problem had been solved amicably without having to cut any of the cars into pieces. Moreover, the lawyer could even drive away in his own car!

Indeed, it is quite amazing how the lawyer could have divided up the cars among the three brothers so satisfactorily without any need of one or more of the cars being cut to pieces. Actually, the lawyer's method is quite simple-he merely put his own car for the purpose of easy calculation and understanding. In accordance with the equation posed, nobody had to lose anything, not even a bit of his share.

Well, if like me, you do find figures, calculations and mathematical problems interesting, stimulating and though-provoking, then do read i=on for the following reasoning.

According to the professor's will, he actually did not give away 100 percent of all the eleven cars in total. A simple calculation will show that half plus a quarter plus one-sixth equals 91.67 of the total 100 percent. Thus, there is a reminder of 8.3 percent of the total left, thereby allowing each son to get slightly more than his share without having to cut any of the cars into pieces.

True enough-the eldest son is able to get six cars, which is half a car more than his original share as stated in the will. Likewise, the second and third sons also get slightly more than their share as mentioned in the will.

Most probably, we ourselves will not inherit properties through such a complicated will as this. Nevertheless, we could face similar problems of complicated sharing and tricky calculations in life. I believe that with an analytical mind and with mathematical thinking, one could help looking into various ways of settlement so that matters can be resolved with a win-win situation as the outcome.

Truly, I love mathematics because it not only makes me work hard but it also stimulates me to play hard. As the saying goes, "we do not stop working and playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop working and playing."

So let's work hard and play hard no matter whether we are young or old!

UNINERSAL DESIGN NOW THE RULE

In November 2017, it was reported in The Star that all new developments in Petaling Jaya will be required to seek building design approval from the City Council's Universal Design Unit (UDU) before applications can be accepted for planning approval.

The P.J. Mayor, Datuk Mohd. Azizi Mohd. Zain, said that the UDU had been formed in 2016 in order to ensure that all developments adhere to universal design needs.

He explained, "This unit will ensure that developments incorporate universal design features such as suitable access to all, including the disabled. Only with the UDU'S approval can a project be submitted for approval at the one-stop centre."

MBPJ is, in fact, in the midst of preparing its Universal Design Master Plan 2030 which will act as a reference for other local councils in Selangor and in other parts of the country.

MBPJ has been committed to implementing the barrier-free city concept sine year 2000. To date, the City Council has carried out access audits at 270 locations which consist of Council and private buildings, and it has shared its expertise with more than ten agencies and local councils.

MBPJ has upgraded and modified its buildings, public parks and other existing infrastructure in order to make them disabled-friendly.

MBPJ has also launched 22 free bus services that are disabled-friendly.

INDEPENDENT LIMING CENTURES FOR THE DISABILED

In the 11th Malaysia plan, the Government announced that Independent Living Centres (ILC's) will be set up in the country to improve the quality of life of disabled people. The ILC's will provide services and facilities aimed at empowering the severely disabled in particular to become self-reliant by acquiring job skills.

A crucial aspect will be providing personal assistants to help the severely disabled in the performance of daily tasks. Socialising, being one of the key areas often ignored but of great importance to the disabled, the personal assistants will bring them for social gatherings, excursions, recreational activities in the park, and so on.

There will be support reference groups to help in advocacy, counselling, referral and information. In fact, disabled persons and their families will be able to visit the centres for support such as counselling and benefit from programmes related to empowerment.

When a person becomes disabled, he may not know what to do or where to go. The ILC's will help to connect them with relevant agencies such as the National Welfare Department, Social Security Organisations and the Health Ministry.

Initially, the Government plans to establish seven of such centres throughout the country by the year of 2020. The ILC's will act as a one-stop centre for the disabled to gain all kinds of information, assistance and services.

Ultimately, the ILC's will double up as a resource centre for both the Government and the private sector to deal with matters on disability

THE JACK MADACTOR

(This extract is taken from an article in The Star of March 26, 2017. There is much that we can learn from the famous Chinese e-commerce entrepreneur, Jack Ma, on living a fruitful life and on being successful.)

The buzz word that kept everyone excited at the Global Transformation Forum 2017 was "Jack Ma". The 1.5 metre (or five-foot) tall Ali Baba founder and Executive Chairman was clearly the main draw at the two-day event in Kuala Lumpur and the Who's Who of Malaysian industries. He is China's e-commerce giant.

Ma, 52, set up Ali Baba, a Chinese e-commerce company in his apartment in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province with eighteen friends in 1999. Today Ali Baba generates an annual gross merchandise volume of US.580 billion. Thus, placing it at the number 21st position on the list of countries by GDP with the goal of achieving US.1 Trillion by the year 2020.

Ma spend seven years in primary school while normal students took only five years. He applied three times to get into university. He applied for thirty jobs but did not get even one.

When he tried to look for a job at KFC, twenty-four people went and twenty-three were hired. He was the only one not accepted.

He also tried to be a policeman. Five classmates went and four were accepted. Ma was turned down.

Nevertheless, Ma said that it was the rejection and failure that made him who he is today. He said, "every setback, every time people refuse us, I take that as a training course."

During his talk, Ma constantly stressed the importance of having a good team and the need to groom and train talents within an organisation to ensure the success of a company. He emphasised the need to elevate small and medium enterprises (SME's) as well as young people to greater heights by using technology.

Ma said, "we are now in D.T. (not Donald Trump) but Data Time." He said that Asia could ride on the D.T. through mobile technology and machine learning.

He cautioned that machines can be smarter and more powerful than people and a lof of jobs will be taken over by machines. Nonetheless, he said that human beings can always trump a machine with culture and values.

He, therefore, advised that we should change the way we teach our children. Education should focus on imagination, creativity and teamwork. We should teach music and sports. Sports make kids understand what is teamwork while music and painting make kids understand what is imagination and creativity.

"I believe the future is not about competition of knowledge but wisdom and experience," says Ma.

He describes successful entrepreneurs like Malaysian tycoon, Robert Kuok and Hong Kong business magnate, Li Ka-Shing as social scientists plus artists.

Ma said, "You have to understand human beings, their behaviour and needs. You should be very artistic."

He also applauded women for their indispensable role in the work-force with their caring nature. In Ali Baba, close to half the employees are female, who also represent 33% management. More than half of the sellers on Ali Baba's online shopping sites are also women.

In November 2016, Ma was named Digital Economic Advisor to the Malaysian Government when he met YB Dato Seri Najib in Beijing for the second time. He first met YB Dato Seri Najib in 2014. Ma said that he did not expect to draw a salary from this role but he saw the appointment as an honour.

According to Tan Sri Ong Ka Ting, the P.M's Special Envoy to China, he found Ma to be friendly and humble despite his phenomenal success. "He carries no airs. He acknowledges everyone watching him, including the airport staff and the police officers, with a wave and a smile," says Tan Sri Ong.

For someone who lives a hectic life and spends 800 hours in the air (as in the year of 2016), Ma said he dreams of "retiring and dying" on a beach and not in the office.

"Life is not only about Ali Baba. There are so many interesting things that I don't have time to enjoy, so I will never go back to the company and criticise the young people like a stepfather," says Ma.

During his trip to Malaysia for the Global Transformation Forum, Ma made several demands on Malaysia. He said he only wanted to work with an efficient and result-oriented government.

The P.M. readily agreed to this condition.

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EARN SOME EXTERA 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.