NCBM OUTREACH



Issue No. 94

January - March 2019

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

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Produced by

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A quarterly publication of NCBM

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

19 & 20, Block C, Lot 757, Jalan Subang 3, Persiaran Subang, 47610 Subang Jaya, Selangor Tel: 603 - 5632 1302 / 1307 Fax: 603 - 5632 4190 / 8011 2773 Email: sylogprint@gmail.com

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 $The\ views\ expressed\ in\ this\ publication\ are\ those\ of\ the\ author/contributor\ and\ do\ not\ necessarily\ represent\ the\ views\ of\ NCBM.$

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.

EDITORIAL BOARD

Moses Choo Siew Cheong
Wong Yoon Loong
Wong Kwee Heong
Chin Yew Cheng

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

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



World Blind Union Union Mondiale Des Aveugles Unión Mundial de Ciegos

The Importance of Braille Literacy WBU Press Release: World Braille Day January 4th, 2019

Toronto, Canada: On January 4th, we celebrate World Braille Day and the huge impact that Louis Braille's invention has had on the lives of blind people all over the world. Braille always has been and always will be more than just a tool for blind individuals who use it. Braille represents competency, independence, and equality.

Braille is not a code to be deciphered but it is a method of reading and writing that is equal in value to print for sighted people. The way in which blind and partially sighted people develop literacy skills may differ, but the goal is the same: to use reading, writing, and other literacy tools to gather and understand important information and to convey important information to themselves and to others.

A lot has changed since Braille was invented almost 200 years ago, both in technology and educational practices. Nowadays, various students have access to different kinds of devices such as refreshable braille displays and/ or braille note takers (a dedicated computer for braille users). The books in Braille that are used now are often produced by high-speed braille embossers using translation software that converts the printed word into Braille cells. However, the fundamental importance of Braille remains unchanged and as important as ever.

There is a real concern in the blind community that there is less support for teaching, using and investing in Braille, particularly among educators and governments, due to the belief that technologies such as e-books, audiobooks, and screen readers can replace Braille. This issue is a worldwide concern, in developed and developing countries alike. "Other formats such as audiobooks, which are generally cheaper than Braille, cannot replace Braille and advances such as the newer and more affordable refreshable Braille displays will support Braille literacy in the future," said Kevin Carey, the new Chair of the World Braille Council.

While advances in technology are welcome, we recommend that technology should be used to enhance the use of Braille, not to replace it. Evidence supports our belief that those who have the opportunity to fully acquire Braille reading and writing skills attain better literacy, better education, and employment outcomes than those whose learning has been primarily supported by spoken word technology.

Literacy – the ability to read and write – is vital to a successful education, career, and quality of life in today's world. Whether in the form of curling up with a good book, jotting down a phone number, making a shopping list, or writing a report on a computer, being literate means participating effectively at home and in society.

The World Blind Union strongly recommends that all blind and severely partially-sighted children be given the opportunity to learn and become proficient in Braille reading and writing skills and that they receive instruction from those who are thoroughly trained and qualified to teach Braille.

We also strongly recommend that all blind persons have access to a variety of books and publications in braille that are up-to-date. This recommendation can be achieved in part by governments ratifying the Marrakesh Treaty, which allows for copyright exceptions to facilitate the creation of accessible books and other copyrighted works and for the import and export of such materials across national boundaries.

To read our revised Position Statement on Braille Literacy, which includes a full list of our recommendations as well as a description of the Braille alphabet, please <u>click here</u>.

The **World Blind Union (WBU)** is the global organization representing the estimated 285 million people worldwide who are blind or partially sighted. Members consist of organizations run by blind people advocating on their own behalf and organizations that serve the blind, in over 190 countries, as well as international organizations working in the field of vision impairment.

For further information contact: Caitlin Reid Communications Officer, World Blind Union Caitlin.Reid@wbu.ngo



04 March 2019

RE: World Blind Union statement on International Women's Day, 8 March 2019

The World Blind Union joins the United Nations to celebrate International Women's Day on 8 March 2019. The theme this year is <u>Think equal, build smart, innovate for change</u>. It focuses on innovative ways in which we can advance gender equality and the empowerment of women, particularly in the areas of social protection systems, access to public services and sustainable infrastructure. Hence it is a day to promote gender equality and women's empowerment, including women with visual disabilities.

Generally, blind and partially sighted women and girls experience multiple forms of discrimination, which infringe on their basic human rights and empowerment. Due to the intersections of discrimination based on gender and disability, blind and partially sighted women are at a higher risk of neglect, gender-based violence and exploitation.

The latest data shows that 55% of the world's visually impaired are women (139 million). States must address the unique needs of blind and partially sighted women to ensure equal participation and access to education, innovation and technology opportunities, employment, rehabilitation, among other basic rights.

According to Article 6 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) states parties recognize that women and girls with disabilities are subject to multiple discrimination, and in this regard shall take measures to ensure the full and equal enjoyment by them of all human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Furthermore, gender inequality continues to hold women back and deprives them of basic rights and opportunities as per Sustainable Development Goal 5. This Goal states that empowering women requires addressing structural issues such as unfair social norms and attitudes as well as developing progressive legal frameworks that promote equality between women and men. The achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals requires transformative shifts, integrated approaches and new solutions, particularly when it comes to advancing gender equality, innovation and the empowerment of all women and girls.

The World Blind Union, therefore, reminds states to fulfil their obligations by protecting and respecting the rights of women, particularly blind and partially sighted women. As we commemorate International Women's Day, we appeal to states, UN agencies, development partners and civil society to mainstream the rights of women with disabilities in their development plans, programs and policies. We urge governments to end all forms of discrimination against women with disabilities and put in place necessary provisions to promote gender equality and other fundamental rights of all women.

It is vital that women's ideas and experiences equally influence the design and implementation of the innovations that shape our future societies.

The World Blind Union (WBU) is the global organization that represents the estimated 253 million people worldwide who are blind or partially sighted. Members consist of organizations of blind people advocating on their own behalf and organizations that serve the blind, in over 190 countries, as well as international organizations working in the field of vision impairment. Visit our website at www.worldblindunion.org

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28 March 2019

Statement to WBU national member organizations - accessible air travel

The World Blind Union is encouraging national members to urgently intensify advocacy efforts towards delegates of International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) to address pressing issues affecting blind and partially sighted Air travellers. ICAO will be holding their 40th session in Montreal, Canada from 24 September to 4 October, 2019. WBU is therefore mobilizing its members to sensitize relevant state authorities in their respective countries to ensure that delegates present and approve a resolution to establish international regulations which address the following key issues:

(The member states and their associated ministries/delegate representatives can be found by following this URL:

https://www.icao.int/Pages/Links.aspx?#Government)

Identified advocacy issues

- 1. Accessibility of self-serve travel kiosks;
- 2. Universal policies surrounding guide dogs and air travel;
- 3. Accessible/usable websites and inflight entertainment systems.

Accessibility in UNCRPD

Article 9 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with disabilities (UNCRPD) urges States Parties to take appropriate measures to ensure persons with disabilities access, on an equal basis with others, to the physical environment, to transportation, to information and communications, including information and communications technologies and systems, and

to other facilities and services open or provided to the public, both in urban and in rural areas. State Parties are obliged to identify and eliminate obstacles and barriers.

In addition, the General Comment 2014 no. 2 of the UNCRPD reiterates that "as long as goods, products and services are open or provided to the public, they must be accessible to all, regardless of whether they are owned and/or provided by a public authority or a private enterprise" (para. 13).

The World Blind Union recognizes and emphasizes that these core principles are applicable in the area of tourism and air travel.

Advocacy issue 1. Self-serve kiosks at airports

International air travel has seen a rapid increase in digitalization and automation of customer services in the spirit of improved efficiency. Checkin counters are being replaced by self-serve kiosks where passengers enter booking details, check-in, select their seat, print boarding passes and luggage tags. Accessible self-serve kiosks have been introduced, but the interface is difficult to navigate as it requires excessive keystrokes, using a menu-based navigation protocol instead of the multi-tap interface adopted internationally for automated teller banking machines (ATMs).

WBU notes that many blind and partially sighted travelers are confident in independently navigating airport terminals. However, others prefer being assisted by visual guides. In line with the UNCRPD, the choice of the level of support must remain with the traveler. In the absence of internationally acknowledged accessibility standards, the International Air Transport Association (IATA), has presented technical specification requirements for the accessibility of Self-serve kiosks. This initiative was done in their ambition to establish uniformity and common use of self-services. However, these are guidelines, not standards. They are neither legally binding nor have they undergone the rigorous process typically undertaken when standards are established. Furthermore, their implementation is voluntary with only a few exceptions; primarily, Canada, the United States and the European Union. Their additional weakness is that they were established without consultation with the disability community.

The World Blind Union is concerned that travel experiences of blind and partially sighted persons or any other disability may deteriorate if compliance with accessibility standards is not enforced. As reiterated in the CRPD General Comment 2014 no. 2 (para. 15) the strict application of universal design to all new goods, products, facilities, technologies and services should apply. Such application shall enable unrestricted chain of movement between spaces included inside particular spaces with no barriers. Universally designed self-serve kiosks accessible to blind and partially sighted persons should, in view of WBU, incorporate the following:

- Consistent interface design
- The ability to magnify text
- The ability to adjust contrast based on ambient lighting or a person's sight capacity
- The ability to obtain audio feedback
- The ability to verify details
- The ability to navigate on-screen menus using screen magnification, audio or haptic feedback.

What should WBU member countries ask of their State authorities?

- 1) To raise the issues of inaccessibility of self-serve kiosks today and the vitality of universal design for equitable access to products and services provided and open to the public.
- 2) To advocate for ICAO to adopt Standards of accessibility of self-serve kiosks which reflect best practices on accessibility.
- 3) To advocate that such standards incorporate and build onto the IATA Technical Specifications in consultation with blind and partially sighted persons' organizations.

Advocacy issue 2: Guide dog policies

Airlines have recently begun to advance their policies on permitting service animals onto their aircrafts. The result is that travellers with guide dogs will face increased administrative hurdles when attempting to travel with their trained, certified guide dogs.

This has been done without consulting Guide dog handlers or organizations of blind and partially sighted persons resulting in confusion and stress among airline staff and guide dog handlers.

The World Blind Union is concerned that these policies, stringent restrictions and bureaucratic procedures imposed are disproportionately affecting the freedom of mobility and access to air travel for blind and partially sighted persons. Beyond mainstreaming accessibility for all, State Parties and private actors need to recognise that some persons with disabilities need human or animal assistance in order to enjoy full accessibility, and that banning trained guide dogs from entering public spaces constitutes to disability-based discrimination (CRPD General Comment no. 2, para 29).

WBU recognises that some of the major airlines operating out of countries where the anti-discrimination legislation is weak are still not allowing guide dogs to enter their carriers providing limited possibilities to seek legal redress.

What should WBU member countries ask of their State authorities?

- 1) To encourage ICAO to publicly recognise guide dogs trained by organizations certified by the International Guide Dog Federation (IGDF) without additional requirements.
- 2) To propose ICAO to encourage Member States to enforce requirements of acceptance onto national airlines currently prohibiting guide dog teams onto their carriers.
- 3) That ICAO adopt a regulatory regime that will require international carriers to provide adequate space for a guide dog and their handler by providing an extra seat at no extra charge.

- 4) To propose ICAO to issue a statement to its Member States recommending that any changes in definitions of and distinctions between guide dogs, service animals and emotional support animals affecting their rights to travel are done in consultation with guide dog handlers and organizations representing blind and partially sighted persons in the respective member state.
- 5) That ICAO member states require that airport terminal buildings provide suitable relieving areas post security.

Advocacy issue 3: Accessible websites and inflight entertainment systems

Regarding accessibility and usability of booking and airline websites, the WBU notes that a growing number of airlines are adopting web technologies which fail to meet usability guidelines. Even though many of these websites may comply with international standards such as those set out by the World Wide Web Consortium, if not properly user tested with assistive technology, shopping for and completing online reservations, managing travel plans and reviewing associated documents can prove unnecessarily difficult.

The guidelines and standards as well as best practices on ensuring that websites are usable by visitors with sight loss are well established. Thus, evidence demonstrates that the usability of many international airline websites remains difficult if not impossible to operate using a screen reader or screen magnification software.

Regarding entertainment systems, the WBU is concerned about the increasing use of more technologically advanced inflight entertainment systems within aircrafts. These systems are mostly in the form of individual touch screen displays where the passenger can not only access movies, television programs, and radio, but also safety information, flight details and the Call button. These systems are creating barriers for our community who are unable to use touch screens to access significant information. Consistent with the UNCRPD accessibility principles, it is the standpoint of WBU that such systems must be accessible to all incorporating magnification and text-to-speech technologies.

What should WBU member countries ask of their State authorities?

- 1) To advocate to ICAO to recognize and endorse the existing international standards for website and web content accessibility.
- 2) To stress the importance of usability testing, where users relying on assistive devices to navigate websites are consulted.
- 3) To demand accessible inflight entertainment systems for all passengers.

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DREAM OF A FINAL HOME

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

One woman's noble dream to redefine retirement living in Malaysia is paving the way for others to lead happier and more fulfilling lives in their golden years.

With reference to this article which appeared in Metro News of 11 October 2017 (Wednesday), it was reported that former nurse Siew Yin Leong had a vision to build a centre for her silvered-haired peers where they can retire gracefully and continue leading independent and purposeful lives. Based on the idea for the Green-Acres Retirement Village, named after the American sitcom starring Eddie Albert and Eva Gabor as a couple who moved from New York to a country farm, the retirement settlement came into being.

The unveiling of the first 26 units of resident-ready single-storey landed villas and a RM10 million community-centric clubhouse at the retirement village in Bandar Meru Raya, Ipoh certainly marked a step closer for Siew to fully realise her dream. Built by Total Investment Sdn. Bhd., a development company founded by Siew and her husband, Cheong Heng Keong, the RM10 Million project will offer 177 units for independent living sprawled across 5.26 hectares of land surrounded by lush greenery and the rolling limestone hills of the Kinta Valley.

With regards to the work for the blind which has been established so many years ago, many of the blind are now in their senior years either looking for nursing care or perhaps preparing to spend their senior years with some form of assistance. Indeed, as we grow older, some of us may be in need of more care.

While the corporate organisations such as Total Investment Sdn. Bhd. May be working on such projects, they are usually located far out of town where public transport may be difficult to come by. In view of this and speaking on behalf of the blindness community, I would like to appeal to organisations which may have sufficient land to consider the idea of building such a village

for the blind and visually impaired and to lease out such units to them at affordable rates. There is no need at all for the blind to own these units because, when they leave this world, they cannot take the units along with them. In fact, the vacant units can subsequently be leased out to other blind persons who are in need of such accommodation.

Some of the characteristics that will go towards making an ideal retirement home for the blind are as follows:

- 1. Having the freedom to choose and enjoy our preferences;
- 2. Having the freedom to go shopping or to join friends on various activities;
- 3. Availability of good transportation with ride-sharing facilities;
- 4. Having the freedom to choose between preparing our own food or relying on whatever is being provided by the institution (limited to simple preparations).

Quoting from the article, "We should not retire into nothingness. Instead, we should keep active because life really begins after we've stopped working and our children have grown up, and here is the place to retire gracefully."

Likewise, the blind should not be allowed to retire into nothingness. Grouping the blind together in a settlement will facilitate the organising of activities and programmes that will keep the blind busy and help them to live the last days of their life in joy and happiness. Such activities can include indoor and outdoor games, gardening, sing-along sessions, tours, and so on.

As such a home will be for people who have lived useful lives, these people should be able to afford paying towards the cost of running and maintaining such programmes. With a group of seniors being housed together, it would also be much easier to organise visiting programmes by the doctors rather than the blind having to find their own way to the clinic or hospital. Likewise, as I have seen being done in the senior nursing care homes, it will be cheaper to get physiotherapists to come and service the residents as a group rather than having each individual finding their way to a medical centre.

As we grow older and age, there is surely nothing better than enabling us to pass each day with happiness and joy. Then as we leave this world and there being no way at all we can bring our riches along, I am sure that something will be left behind for the organisation that has made our last days worth living.

It is my earnest hope that I will be able to see this dream come true for the blind in Malaysia.

NCBM EDUCATION PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS 2018

Dr. Kway Eng Hock Chairman

1. BRAILLE COUNCIL OF MALAYSIA

As Braille forms an important part of the education for the blind, the NCBM Committee on Education has set up the Malaysian Braille Council with representatives from various education-related bodies serving on the Braille Council.

In its continual effort to improve Malay Braille, the Malaysian Braille Council held two workshops in 2017. The objectives were to have a discussion on our very own Malay Braille Code and to see how it can be synchronised with the Unified English Braille Code (UEB) which has been adopted by a number of countries like Britain, Australia, New Zealand, and the United States of America. While the changes are yet to be finalised, it can be confirmed that there will be about 40 different updates.

We would like to express our sincere appreciation to SEAMEOSen for the close collaboration in organising the Braille workshops.

National Braille Reading 2018

In keeping up with the tradition and to also continue the efforts of promoting Braille, NCBM organised a National Braille Reading competition on 30th

November, 2018. There was a total of 16 participants from 4 member organisations and there was also a total of 4 categories.

Results for 2018 NCBM Braille Reading Competition:-

Bahasa Malaysia 24 Years and Below (Junior) Category

1st prize: Bredesley David Sotobi from Sabah Society for the Blind 2nd prize: Norhaslinda Bt Hamdan from Sarawak Society for the Blind 3rd prize: Ambar Aishah Bt Murugasoo from Society of the Blind in Malaysia

Bahasa Malaysia 25 Years and Above (Senior) Category

1st prize: Alfa Nur Aini Bt Herman Afendi from Society of the Blind in Malaysia

2nd prize: Mit Anak Seridien from Sarawak Society for the Blind 3rd prize: Siti Jineh Bt Jaimun from Sabah Society for the Blind



JUDGES FOR THE ENGLISH AND MALAY JUNIOR AND SENIOR





Ms Mahavithia



Mr Bredesly David Sotobi

English 24 Years and Below (Junior) Category

1st prize: Bredesley David Sotobi from Sabah Society for the Blind 2nd prize: Sun Wan Ting from Sarawak Society for the Blind 3rd prize: Mahavithia a/p Arumugam from Society of the Blind in Malaysia

English 24 Years and Above (Senior) Category

1st prize: Chan Sau Yin from Society of the Blind in Malaysia 2nd prize: Tan Chai Chin from Malaysian Association for the Blind 3rd prize: Siti Jineh Bt Jaimun from Sabah Society for the Blind

2. CAREER CAMP 2018

National Career camp for Form 5 BVI Students (07-10 December 2018)

The Camp was held from 7-10 December 2018 in Gunung Ledang Resort, Tangkak, Johor. There were 45 participants including volunteers and staff. Besides the regular sessions on career choice, resume writing, tips for interview, decision making, sharing by successful BVIs, ICT Workshop and charting your future, we introduced talk on saving yourself during fire and photography as a hobby. On the last day, we visited Universiti Malaya and Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB).











Encik M. Firdaus















Ms Lim Sok Lin

NCBM EMPLOYMENT PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS 2018

Dr. Wong Huey Siew Chairman

3. Employment

3.1. Fusion Massage – working with the Malaysian Association of SPAs (21 – 26 January, 2018)

In an effort to allow our blind Masseurs to understand the type of Massage being offered at SPAS, NCBM together with MAB with the support from Malaysian Association of SPAs, (MASPA) had a one week programme. In order to benefit more people, the Masseurs were selected from among Instructors and owners of blind massage centres. On behalf of NCBM, we would like to thank the Malaysian Association of SPA, especially Dr. Baskaran for having spent one complete week to share with us what the world of SPA in Malaysia is like.

3.2. Employers Exhibition in UM 16-17 April

This was an opportunity for companies to come over to University of Malaya to secure employees. NCBM made our presence to let these companies know that we are around to support blind persons looking for employment. While NCBM did not have enough staff to run a booth for the three days, Mr. Nadir was indeed our good part timer who supported NCBM in carrying out our duty. As such, we would like to express our appreciation to him for rendering us his time.

3.3. Research-Employer's Perspective in Employing BVI's

3.3.1Conducted research on the Employer's Perspective in Employing BVIs. This purpose is to get a better understandin on the perception of employers in employing the BVIs and what we can do to increase the employment rate of BVIs. The result of this research will be used to design training programmes in line with market requirement and plan support services to support BVI job seekers and those already employed in their job retention.

Employers' survey

While employment is an empowerment for blind people to be more involved in society, NCBM felt that there should be a way to charter some of the assumptions that we have been plagued with. As such, the NCBM Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment appointed Mr. Nadir to carry out a survey that would involve fellow workers of blind employees, employers and would be employers. After 3 months, the survey provided the following recommendations:

The survey has the following recommendations:

Job opportunities for Malaysians who are blind or have low vision, hence creating a more inclusive domestic labour market. In underlining these suggestions, we considers factors by applying theory of planned behaviour, which the factors are employer attributes, organizational characteristics, Malaysia's Persons with Disabilities Act 2008, attitudes toward hiring disabled people, subjective norm and perceived control in hiring disabled people (Ang, Ramayah & Teong 2013).

- Examining engagement process and related job placement programmes, including the functions and capacity of job placement officers;
- Strategizing better communication and awareness raising approaches, including promotion of individual, organizational and societal benefits of hiring visually impaired people, as well to nurture consciousness on related legislations, incentives and support system;
- Developing a guidelines on proper communication techniques, including tips and guidelines on appropriate job matching and job modification suitable for persons who are blind and/or have low vision;
- Empower persons who are blind and/or have low vision by nurturing positive characteristics and necessary skills for employment as part of all vocational courses or capacity development programmes;
- Developing and implementing multiple matrix of assessment and capacity training to better prepare persons who are blind and/or have low vision to adapt in working environment;
- Engaging directly with few corporates or multinational companies to develop relevant on-job training programmes.

All suggestions put forth above can become the basis to achieve the fourth objective of this research, which is to suggest a model of job placement service for workers who are blind or with visual impairment in Malaysia.

3.4 Workshop for parents with Blind and visual impaired Children (15 &16 Dec 2018)

This first ever workshop was held in Grand Tower Regency Hotel, Ipoh, Perak from 15-16 December. 12 families with BVI children participated. The parents and siblings had a heart to heart talk on their challenges and find solutions to their common problems. Dr. Jamila K.A. Muhamed Kutty, Ketua Sektor Perancangan Mikro, Pembangunan dan Maklumat, Bahagian Pendidikan Khas and Dato' Dr. Amar Singh, retired consultant paediatrician and officers from NCBM made presentations and providing guidance for the parents. The parents decided to set a national parents of BVI children group and requested NCBM to be the secretariat.

It was an avenue for parents to meet up with representatives from the Ministry of Education and to be assured that blindness is not a reason for failure.









NCBM PUBLIC AWARENESS PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS 2018

Datuk Rosalind Chew Chairman

4. DET/DRST Training

4.1 Malaysia Airlines Berhad -In bringing about awareness to the staff of Malaysia Airline Berhad, NCBM together with the Malaysian Confederation of the Disabled and other related organisations secured a contract to conduct training that would cover most of the staff of the airline. The programme began in September of 2017 till December of 2018. In an effort to encourage companies to also continue our efforts, we also had a special session specially designed for the trainers of Malaysia Airline Berhad.

As of 20 December 2018, Completed DET/DRST for 4,300 Malaysia Airlines staff in 208 sessions through out 16 months. We experienced and also received positive feedback from BVI travellers on the improvement of services provided by the staff.

4.2 PERMATA KURNIA/YAYASAN SIME DARBY/KL PERFORMING ARTS (KLPAC)/GRAB CAR

NCBM also provided training to Permata Kurnia (centre of excellence for autistic children), Yayasan Sime Darby/ KL Performing Arts Centre (August 10-11, 2018) and Grab Car Drivers on 28 Nov.

4.3. Be their light – A Charity Night by the Leo Club of the Wesley Methodist School, Sentul. While everything was handled by the students, NCBM merely play the role of providing information of (What is Blindness?)

4.4 Worked with students of Universiti TAR(UNITAR) -

"Grow in the Dark" an effort of students from the Media faculty of U-TAR to promote the understanding of blindness to their fellow students. The activities included games, and also a massage experience. NCBM was invited to give a talk on "what is blindness". The organisers also contributed a sum of money to NCBM.

4.5 Designed and produced Braille Safety Card for Malaysia Airlines.

In order to support the right of the blind to information, NCBM also worked with Malaysia Airlines Bhd to produce the braille safety Card which is available in all MH aircraft . Such training will enable blind and others with disabilities better experience when travelling with Malaysia Airlines Berhad.

Many local/foreign BVI travellers posted encouraging and appreciation feedback on their Facebook on this initiative. The Management was very happy with this.

4.6. Banking Forums

5.6.1 Forum on Accessible Banking - As the banking industry has yet to really understand the needs of the blind, and as suggested by the NCBM Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment, NCBM, through the CARE unit organised a 2nd Forum on Banking on August 25, 2018 in Dorsett Hotel and was officiated by NCBM's newly elected President, Dato' Dr Hsiung. In his opening speech, Dato' Hsiung thanked the banking fraternity for listening to our grievances on the barriers faced by BVIs in accessing banking services and their willingness to make reasonable accommodation. The BVIs are patiently looking forward to an inclusive banking services which they can access without barriers.

As Mr. Dipendra Manocha was due to be in KL round about the same time, we took advantage of his presence to learn about how India has tackled the banking issues faced by India. Indeed, India has taken advantage of the powers that has been bestowed upon their central bank and guidelines are already in place to ensure better accessibility for the blind. Not just in the case of physical accessibility but their online as well as ATM machines.

RECOMMENDATIONS DURING THE BANKING FORUM HELD ON 25 AUGUST 2018

- 1. Banking Policy Clear policy on bank account & services
- 2. NCBM write in for a written policy of the different banks
- 3. Talking ATM to give emphasis on change of PIN, able to activate and withdraw
- 4. Banking Online duration to be extended instead of 1 or 2 mins only
- 5. Political will
- 6. Organise Bank seminar with DPO's
- 7. Draft strategy -elderly falling eye sight -mobility and hearing
- 8. Universal design for all PWD's
- 9. List of Bank to be numbered for each bank instead of scrolling from the list of banks
- 10. ATM Plastic card not embossed- unable to differentiate from other plastic cards
- 11. Must be cooperation between Government, Banks and NGO's
- 12. Must have a quota system for employment
- 13. Policies need to be reviewed every 4-5 years
- 14. Technology sectors and Thematic Mass Awareness Campaign

ISSUES RAISED DURING DISCUSSION WITH MALAYSIAN NGOs/DPOs

SHARED BY (JPOKU)-

- 1) Difficulties in getting ATM & Credit Cards (Blind)
- 2) Unable to open current account (Blind)
- 3) Vehicle loan only granted for those with driving license (Blind)
- 4) Difficulties in reporting of accident cases without SMS services (Deaf)
- 5) Not allowed to launch complaint via third party(Deaf)
- 6) Difficulties in obtaining life insurance for PWDs (all type of disabilities)
- 7) Most of the ATM's not at appropriate height (physical)
- 8) ATM's not accessible (Blind) no Braille & sound system

5.7 MyIPO

In working towards better accessibility on information, NCBM has begun work with MyIPO to work towards Malaysia being a part of the Marrakesh Treaty. As a result, there was a seminar held on the 28th of August and it was followed by a close-door meeting on the 29th of August. This will now create an opportunity for NGOs and MYIPO to work towards Malaysia acceding to the Marrakesh Treaty: To Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled.

5.8 Cultural Street Exhibition, Batu Pahat

In order to reach out to people living out of Kuala Lumpur, NCBM was part of the Cultural Street of Batu Pahat - 14 to 16 September, 2018. Conducted talks/exhibition to promote public awareness on the BVIs as follows:

5.9 KIND Malaysia (24-25 October 2018)

In supporting the efforts of KIND Malaysia, NCBM conducted talks and held an exhibition to promote Public Awareness on the BVI's.

$5.10\ Bengkel\ Komunikasi\ Bagi\ Anggota\ Farmasi\ Ambulatori\ (5\ September\ 2018)$

A Forum "Komunikasi dengan Orang Kurang Upaya interaksi & Ekspektasi" was held at Geno Hotel. NCBM shared on the part on the BVI's and also how to dispense medication to the Blind or low vision to the Pharmacists present.

5.11 Tun Hussein On National Eye Hospital World Sight Day Celebration on 20 October 2018

In continuing support for the prevention of blindness, NCBM increased the allocation from RM50,000.00 to RM70,000.00. RM40,000.00 was to support the Conference Seeing Eye-2-Eye and the efforts of Eye Screening in the North while the remaining RM30,000.00 was set aside to support member organisations to celebrate World Sight Day in their respective region.

NCBM did a presentation on "The role of NCBM towards the prevention of Blindness"

5.12 White Cane Day 2018, Kota Kinabalu, Sabah

In keeping with the tradition of celebrating White Cane Day, the NCBM Council had also approved a sum of RM20,000.00 in support of the Society of the Blind in Malaysia to celebrate White Cane Day in Kota Kinabalu on 18th October 2018

5.13 Central Region World Sight Day Celebration on 26 October 2018

NCBM was invited to be one of the Panelist to the celebration of the World Sight Day Central Zone 2018. It was held at Menara Standard Chartered. The topic of discussion was: How do I do it, being visually-impaired". The discussion took about half an hour. This is an annual event celebration of World Vision 2018 central zone level.

5.14 Project "Be My Eyes"

At a request of the Lions Club of Kuala Lumpur, NCBM together with the Malaysian Association for the Blind teamed up to recruit volunteers for the app "Be My Eyes". As many of our blind people have found this app useful, recruiting more volunteers would make it easier for blind persons to seek help, especially in our own local language.

5.15 Puchong Carnival

As a part of public education, NCBM participated in the Puchong Carnival organised by Puchong Combined churches Fellowship. We took the advantage to educate the public on what Braille is. The photos will show you that if organised well, many of the young ones are eager to try their to read braille.

5.16 MYNIC

As MYNIC is the only body that administers the .my top level country domain name for Malaysia. Therefore, anyone who wants to register this .my domain name can do so only with MYNIC. As such, NCBM would like to thank them for having responded to our call for better awareness. We, at NCBM believe that working with MYNIC is really the best way to work on better web accessibility experience. We hand our first briefing on 4th December, 2018.

NCBM CARE PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS 2018

Wong Yoon Loong Manager

Throughout 2018, the Centre for Advocacy, Research and Empowerment for the Blind (CARE) continued to work together and collaborate with Government Ministries, Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and Disabled People's Organisations (DPOs) in furthering the cause of Persons With Disabilities (PWDs) in particular Persons Who Are Blind Or With Visual Impairment (BVIs) in Malaysia and also in the ASEAN Region.

5.1 Engagement with the Government

NCBM continue to engage actively with the relevant Government Ministries in planning, implementing and reviewing government policies and programmes for BVIs such as the Jabatan Pembangunan Orang Kurang Upaya (JPOKU), Ministry of Human Resource, Department for Special Education, Transport Ministry and the local authorities and public/private universities.

5.2 Engagement with International Bodies

ASEAN Enabling Master Plan Mainstreaming Rights Of Persons With Disabilities 2025

NCBM was also actively involved in providing inputs during the formulation of the ASEAN Enabling Master Plan which was adopted at the 33rd ASEAN Summit in Singapore on 15 November 2018. The Master Plan was launched in Bangkok, Thailand on 03 December 2018. NCBM will continue to work with the Government, CSOs and DPOs to oversee the implementation of this Master Plan.

5.3 Accessible Play Ground

Together with Unicef Malaysia, NCBM provided consultation to Sime Darby Bhd to make play grounds at all their future developments accessible to children with disabilities using universal design concepts. The pilot project will be ready in early 2019. All partners will be invited to provide feedback on the design and construction.

5.4 Publications



5.4.1 Buku Panduan Cara Membantu Dan Berinteraksi Dengan Orang Kurang Upaya was launched by Datuk Rosalind Chew, Chairman of the Committee on Public Awareness on 5 April 2018. This publication describes in detail with pictures how to assist and interact with PWDs. The objective of this publication is to give the general public a basic understanding on how to assist and interact with PWDs. The publication was presented to representatives from the Jabatan Pembangunan Orang Kurang Upaya, National Library Malaysia, University of Malaya, Prasarana, Malaysia Airlines and member-organisations. The publication is free of charge. Those interested to get a copy can request from NCBM.

5.4.2 "We Want To Work" Booklet



NCBM also published a publication "We Too Want To Work" aimed at promoting employment of BVIs. It describes briefly the reasonable accommodation, brief profile of BVIs and the tax incentives provided by the Government in employing BVIs. This publication is provided free.

5.5 Braille Name Cards

NCBM introduced Braille name cards costing RM40.00 for 100 pieces which is being well received. Ministers, deputy ministers and government officials are ordering this name cards in order to reach out to BVIs.

5.6 Signature Guide

In encouraging more BVIs to be able to sign, NCBM designed, Produced and distributed signature guide which can guide them sign in a straight line. Those interested to get this signature guide can contact NCBM.



NEWS FROM NCBM AND MEMBER-ORGANISATIONS

by Dr. Gordon Tan Tok Shiong



THE TASKA PROGRAMME FOR PRE-SCHOOL VISUALLY IMPAIRED CHILDREN:

The TASKA programme of St. Nicholas Home has come a long way since January 2014 and it has in the process churned out positive results for visually impaired children of pre-school age. The TASKA mission is to create equal learning opportunities for the visually impaired child through early child development, thereby paving the way for them to proceed to inclusive education in the schools.

The TASKA is proud to have brought early childhood education to at least 9 visually impaired children since its inception with at least 3 girls having been accepted in to the inclusive education programme of Tadika (kindergarten).

The TASKA enrols children to ages 2 to 7. Children are from the island of Penang as well as from the mainland. There are also some from the northern state of Kedah whose parents have made Penang their home.

One such student is little Everson Ooi. The relocation of his parents was to enable him to partake in the TASKA curriculum at St. Nicholas; with least inconvenience possible. Everson now looks forward to attending TASKA every day and he has acquired a fair bit of learning skills. He has been in the TASKA for two years now.

Victoria Ho, 6, was born deaf-blind. She is now wearing a hearing aid after having gone through a successful ear operation in August 2017. She now responds to sounds and she has learnt to babble. Although she stays on the mainland, her parents have made great effort to send her to the Taska daily. She and her parents leave their home on the mainland as early as 6.30 am. Like any other child, Victoria is also encouraged to build her learning skills through the activities tailored for her.

Effort has also been made to hold introductory braille classes for the parents and guardians of the TASKA children. It is a first hand experience for the sighted to operate a brailler and to learn the alphabets in dots by depression of the brailler keys. With this acquisition of braille knowledge, the children have an added advantage of being assisted and monitored.

Through the TASKA, communities have been developed and connected as parents have been given the opportunity to bring about the St. Nicholas' Home environment and experience back to their hometowns and neighbourhood, thus creating awareness among the stake-holders and those close to them that there is hope for the visually impaired if there is faith. Through these families the community will come to realise that there is a home out there known as St. Nicholas' Home for the visually impaired and that there are opportunities of education for the BVI's and that TASKA is the first platform to begin with!

The early intervention programme (EIP):

The EIP is a programme designed for visually impaired children of age 0 to 6 years old. This is an outreach programme where the children are taught in the child's natural environment with the parents or guardians present. This programme of St. Nicholas' caters for such children in all the northern states of Malaysia which include Perlis, Kedah, Perak and Penang. The children are taught to improve on their cognitive, language, social, motor and living skills as these are the major developmental delays faced by a visually impaired child.

In 2017, the programme provided early development skills training for 15 children residing in the northern region. 5 of these children had been newly identified.

This programme is open to all children with visual impairment and with other disabilities. Therefore, physiotherapy treatment is provided to those who need it, especially the children with Cerebral Palsy or who have multiple disabilities.

These children also learn more when they explore the environment around them. Therefore, they are often taken out for walks to touch and feel what there is outside of their houses. By doing this, they tend to develop their other remaining senses and they get familiar with things.

This programme also provides support for their families as they are the ones spending most of their time with the children. Thus, the family members are include in the all-inclusive planned activities so that such activities can be continued at home until the next visit.

The programme also often includes the provision of food rations to the needy families of the children. This is carried out in line with the guiding principle of caring and sharing, which is the philosophy of St. Nicholas' Home.

The deaf-blind and multi-handicapped programme:

Through this programme, St. Nicholas' Home provides training and educational services for visually impaired children with additional disabilities like hearing impairment. This residential programme was initiated by Hilton Perkins International. (USA). The children in this programme range from the age of seven to eighteen.

In 2017 there was an enrolment of 10 students (including two new admissions). 6 of the students were residential while the other 4 students were day scholars.

The year started with the arrival of the AFS Volunteers from Germany. Pauline Heine arrived in January followed by Hivi baker in July. Both of them contributed a lot to the daily life of these students through the intercultural exchanges. The children especially had a great experience in communicating with them in two languages. The students were at ease with these two volunteers as they were showered with love, care and friendliness. Hivi and Pauline were placed in the classroom to teach these students with special needs.

For 2017, there was a group of students from SEGI College who volunteered their services to upgrade the Sensory Garden. They generously sponsored some plants, pebbles and soil for the garden project and put in tireless effort to clean and clear the garden.

In 2017, more outdoor activities were organised and the students had more opportunities to explore and feel their surroundings and the public places in Penang. Outings and visits were organised as part of their learning activities whereby the students could feel the world beyond their comfort zone. They were given the chance to connect with people not normally encountered in their daily life. Sometimes friendly strangers approached them to converse with them or just to say hello.

On a weekly basis, the students were taken to explore the environment at playgrounds, public parks, beaches, shopping complexes, wet markets, post offices, zoos, museums and other places of interest. For these children, the

exploration of new surroundings, especially those of nature, is very important. They get to enjoy the contact with people and the environment. As part of their experiential learning, they enjoyed water in a natural surrounding. For example, at the beach they were able to hear the sound of the waves and of water lapping the beach feel the sand under their feet and touch the cells and debris washed up by the sea. They were also given the opportunity to touch animals and different species of birds. They even learned to feed birds and feel the wings of the birds.

The senior citizens programme:

Have you ever wondered what goes through the minds of senior citizens as they deal with the rapid and unpredictable everyday life surrounding them? What are their thoughts and how do they process the new things they have to go through? Are they heavily influenced by the lives they have lived through and the times in which they now live? With 70 or 80 years behind them, is there a "typical" point of view for a senior citizen?

Getting out of bed is no longer a matter of simply sitting up immediately instead, we have to resort to more of a rolling position to generate the momentum necessary to rise. All of these changes take their toll and lead to frustration in the seniors who finally have the time to do what they want to do but increasingly are not physically able to do so. The mind is willing but the body is weak__ it is real frustration. There is often a desperate sense of hopelessness and despair. Loneliness is another factor in the life of a senior citizen.

Contrary to giving up to such feelings of helplessness and hopelessness, however, the wonderful and lively seniors at St. Nicholas' Home have a fulfilling daily life dedicated to dispelling any frustration that might arise. The most prominent of these senior citizens is Elizabeth Liew, the queen of evergreen songs which she loves to sing.

There is also Choy Yoke Chin (better known as Joy). She may be a bit quiet but she finds joy in living and listening to oldies. Another great soul is John Lee Kow Chye who simply adores his food.

Among all these seniors are two very interesting personalities- Bobby Seng and Moh Weng San (also known as Andrew). Both of them certainly known what they want and how to live life in their own individual way. Andrew is philosophical and highly knowledgeable with a wisdom of his own. He monitor his medication well and always keeps the housekeepers on their toes.

Bobby Seng maintains his health perfectly. He only consumes white rice with plain soup; no meat or fish. Inevitably, his superb medical track record surprises no one at all. His blood pressure is always maintained at 120/80 and his glucose level is well kept at 5.8 mmo/L.

These so-called seniors have a very scheduled and disciplined daily life; they spend most of their time in the Appeals Department and in the house of the LORD. Life goes on for these seniors even though people call them "old" and yet they have a meaningful life-style. It is an exemplary way of life for us to follow and prepare for retirement; learn to accept ageing and to find inspiration in our daily life as retirees.

Vocational Training and Employment (VTE):

Exploring the world of darkness by learning to walk using a walking cane to navigate the walkway, feeling the surface for different textures, detecting obstacles, crossing the road, and using the staircase and escalator requires a lot of self-confidence and self-motivation. These traits empower the person to explore the unknown.

In similar vein, the acquisition of daily living skills can be better accomplished with these traits as well as with constant practice. As such, these daily living skills (DLS) like cooking simple meals, making beverages and doing household chores are some of the daily tasks taught to the blind and visually impaired trainees at St. Nicholas' Home. Grooming, money matters, braille plus orientation and mobility (O&M) are included as rehabilitation skills to equip the new trainees for independent living.

Pastry making, massage techniques, information technology and basketry are some aspects of the vocational training available to assist the trainees in acquiring new skills that will enable them to explore for job opportunities as

well as engage in certain enterprises. Some of them are able to set up their own business enterprises, thereby securing a sustainable income and gaining a sense of self-accomplishment as they support themselves and their loved ones with dignity.

They are also taught other soft skills such as communicational skills, computing skills, navigating new apps on the phone as well as social etiquette to interact and socialise in society. By acquiring these new skills, their personal confidence is greatly enhanced.

In the final stage out their training, they are exposed to the real world outside the confines of the home. They take part in outdoor exercises, tandembike riding, the gym, excursion trips, social gatherings, motivational talks, workshops, competitions and other leisure activities.

A STORY TO SHARE

By Nurul Farihah

Editor's Note: This story has been taken from the St. Nicholas' Home Penang annual report 2017. It begins with a note from the producer of the annual report.

Have you ever imagined being diagnosed with vision loss at the age of 25? How are we to see objects with limited vision and low light? Blindness has set in. an utterly frightening experience has begun. A journey of change and adjustment begins.

Hello, I am Nurul Farihah and I live in Kedah. Before the diagnosis, I was working as a mathematics teacher at a secondary school in Kedah. In 2016, I was diagnosed with Systematic Lupus Erythematosus [also known as SLE or Lupus]. It is a chronic inflammatory disease of an autoimmune nature that can affect the skin, joints, kidneys, lungs, nervous system and other organs of the body. In my case, it affected my eyes and my sight. Because of photosensitivity, I need to avoid the UV light and decrease my outdoor activities.

Depression and anger are common for us who suddenly find ourselves in such a new and frightening experience. New skills must be learned. Everything seems difficult. Me"—I thought my head would explode trying to remember everything. I learned that multi-tasking is best left to sighted people. Patience with yourself is critical. It takes more time to do everything, or so it seems when you are doing it with less sight. It frustrates me to "think" and imagine everything I am doing. I will spend 20 minutes on a task that I once performed in 5 minutes. Emotional support is very important for people who experience vision loss. Peer support groups can make all the difference. Being able to share the daily frustrations with others "in the same boat" is very helpful.

Gratefully, I have a wonderful family, friends and community members who give me support in every situation as I have lost my vision. It is far more helpful to facilitate good skills of orientation and mobility (O&M)

training with a service-providing agency like St. Nicholas' Home (SNH), in Penang than to adopt a "let me do that for you" attitude. O&M training is where someone learns techniques of using a white cane like streamline caning, tapping method and the sweeping method, use of sound reflection to determine position and location as well as learning to judge traffic flow and many more, thereby allowing a blind person to travel independently.

People ask me all sorts of questions about how I manage to do this, that and other things. It can be helpful to someone who is experiencing vision loss for family members to help reorganise the home environment. A big factor in feeling comfortable is the accessibility of the home. Whether the person with vision loss is living alone, or with others, reorganising the environment is necessary. Simple things, like special placement of household items (so they can be found), using colour contrast schemes, using non-skid tape on stair risers, colouring handrails, selecting suitable floor material, installing good lighting [mostly incandescent] and "attaching" light on the underside of cabinets are very helpful.

I feel that the exchange of information and tips with other who are blind can provide one with helpful ideas to make a home safe [such as removing scatter rugs and repositioning furniture], thus enabling one to perform the same tasks as they did before they could not see. We can perform all these tasks but only differently such as cleaning floors by using a grid system, marking appliances with embossing stickers to facilitate cooking and cleaning, and using elastic bands or large prints labels to distinguish containers.

The assistive technology such as JAWS, Window Eyes, NVDA, and other screen-reader software as well as other scan-to-speech programmes that are available enables blind people (who can afford or otherwise obtain themwhere to gain access to the internet, emails, writing and reading documents, and much more. I learned how to use all these assistive technologies from SNH in the IT course for nine months.

I also learned braille. All blind adults are encouraged to learn braille. I needed to spend hours learning braille, first uncontracted or Grade 1 braille, then contracted or Grade 2 braille. I learned Bahasa Malaysia and English in braille notations. As a result, books became accessible. Braille book reading is done by recognising the dots using your fingers.

After about one year of training at SNH, I returned to work at the same workplace but in a different position. I would not be able to teach mathematics anymore with this limited vision. I would not be able to read handwriting and mathematical symbols. This was a fact that I needed to face. The job that I was really passionate about was no longer mine. It was very sad and I had to be strong to accept it with an open heart. In Malaysia, using technology to learn mathematics as a blind person is not yet accessible. So I work as a staff in the school library. There are many new things that I need to remember. Slowly I need to restructure and reorganise everything to make my job easier. Thankfully, I have a work community that can accept me as a blind person right now. They are all so lovely and helpful to me. Thank god for putting me in this great surrounding.

However, awareness about the blind still needs to be disseminated among the community at my workplace. My eyes might look normal but I am blind. I have limited vision. People must be confused about me; those who do not know me will not see me as blind. As a solution, I will tell them about my vision, why I need to wear sunglasses, why I have a white cane, why my handphone and laptop have voices to read the text and much more. I cannot and I do not blame them. I take it positively to spread the knowledge about the blind and to make them understand as well as know how to react when they encounter the blind.

Values in life can be spread among them some of them also share their knowledge and skills with me. They also like to help me by describing things that I am unable to see. I like the way they describe thing to me. It is very clear and specific. This is a great way to help the blind see the world. Thanks to all the lovely people I am surrounded by.

I hope people do not ignore us just because of our limitations. We do not use our incapacity as a reason to make bad judgements. But let us help to make the world more accessible for the blind. I hope that one day this will come true.

THE 2019 BUDGET-PROVISIONS FOR THE POOR AND THE DISABLED

By Ooi Hock Tiam

The 2019 budget was tabled in parliament by the Finance Minister, Lim Guan Eng, on 2nd November 2018 (Friday). The total budget allocation is RM314.5 billion. Out of this sum, RM294 billion has been allocated for management and RM54 billion for development.

However, no mention was made concerning the welfare allocation nor was any mention made concerning the disability allowance. Normally, if these things, are not mentioned, it can be assume that they will have been allocated in the budget as before.

Therefore, the provisions for the poor and the disabled are as follows:

1. Bantuan Saraan Hidup:

- 1.1 Those with a family income of RM2,000 a month will receive RM1,000.
- 1.2 Those with a family income below RM3,000 a month will receive RM750.
- 1.3 Those with a total family income between RM3,000 and RM4,000 a month will receive RM500.

All of these payments are only one-off payments. For parents with children who are disabled, they will be entitled to an extra sum of RM120 per child regardless of age limit (up to the fourth child until the age of 18).

2. Transport:

- 2.1 RM50 coupons will be given out to the commuters using the Rapid bus and train. (Further details are not available yet).
- 2.2 A subsidy of 30 cents per litre of petrol up to 100 litres per month will be given for cars below 1,500 cc and for motor-cycles below 125 cc (no details are available yet)

3. Salaries:

- 3.1 A minimum salary of RM1,100 must be paid to all wage earners. This is an increase of RM50.
- 3.2 All civil servants will receive RM250 by the end of the year.

4. Housing:

A sum of RM1 billion will be allocated to help first time house buyers whose income is below RM2,300 per month.

5. Income-tax relief, EPF and insurance:

The deduction has been increased from RM6,000 to RM7,000. In other words, a person who is paying income-tax will be able to buy more insurance or pay more for EPF.

Against all these, there will be an increase of tax on drinks with high sugar content, which is good for diabetic prevention.

With all these deductions, however, we must bear in mind that the country's debt stands at RM1 trillion. In other words, it is about three times of our total annual budget allocated for 2019.

How is this debt going to be paid? Perhaps we disabled persons also need to play our part.

Well, let's hope for better things to come next year and in the future to come.

CELINE LEAN YEW LIN – BLIND ACHIEVER IN EDUCATION



Mr. and Mrs. Lean certainly had reason to be proud and rejoice in the success of their nineteen-year old daughter, Celine Lean Yew Lin, when she graduated from Methodist College Kuala Lumpur (MCKL) on January 27, 2018. At the graduation ceremony held at the Dream Centre in section 14 of Petaling Jaya, Celine was awarded the a-Level certificate with such excellent results—she score two a-stars for Law and for Psychology, two a's for Economics and English Literature, and Distinction for Malaysian Studies, Moral Studies, character Formation and Community Service.

At the age rather four, Celine suffered from APML Leukaemia causing internal bleeding and retinal detachment which ultimately resulted in blindness. Mrs. Lean got her young little daughter enrolled in the pre-school programme of the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) which helped to prepare Celine for admission into school three years later.

On the advice of the pre-school teacher and supervisor, Cikgu Rosnah Ali Muda, Mr. and Mrs. Lean got their daughter admitted into Standard One of the SK Klang Primary School at the appropriate age of seven as mandated by law.

Celine had only one younger brother who is now 14 years of age. However, there was very little verbal communication between them other than at some social gatherings of the family. Most of the time, her brother would be sharing information on the phone so that she felt right bored. So Celine turned to reading in order to pass the time and this soon became her favourite hobby. Initially, she enjoyed reading the braille books sent to her from the MAB library. Eventually, however, she got tired of reading the braille books because they were not mainstream, they were not the best sellers and they were out of touch.

So she started reading from the internet where she could find her favourite author, Rick Riordan with his Percy Jackson series. She also loved reading the fictional mythologies and even the old authors like Shakespeare, Charles Dickens and Jane Austen. While her family mother-tongue is Chinese, it was probably her love for reading and frequently speaking English at home that has made her quite fluent in the language.

Celine feels that everybody being attached to the phone is a worldwide phenomenon. Even in the restaurants, the phone is being used like a baby-sitter to keep the children busy. She suggests that the schools should introduce and implement activities that would encourage interaction and inter-personal communication among the students.

At the age of sixteen, Celine made the bold decision to skip school for a period of seven months in order to join the students' exchange programme under the Kennedy-Lugar Youth Exchange and study scholarship scheme by the U.S. Department of states. She was posted to Tennessee where she lived with a host family and she attended American High school for the blind.

According to Celine, they had computers with JAWS and embossers in every classroom and they had the opportunity to take part in all sorts of activities like swimming, golf and the arts. She even did oil-painting and she worked with mosaics, i.e. using broken glass to make patterns and sculptures.

Celine said, "It's really amazing—seeing a school for the blind in America that is way beyond our advancement in Malaysia. We had only a very limited number of embossers in the Setapak School for the Blind. Truly, we lack the opportunities to be exposed to experiences in Malaysian education."

In fact, living the life in America was a great new experience for Celine. A blind person was expected to be independent and you would be provided with the means and the facilities and there was accessibility. She was keenly aware that the people in America did not hold any prejudices against the blind who were expected to live independently. She really felt and she did enjoy a sense of equality as she went about her daily life with independence.

She also gained invaluable experience with her involvement in volunteering work. She found great inspiration from her sharing with a deaf-blind lady who had graduated with a PhD in law from Harvard University.

On returning to Malaysia, she joined the model United Nations. This gave her the opportunity to take part in discussions and debates on important global issues like capital punishment, poverty and human rights.

She also joined the Exchange Students' Alumni and took part in many volunteering activities. It was their way of giving back to the community. Celine joined a beach clean-up in Klang and spend a lot of time in the orphanages.

In 2016, Celine organised her own volunteer project which she named as "the gift of sight" programme. During the 2016 to 2017 period, she organised a series of activities aimed at raising public awareness of the blind. She got volunteers to help in producing tactile maps, mathematical graphs and economic diagrams and even to create google maps. She made arrangements for volunteers to provide assistance in the Setapak School Library and to play goalball with the blind students.

At the same time, however, Celine went on to complete her secondary school education at the Setapak Secondary School. She then made the conscious decision to move away from the well trodden path of her predecessors by choosing to go to a college where no other blind person had gone before, i.e. The Methodist College Kuala Lumpur (MCKL). While MCKL was insistent that they were taking a great risk because they had never taken in any blind person before, Celine was adamant in not going to the integrated programme for the blind at St. John's Institution in Kuala Lumpur.

Indeed, MCKL had no idea at all how to help Celine in her studies. Fortunately, they were able to reach out to the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) which provided the much needed assistance and support in producing braille textbooks, tactile diagrams and embossed maps, particularly for the study of Economics. NCBM even made available some special plastic material which made it possible for Celine to answer the questions usually omitted for the blind in the examinations set by the Lembaga Pengurusan. With the special plastic paper, Celine was able to produce her own drawings required to back up her explanations to certain economic theories.

"This was really exciting!" Celine exclaimed. "When I was in the blind school in Setapak, we never had the chance to draw. I hope this can be introduced to the blind students in school in the future. I want to take this opportunity to thank NCBM for having done so much to help me in my studies at MCKL." In college, Celine used the computer for writing out her essays and assignments. For the examinations, she was given a separate room and extra time with a personal invigilator to provide assistance and ensure that there was no cheating. She also used the computer to produce the answer scripts. As mentioned earlier, Celine graduated from MCKL in 2018 with excellent results.

Because of her good results, Celine managed to get a scholarship from Yayasan Khazanah to go to Cambridge University in Britain for a three-year course in law. However, she will only be able to go one year later when she is 21 years of age, which is the requirement for admission to the Residential Mature College.

She chose to go overseas rather than studying in a local university as she felt they could provide the greatest support and they had the best academics. Moreover, there was a very good disabled resource centre in the university. Celine said that had she been given the chance to choose between law and science, she would probably have opted for science. She remembers the time when she was in the U.S. and the blind students could take up science subjects in school. They could take up biology, chemistry and physics. She had the chance to dissect frogs but she found it rather disgusting.

"The experience was both fun and terrifying," Celine said. "But I also love technology which is science." She added.

Another favourite subjects of hers was history. She loved this subject because it helped her to know about the past. Celine says that even though it is amazing overseas, she will return to Malaysia after completing her studies. She wants to come back as her life's mission is to help bring about change in Malaysian Society.

"Why would I want to remain overseas. The people there are so advanced. Malaysia needs me," says Celine.

Celine added, "Even if I meet someone there, I will still come back. If he won't come back with me, then he is not really for me. So I will come back alone." So while waiting to leave for England in September 2019, Celine will be doing an internship with a law firm, which is Wong and partners in the Garden South Tower for a one-month period. It will like a structured programme with Celine shading the lawyers and drawing up legal documents. She will be using their computers which will be installed with the NVDA screen-reader. As the company has never taken in a blind person before, Celine will find it to be very exciting. The internship programme may be extended if the company wants her or if she so desires.

Meanwhile, after graduating from MCKL in early 2018, Celine decided to resume the "gift of sight" volunteer programme to raise public awareness about blindness and the visually impaired. In April, she organised the Global Youth Service Week-End programme at the University of Malaya. A number of activities and events were carried out with the participants being blindfolded.

One of the activities was a braille workshop where the participants had to carry out braille transcription. They were given a short poem on PowerPoint which they had to write out on a braille slate and using the braille alphabet as a guide. Then they had to read out the poem.

In another workshop, there was a screen-reader station on Voice Over or Talk Back. The participants had to use the phone blind-folded. The facilitator will send a message to the participant who will type out the message that he has heard. He will then send the message to participant

- b. who will send it on to participant
- c. Finally they had to check whether the message they sent was the same as the original message.

In the afternoon, stations and booths were opened so that the participants could carry out various activities blind-folded. The activities included walking with the white cane, brailing with the Perkins Brailler and drawing with plastic paper.

Subsequently, Celine organised a goalball event at the University of Malaya. Friends form the Majlis Sukan Negara were invited to play goalball with the blind using blind-folds.

When asked why she wanted to raise public awareness, Celine replied, "like it or not, we cannot stand alone. We need the community at large to be cooperative. For instance, if they are not aware about tactile guides for the blind, then this accessible facility will not be provided for the blind."

To the question concerning her ambition, Celine said, "I don't plan to be a lawyer as I would prefer to be involved in advocacy work and social reachout. I hope to be able to take part in the U.N programmes on active global citizenship. I know there will be a lot of obstacles but I would really love to do this."

Here is Celine's final message: "I wouldn't take things lying down but I will plan what to do. While I accept what fate has given me, I will do my best with what I have."

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE – NEW IDEAS FOR NEW TECHNOLOGIES

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

As we all step into the digital world, we cannot help being increasingly aware of the drastic change that is taking place with regards to the way in which the bling are getting assistance. In bygone days of the past, all kinds of assistance came in the form of helper support for blind people without vision. However, the sighted volunteers had to be in close proximity with the blind person in order to render the visual assistance. In the digital age, new thoughts and ideas have been introduced which we had never thought possible.

Through the Internet of Things, for example, the idea of a video call has been made possible. Now with just a smartphone in hand, you can have real-time conversation with someone who may be thousands of miles away. In fact, many people area using this gadget to stay in touch. Business corporations are making use of such facilities as the internet to conduct meeting or bring together several persons from different parts of the world.

Indeed, all these innovations have given rise to a new and different way in providing assistance to the blind. Video calls are being utilised to provide support for blind people who are in need of visual assistance.

By down-loading an app on to a smartphone, two different forms of communication are made possible.

- 1. The blind person can take a picture and send it to a server where the photo can be deciphered with the help of artificial intelligence.

 Alternatively, the photo can be sent to a volunteer who will determine what is in the picture and then type a message describing the photo.
- 2. As the internet speed improves, new apps are being developed to enhance the video call service. When a blind person is in need of some visual assistance, he can run an app and volunteers at the other end can

respond. The app then connects the two parties together.

Then, instead of focusing the camera on the two persons talking, the blind person can focus the camera on the things for which he needs assistance. E.g. identifying a can of tuna from a collection of several other canned foods.

With such an idea, blind persons can now use the eyes of another person who may be thousands of miles away to have lots of things done. In fact, now the power is in the imagination.

Some blind persons in Malaysia have taken advantage of the free services offered by "Be My Eyes". Here's what they have to say:

Wong Kwee Heong: "As I'm staying on my own and there's usually nobody around, I went into the app on my phone and registered myself as a visually impaired person. Once I get into the app, an option is immediately available for me to call a sighted person just by pressing a button. In this way, I have been able to obtain visual assistance on several occasions.

"On one occasion, I needed to know the flavour of Maggi mee-chicken or curry. The volunteer could direct me to face the camera on to the article or let me know whether the package was the right side up. This enabled me to select the flavour I wanted.

"I have obtained such visual assistance to get in to certain websites to check on certain things such as my voter registration. To confirm that I was not a robot, I needed to enter some characters on the screen. So I went in to the app and got a volunteer to guide me in adjusting the distance of the camera from the computer and identify the images or characters to be typed and I could then proceed with the work.

"On another occasion, it was midnight and the air-con wasn't functioning properly. I called a volunteer to help me adjust the remote control setting. He could tell me which mode and what temperature I was on so that I could make the necessary adjustments.

"Wow! It's just like having a sighted person next to you providing visual assistance!"

David Gib Eu Jo: "Here is one of my best experience. One day at midnight I heard something in my house. As I couldn't see, I was afraid to walk out and waited till next morning. When I woke up, I heard the thing again. So I opened up "be my eyes" and managed to get a volunteer to check and, lo and behold, there was a cat in my house.

"I shooed the cat and I thought it must have left. I scanned with "be my eyes" to confirm that the cat was not in the house. Then I went to work.

"I came home in the evening and at midnight, I smelt something in my bedroom. Again I called "be my eyes" and a sweet lady from Canada helped me look as I scanned everyone. She saw nothing until at last below my bed, she saw a cat hiding there. Cat and she exclaimed, "There's the cat! There's the cat!"

So I called my apartment security to take the cat away."

Tan Boon Kiat: "I have made use of the volunteer service on several occasions with the help of "be my eyes". For the first time, I was able to get a volunteer to assist me in setting up the remote control for my air-con. On another occasion, I was able to get a volunteer to help me recognise some medicine labels. Later, I even managed to get a volunteer to see whether the colour of my long pants had run just by looking at the water in my washing-machine. I really thing that this is a very good volunteer service that is being provided through "be my eyes". Best of all, you get the service free of charge."

From the above, it can be seen how such new ideas are making it easier for the blind to seek assistance by making many more volunteers available and easily accessible. In fact, the blind not travel at all in order to make use of such voluntary assistance, thereby enabling them to save cost as well as the precious commodity of time.

Yet another new idea in technology is AIRA. The name has been derived from two interesting sources – the emerging field of Artificial Intelligence (AI) an the ancient Egyptian mythological being and symbol known as the Eye of Ra (RA). Steeped in the mysteries of Egyptian mythology, the Eye of Ra symbolises protection, healing and the power receive and interpret both the seen and the unseen in the universe.

The seeds for starting AIRA were planted in 2014 when Suman Kanuganti and Nuja Chang struck up a friendship with a blind communications professional, Matt Brock. This led them to begin discussions on how Google Glass Technology can be used to help the blind and visually impaired become more mobile and independent. Based on this concept, Kanuganti and Chang were inspired to come up with a service that is akin to "On-Star" for the blind.

AIRA is, in fact, in the business of developing transformative remote assistive technology that connects the blind with a network of certified agents via wearable smart glasses and an augmented reality dashboard. This allows the agents to see what the blind person sees in real time. The agents, serving as visual interpreters for the blind, assist the users to accomplish a wide range of daily tasks and activities, from navigating busy streets to recognising faces and litghally traveling around the world.

For a rough estimate of the cost, let us have a cursory look at the plan which includes the following:

- 1. Glasses;
- 2. Data via AT&T MIFI;
- 3. Insurance for hardware;
- 4. Training session;
- 5. 7pm 1pm + 08 access to agents;
- 6. Cost per month basis us.89 100 hours;

Us.1290200 hours;

Us.199 400 hours;

Us.329 unlimited.

Going on to the transport sector, let us have a look at the two existing scenarios – the current scenario with the Uber and Grab operations and the old scenario without Uber and Grab. The objective is to find out which scenario is able to produce a higher (regate) surplus for society.

In this analysis, it appears that with the introduction of Uber and Grab, the number of people driving taxis (including traditional taxis) will increase. Moreover, the average taxi fare will be lower as Uber and Grab generally charge lower fares, thereby forcing traditional taxis drivers also to reduce their fares due to greater competition.

From the above, it can be seen that the introduction of Uber and Grab does bring gains to some and losses to others. Nevertheless, the new technology has brought about the increase of trade in the economy, i.e. more people are carrying out activities that are beneficial and thus increasing the (regate) surplus in society.

As such, therefore, the Uber and Grab scenario is apparently more preferable to the one without Uber and Grab. So let us look forward to more new ideas for new technologies.

TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS BY 2025

Just 17 years ago, Kodak had 170,000 employees and sold 85% of all photo paper worldwide. Within a few years their business model disappeared and they were bankrupt. This will happen in a lot of industries in the next ten years. It will happen with artificial intelligence, health, autonomous, and electric cars, education, 3D printing, agriculture and jobs.

It is amazing to think that Uber is just a software tool, they don't own any cars, and they are not the biggest company in the world. Airbnb is now biggest hotel company in the world although they don't own any properties.

In the U.S. young lawyers cannot get jobs. Because of IBM Watson, you can get legal advice within seconds, with 90% accuracy compared with 70% accuracy when done by humans. Watson already helps nurses diagnose Cancer abled times more accurately than human nurses. In 2030 computer will become more intelligent than humans. In 2019 the first self-driving car will appear. By 2022 most of us won't want a car any more. You will a car with your phone and it will drive you to your destination. Cities will have 90 to 94 percent less cars; parking space can become parks.

Cities will be less noisy because cars will be electric. Electricity will be incredibly cheap and clean. In 2017, more solar energy was installed worldwide than new fossil installations. The price of solar energy will drop so much that coal companies will be out of business.

A POINT TO PONDER: MONEY AND MONEY GAMES, PART 1

By Wong Kow

Traditionally, when one lives school and reaches adulthood, he will look for a job in order to earn his livelihood. If he should attain a higher position in his profession and get a better income, he will probably get married, buy a car and a house in order to settle down and organise his own family.

When the married couple have their own children, they begin to realise that money is hard to come by in spite of the fact that both husband and wife are working. The annual salary increments never seem to be adequate in catching up with the rising inflationary rate and the ever increasing expenses incurred with the upbringing of the children.

To be self-sufficient, therefore, the couple needs to plan wisely and carefully in order to gain financial stability. Whenever they have extra money, they will have to secure their savings through legal and low-risk investments. Such investments usually grow slowly and steadily; they may not be good enough to help curb inflationary pressures but, at least, the money will come in hand on rainy days.

As a result of facing such financial challenges, some people will look for parttime jobs while others will try their best in cutting down on expenditure. They may decide to drive and old secondhand-car or go to work by means of car-pooling or perhaps even commuting by bus or by train.

However, when the lack of money makes life more difficult, then there may be the growing desire to get more money in order to live comfortably. It is at such times of crisis when some wage-earners fall easily into the traps of the "get rich quick" programmes or the "money game" tricksters.

Once a person loses control of himself as he gets caught up in chasing after money, then he becomes an easy prey for the racketeers. He will gamble heavily at the casinos, bet extensively through Doto, play three or four-digit number games, and so on.

Indeed, they are various types of money games that will attract his attention. This is the time when the conmen and swindlers will take advantage of his greed for money. That will come with sweet but false stories of successful investors with their testimonies. The agents of such irresponsible money game companies can easily lure the unwary prey to sign and pay up without ever having the chance for consideration or consultation with some wiser person.

On immediately signing up, the person will feel pleased and happy because he is given some special discount or he may have earned some substantive interest for the first or second month. Thinking that he has really made a fortune, he will persuade his family members, close relatives and friends to join in as members. Alas! Who knows – they may subsequently become the victims of the money game!

From news reports, you will probably have come across actual true stories of family members, colleagues and friends who have been the victims of such money fames. Let us have a brief look at the following for reference or as a reminder:

- 1. The very expensive items from multiple-level sales are of minimal value or they may have no value at all to their users. For instance, a bottle of powder, capsules or tablets derived from unknown sources may claim to be able to cure all sicknesses.
- 2. The company may not be the company may not be in actual possession of the products such as gold, diamonds and other precious stones that they claim to be selling.
- 3. When one is obsessed with the idea of getting money, he can be easily fooled by tricksters who may claim that with a magical liquid or a special machine, he can turn a piece of blank paper in to real money.

You will probably agree with me that scams are everywhere. You will surely have heard from the news or from reports here and there how even many of the professionals have been cheated and lost a substantial amount of money. Probably, just like me, you will be tempted to ask the question, "since the professionals are highly educated people and they would surely be well informed about scams and illegal investment activities, why are they so gullible?"

Truly, I hope that readers will be able to exercise their own judgement and wisdom in making "clean money" for happy and independent living.

SOME HUMOURS WIDBITS

Nailing the coffin:

A clerk was reading to her boss when the phone rang. As she ran out to get the phone, she tripped among some books and fell. Fortunately, she was not to badly hurt.

The boss came out laughing because it reminded him of the story in which some boys were nailing shut a coffin. Suddenly, they were frightened by some noise coming from the coffin and they ran as fast as they could. One boy, however, could not run as he found that he had got stuck to the coffin because he had mistakenly nailed part of his sarong to the coffin.

An audience with god:

Gorbachev, Bush and a disabled person had an audience with god.

Gorbachev asked whether he will see perestroika happening in his lifetime. God thought for a while and said, "I'm sorry this will not happen in your lifetime."

Bush asked if he will see the U.S. winning over Japan in economic supremacy and the balancing of trade. God thought and answered, "This will not happen during your term of presidency." Bush wept and made his exit.

Then the disabled person asked whether he will see legislation for the disabled all over the world in his lifetime. Suddenly god wept.

"Why are you weeping?" the disabled person asked.

God answered, "Because I won't see this happening in my lifetime."

Request for another ten years:

A man died at age 45. He said to god, "Why did you take my life at such an early age? I need another ten years."

God asked four questions. "Do you smoke?" The man said, "No."

"Do you drink alcohol?" The man said, "No."

"Do you gamble?" The man said, "No."

"Do you womanise?" The man said, "No."

Then god said, "If you don't do any of these things, why do you need another ten years. You're wasting my time."

REFLECTIONS

Alexander The Great:

We can produce more wealth but we cannot produce more time.

When we given someone our time, we actually give a portion of our life that we will never take back.

Time is our life.

Unknown author-

Prayer on how to live:

Oh lord, keep me from the habit of thinking I must say something on every subject and on every occasion. Release me from craving to straighten out everybody's affairs.

Keep my mind free from the recital of endless details; give me wings to get to the point. I ask for grace enough to listen to the tales of others' pains. Help me to endure them with patience. But seal my lips on my own aches and pains-they are increasing and my love of rehearsing them is becoming sweeter as the years go by.

Teach me the glorious lesson that occasionally it is possible that I may be mistaken. Keep me reasonably sweet; I do not want to be a saint-some of them are so hard to live with-but a sour old person is one of the crowning works of the devil.

Give me the ability to see good things in unexpected places and talents in unexpected people. And give me, o lord, the grace to tell them so.

Make me thoughtful, but not moody;

Helpful; but not bossy. With my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to use it all-but you know, lord, that I want a few friends at the end.

SOME QUESTIONS

Top ten Bill Gates quotes:

- 1. I choose a lazy person to do a hard job because a lazy person will find an easy way to do it.
- 2. TV is not real life; people actually have to leave the coffee-shop and go to jobs.
- 3. Don't compare yourself with anyone in this world. If you do so, you are insulting yourself.
- 4. I failed in some subjects in the examination but my friend passed in all. Now he is an engineer in Microsoft and I am an owner in Microsoft.
- 5. If you can't make it good, at least make it look good.
- 6. Your most unhappy customers are your greatest source of learning.
- 7. If you are born poor, it's not your mistake; but if you die poor, it's your mistake.
- 8. Success is a lousy teacher; it seduces smart people into thinking they can't lose.
- 9. Life is not fair; get used to it.
- 10. Patience is the key element of success.

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

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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.

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