

# NCBM OUTREACH



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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

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## **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.*



## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### NCBM'S SUPPORT SCHEMES FOR THE BLIND

#### 1. Research Grant

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

Please contact NCBM at 03-2028 1999

*Note:*

*For more details concerning these projects and for the application form, you can contact the NCBM Secretariat.*

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*Contact person : administrative assistant*



## SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT

### BRAILLE READING COMPETITION 2019

(Bahasa Melayu and English)

#### **PENANG - Date : 06 July 2019**

St. Nicholas' Home, Penang

Contact : Ms Lee Cheng Imm

Tel : 04 2290 800

#### **SARAWAK - Date : 10 August 2019**

Sarawak Society for the Blind

Contact : Ms Annie Soon

Tel : 082 424 046

#### **SABAH - Date : 23 July 2019**

Sabah Society for the Blind

Contact : Mr Jimmy Ng

Tel : 088 218 130

*\*Finalist will participate at the National Level in the braille Reading Competition organized by National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM).*

## **WBU Statement on World Book and Copyright Day, 23 April**

The World Blind Union joins UNESCO (The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) and the rest of the world in observing World Book and Copyright Day on 23 April 2019. World Book and Copyright Day is a celebration to promote the enjoyment of books and reading. It is an occasion to pay worldwide tribute to authors, book publishers and libraries.

On this occasion, the World Blind Union is raising concern about the limited amount of accessible books and reading materials available to our members. Despite the ratification of the Marrakesh Treaty by many countries, a treaty which allows the production of reading material in formats accessible to blind and partially sighted persons or otherwise print disabled, without copyright infringements, the amount of reading material accessible to our community is still very limited in terms of volume and variety.

Article 21 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) obliges States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities can exercise the right to freedom of expression and opinion, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas on an equal basis with others and through all forms of communication of their choice.

In addition, in order to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all, as per Sustainable Development Goal 4, reading materials have to be accessible to all. This is the only way that the target to ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities and ensuring that all youth and adults achieve literacy and numeracy has to be met.

The World Blind Union is therefore urging States Parties to take all appropriate measures to ensure that persons with disabilities, including blind and partially sighted persons, have access to books and

reading materials in accessible formats and appropriate technologies such as braille.

In recognition of the World Book and Copyright Day, the WBU wants all countries to ratify and properly implement the Marrakesh Treaty to enable people with print disabilities have full access to books and other printed works. With greater access to books and less copyright restrictions to reproduce them in formats accessible to blind and partially sighted persons WBU's members globally will enjoy their full right to freedom of expression and accessible information. Access to information not only leads to educational opportunities and enjoyment of culture it also leads to employment and independence.

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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](http://www.worldblindunion.org)



# **WBU Statement on World Day for Safety and Health at Work, 28 April 2019**

The World Blind Union joins International Labour Organization (ILO), governments, employers and workers to observe the World Day for Safety and Health at Work, today April 28. The theme for this year is **Safety and Health and the Future of Work**.

The World Day for Safety and Health at Work is an annual international campaign to promote safe, healthy and decent work. Inspired by the ILO centenary anniversary and discussions on the future of work, the world day this year attempts to take stock of a 100 years of work in improving occupational safety and continuing efforts through major changes such as technology, demographics, sustainable development and changes in work organization.

As we observe this day, we, the World Blind Union would like to commend the International Labour Organization on its 100 years of work in improving occupational safety and health globally. The ILO has had a long involvement in promoting Decent Work for persons with disabilities based on the principles of equal opportunity, equal treatment, mainstreaming, and community involvement. ILO Convention No. 159 and other international, regional and national initiatives, aim at improving the living conditions and status of people with disabilities around the world.

We re-affirm our support to the ILO in pushing forward global efforts and initiatives which will positively impact the lives of persons with disabilities, including the blind and partially sighted persons.

Meanwhile, in keeping with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) article 27 which focuses on work and employment, we call upon State Parties to fulfil their obligations to protect the rights of persons with disabilities, on an equal basis with others, to just and favourable conditions of work. States must implement appropriate policies that provide employment opportunities, safe and healthy working conditions.



They must ensure that persons with disabilities are able to exercise their employment rights on an equal basis with others; provide effective access to technical and vocational programmes.

In the quest to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, which promotes sustained inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all, States must increase employment opportunities, especially for young people, reduce informal employment and labour market inequality. They must promote safe and secure working environments, especially for persons with disabilities, and improve access to financial services to ensure sustained and inclusive economic growth.

The World day for safety and health at work is observed by the International Labour Organization since 2003.

Read more on the ILO website: <https://www.ilo.org/safework/events/safeday/lang-en/index.htm>

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# **NEWS FROM NCBM AND MEMBER-ORGANISATIONS**

## **COUNTRY REPORT MALAYSIA 2018**

*By Moses Choo Siew Cheong*

*Executive Director*

*National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*

The population of Malaysia as at 18th June 2018 stands at 32,027,681. The total number of people with disabilities is 430,000 while the number of people affected by blindness (including the blind and visually impaired) stands at 46,875.

It should be noted that the definition of blindness in Malaysia is a little different from that of the World Health Organisation (WHO). For clarification, therefore, the definition of blindness in Malaysia is as follows:

Visual impairment means both eyes are blind or the person is blind in one eye.

Visual impairment in Malaysia can be divided into:

1. Low vision, meaning vision worse than 6/18 but equal to or better than 3/60 despite using visual aids or having a visual field of less than 20 degrees from a fixed point.
2. Blindness means having a vision of 3/60 or a visual field of less than 10 degrees from fixation. Less than 3/60 takes into consideration the Counting of Fingers (CF), Hand Movement (HM), Perception of Light (PL), and No Perception of Light (NPL).

Although the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) had made a request for the above definition to be aligned with that of WHO, the Government of Malaysia had not agreed to the change.

## **THE MALAYSIAN DISABILITY ACT – 685 OF MALAYSIA**

While Malaysia already has an act to govern the affairs of people with disabilities, all the organisations for and of people with disabilities agree that the Malaysian Act for People with Disabilities has been a toothless tiger despite having been around for about ten years. Due to the fact that this act has not been very effective, all matters pertaining to education, employment and accessibility have made little progress. Although a call had been made for the Government departments to provide at least 1% of employment opportunities for the disabled, so far only one ministry has managed to reach a target of about 2.1%. All the other ministries have not made much effort to employ people with disabilities.

### **EDUCATION OF THE BLIND IN MALAYSIA**

In 2012, the Ministry of Education introduced the Malaysian Education Blue Print with the hope of implementing the programme of at least 70% of people with disabilities in the inclusive schools. This implies that the Government of Malaysia has acknowledged that not all people with disabilities can cope if placed in an inclusive school. In actual fact, however, the Blue Print merely has a target but it lacks the guidelines for implementation. Moreover, there are no proper procedures for mid-term assessment.

On the part of the students affected by blindness, one of the biggest problems in inclusive education is the teaching and coaching of blind people in blindness-related skills such as ICT, Braille and independent living. While there is awareness that the approach in assisting people with disabilities is multi-disciplinary in many countries, the approach is still segregationist in Malaysia. Indeed, in most cases in Malaysia, training and adaptation of people with visual impairment or other disabilities has been left to the non-governmental organisations to carry out.

Another issue concerning the implementation of inclusive education is the lack of facilities, equipment and know-how in adapting the services and amenities for the use of the blind. In fact, having more inclusive programmes would also mean spreading out more thinly the resources, hence making it

more expensive in providing such facilities to all the blind students. As a result, the use of technology and expensive equipment is not as advanced as desired. In spite of the lack of facilities, nonetheless, Malaysia has an average of about 30 blind persons in higher education at any given time.

## **THE USE OF BRAILLE**

In complying with efforts to bring about change towards the use of the Unified English Braille Code (UEB), Malaysia has already adopted the use of UEB as envisioned in its education policy. In this connection, efforts are also being made in formulating the Malay Braille Code so that there is synchronisation based on the conventions of UEB.

## **EMPLOYMENT OF BLIND PERSONS IN THE MAINSTREAM**

In order to increase the participation of people with disabilities in the Malaysian workforce, the Ministry of Human Resources is now more active in organising job carnivals and job-matching seminars. However, it is our opinion that while such engagements do help to promote the employment of the disabled, they are not good enough in convincing blind people that they are able to work in a normal setting. As such, organisations serving the blind in Malaysia are encouraged to have direct contacts with the employers and to have more interaction that would allow the employers to understand how the blind can manage in a workplace. Hence, this implies the importance of having an effective job placement department with suitable placement personnel.

## **BANKING SERVICES**

While we do hear of the idea to introduce talking ATMs and accessible online banking facilities, Malaysia is still in the infant stage in implementing such initiatives. While we have had discussions with the relevant authorities, such installations require financial commitments so that the financial institutions have been taking only very small steps towards achieving the desired goals.

There are banks which are still reluctant in making their services fully accessible to the blind (e.g. the current account, overdraft facilities and the car loan). Some blind persons have managed to gain access to such services but this has to depend on whom you meet and how one is able to carry oneself. Short of any official policy, however, the blind are always at the mercy of the bank officer.

## **THE MARRAKESH TREATY**

Being party to the Marrakesh Treaty, NCBM has had several discussions with the Intellectual Property Corporation of Malaysia (also known as MyIPO). Things look good as we have been made to understand that Malaysia is hoping to be a party to the Marrakesh Treaty by 2019.

During our discussions, the officers apparently understood that domestic laws have already made provisions for local distribution. However, the laws affecting the import and export of copyrighted materials will need to be amended prior to the signing.

## **ACCESSIBLE TRANSPORT**

In order to make improvements in transport, Malaysia introduced a new train service in July 2017, stretching over an area of 51 km and passing through thirty stations. By far, this has been the most accessible train service equipped with auto doors and audio announcements. However, the vending machines used for the dispensing of tickets are still not accessible to the blind. As most of the blind commuters use the Top Up or Touch 'n Go Card, they have been able to avoid using the vending machines. However, in an effort to support the blind commuters, all the stations are manned with extra manpower during the peak hours.

On 9th May 2018, there was a total change of government. NCBM, in collaboration with other NGOs, took the opportunity in reaching out to the new authorities in order to request the new Government to consider new ideas to help the organisations serving people with disabilities to move forward.

One of the main requests is for the establishment of a disability rights commission in order to monitor discrimination faced by the disabled. We are quite hopeful that the new Government will give serious consideration to our recommendations.

Let us hope that the new Malaysia will be a better place for the disabled.



## **STRENGTHENING THE PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES ACT 2008**

*By Muhamad Nadhir Abdul Nasir & Wong Yoon Loong*

The year 2019 marks the eleventh year since the enactment of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008 (Act 685). This represents the Government of Malaysia's most monumental step to date in promoting, protecting, and ensuring the full enjoyment of rights for its citizens by pledging Malaysians with disabilities equal access to public facilities and services, public transportation, education, employment, healthcare services, cultural life, leisure, and sporting activities.

The act was introduced in the wake of human rights discourse for disability issues at the international level, with the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006. In the spirit of the CRPD, the Persons with Disabilities Act recognizes the equal rights of persons with disabilities, with the aim of shining a light on the lives of the more than 500,000 registered Malaysians with disabilities.

Unfortunately, the disability community has yet to witness a “real change” resulting from the enactment of the act. Most, if not all Malaysians with disabilities, continue to face discrimination in education, employment, public goods and facilities, and more. Many have criticised the act as “toothless” in protecting the rights of Malaysians with disabilities, and some have expressed their frustration in the role of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities as a focal point for disability issues, though the reasons behind its failings have yet to be fully proven.

In response to this disparity, the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) has begun a legal analysis of the Persons with Disabilities Act as part of the project “Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Malaysia through ASEAN Enabling Masterplan 2025”, with funding by the International Foundation for Electoral Systems (IFES). As part of the project, NCBM is assessing the gaps between the Persons with Disabilities Act and international disability rights frameworks such as the CRPD and the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Enabling Masterplan 2025: Mainstreaming the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, with the aim of harmonizing national and international policies.

NCBM coordinated a Focus Group Discussion with legal practitioners, academics, government officials, and activists, through which two major flaws of the Persons with Disabilities Act were uncovered. First, the act does not define discrimination or prohibit discrimination on the basis of impairment and/or chronic illness. Second, the act does not provide punitive measures or redress mechanisms for violations of persons with disabilities’ rights.

In addition, the Focus Group Discussion highlighted the need to establish a commission to serve as a watchdog on disability-related issues. At the same time, the role of the National Council for Persons with Disabilities should be strengthened and enhanced, including increased transparency in the nomination and selection process, publication of relevant documents, and its expansion to state governments and local authorities. Looking beyond the Persons with Disabilities Act, proposed an amendment to be made to Article 8(2) of the Federal Constitution of Malaysia to include the phrase “Disabilities” to strengthen the legal protection for Malaysians with disabilities in all areas of life.

All in all, NCBM’s analysis has revealed that there is a crucial need to amend the Persons with Disabilities Act 2008. To achieve this, all Malaysians with disabilities, their families, and their organizations must work together to advocate to the government. Now, it is vital for us to strategize an effective advocacy plan in order to materialize this vision. Yes, the journey ahead is still long and arduous, but we can no longer tolerate this persisting discrimination. We remain hopeful and optimistic that our nation can truly become a truly inclusive Malaysia.





## THE "SILENT AIRPORT" INITIATIVE

As part of the global "silent airport" initiative, Malaysia Airports Holdings Bhd. Has discontinued announcements of flight information at the KLIA and KLIA2 since 1st December 2018. The termination of such announcements also include the passenger calls.

"We advise all passengers to refer to the flight information display screens (FIDS) or speak to our airport care ambassadors for assistance," Malaysia Airports Holdings said on its Facebook page.

The rise of global travel and the diversity of languages spoken by travellers have led to noise pollution in the form of repeated announcements of the same information in all major languages used at airports.

This prompted a movement towards so-called "silent airports" where boarding calls and other non-essential announcements are no longer publicly made.

Among the early adopters of the movement include London City Airport, Helsinki Airport, and the Barcelona Airport among others in Europe.

India's Chennai and Pune Airports and Singapore's Changi Airport went silent earlier in the year of 2018.

# **ST. NICHOLAS' HOME, PENANG** **HEMARRUBEN S/O KRISHNA MOORTHY-** **PASTRY DEPT. OF DOUBLE TREE** **RESORT, PENANG**

*By Lee Cheng Imm and Irene Ong,  
Training and Social Services (TSS) Department.  
St. Nicholas' Home, Penang*



Ruben (Centre)

Hemarruben s/o Krishna Moorthy (known to us as “Ruben”) is a nineteen year old lad with low vision who enrolled at St. Nicholas' Home, Penang for a training programme in July 2016. Our first impression of Ruben was that he was a quiet boy with a reserved personality. Ruben came for a tour of St. Nicholas' Home with his grandmother and uncle. At that moment, the job placement officer asked him about his interest and in what field he would like to build his career. He replied with resolute and confidence, “A front office staff in a hotel”.

After vetting his SPM results, and seeing that securing a scholarship might be difficult, the Job Placement Officer advised him to give a try at pastry making, “Let's place you in Pastry to see if you can bloom from there”.

Ruben learnt pastry making for about a year, he did fairly well. His work programme was extended for 9 months, fine tuning his skills in preparation for an opening for internship at Jen Hotel, Penang. Following his 3-month internship, he was offered employment as a full-time staff in the Pastry Department of Double Tree Resort, Batu Ferringhi, Penang. The Double Tree Resort was then a newly built hotel located along the tourist belt, facing the Andaman Sea.

Ruben, having achieved his dream to work in a hotel, cherishes another dream in his heart, this time is to own a home in Penang. He wants to bring his grandmother along to live with him in his dream home. Ruben is a good worker and valued employee of the hotel – his future lies before him with bigger possibilities! He was earmarked for a promotion and a transfer to the Double Tree Resort in Kuala Lumpur. However, on 6th of March this year, Ruben experienced blurry vision and he could only see silhouettes. Ruben sought medical advice, with no guarantees of restored vision after surgery, Ruben decided to go for his eye surgery at the International Eye Specialist Centre, Penang.

He has moved back to stay with his grandmother in Bedong, Kedah while recuperating from the eye surgery. Both of Ruben's parents are blind and divorced and they have not stayed in touch with him.

Ruben has been away on medical leave for 2 months now. His vision has improved slightly in the past few days after a change of medication. He can see slightly the grandmother's face, some colour but he cannot read words yet at this stage.

Let us pray for Ruben's speedy recovery, so that he could spring into action again.

# NEWS FROM SARAWAK SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND

1. Sarawak Society For The Blind branches had their AGM being carried out recently:-

- i) Sarawak Society For The Blind Kuching Branch



2. ICT training is an on going activity for Kuching branch. The Miri branch started their first ICT activity recently with 2 students. Activities of daily living skills is incorporated into their training.



3. 4 wheel bicycle cycling is being promoted at Miri branch. The BVIs together with their sighted volunteer's cycled at a park.



4. Massage training at Kuching Blind Centre with 5 trainees is back on the 2nd month since our trainer left us. Our new instructor is Mr. Isak Ngau.



5. Eye screen is being carried out at our 3 branches.

- i) Sarawak Society For The Blind Kuching Branch in collaboration with Diabetic Association.



- ii) Sarawak Society For The Branch Sibü Branch together with the Sibü General Hospital on 12 Mei, 2019.





iii) Sarawak Society For The Blind Miri Branch together with the Miri Buddhist Association.



6. Braille reading and writing is being introduced to adult blind and massage training trainees.



7. BVIs in Miri participated in an open run recently. On the right is Mr. YK Yang, The Branch Chairman.



# **SABAH SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND - LUNCHEON IN THE DARK**

*by Frederick Chua*

In collaboration with Sabah Society For The Blind, Universiti Malaysia Sabah (UMS) students organised at their a “luncheon in The Dark” on 24th April, 2019 at 12 noon. This function is in relation to their course of study on hotel catering and management and with it the students promote and market this event so as to get an insight experience of what they have learned and put into actual practice.

There were two classes of students for the hotel catering and management course.

Applying the title of the event “Luncheon in the Dark” which was unique and puzzled in its own way and with the collaboration of Sabah Society for The Blind who is participating with their blind masseurs, the students were able to market their luncheon with ten tables fully occupied.

It was successfully functioned and served as identically to hotel operation where the students dressed in hotel uniforms and the serving was perfect clean and neat. The only strange for the patrons were that they were blind folded during their lunch. The simulation was a good experience for the patrons.

The blind masseurs who worked in the same vicinity have their income for the day too.

The proceeds of sales for the days was donated to the Sabah Society For The Blind.

The lunch ended at about 3pm





# **MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND**



## **WHAT IS KEPSMAB?**

KEPSMAB is the Kelab Penggiat Seni MAB (or MAB Arts Activation Club) which was formerly set up at the Dewan Dato' Dr. Ismail Salleh of Kompleks MAB on 24th November 2018 (Saturday). The Organising Chairman, En. Fadzlin, said that while scouring the internet, he found that arts teaching programmes were very popular in Britain and America. As for Malaysia, he found nothing about the arts as the people here were more interested in psychology and technology. He hoped that with the establishment of the club, they can help to bring about change on the internet landscape. Currently, the blind may know how to play a-flat minor on the guitar but they know nothing else about the arts. The day's programme was to help brainstorm for some ideas in moving forward the arts agenda for the blind in Malaysia.

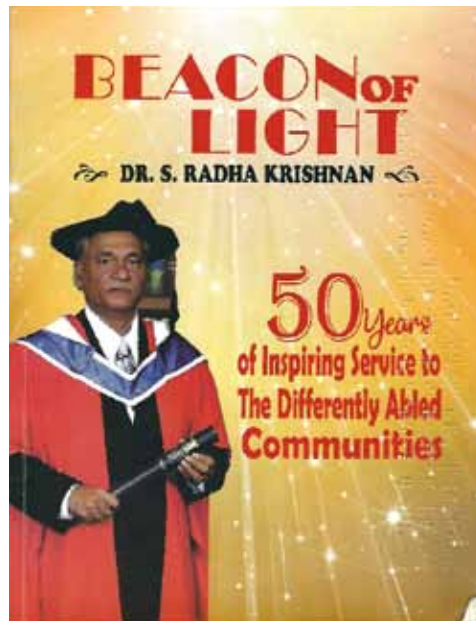
Dato' S. Kulasegaran, Deputy President of MAB, said that formation of the Arts Activation Club was the predecessor to the establishment of the Music Academy by the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB). He urged the Research and Development Section to help advance the cause of the blind in the arts arena. He promised moral support and financial assistance from MAB that would lead to the establishment of the Academy of Arts and Culture for the blind.

Mr. Yen Yok Heng from the Ministry of Tourism, Arts and Culture said that with skills in the arts, the talented blind could get involved in the tourism programmes.

According to Puan Sumitha, the Research and Development Manager of MAB, the idea of establishing KEPSMAB had been conceptualised about one year ago. In an effort to strategise actions and come up with solutions that would make life more meaningful for the blind, the Research and Development Unit came up with the idea of setting up KEPSMAB. It was felt that with the introduction of the arts to the blind early in their years of education, they would be able to network more effectively and even develop interesting careers. Ultimately, the arts of the blind can contribute to the development of society.

## **RADHA'S BOOK LAUNCHED ON 24th DECEMBER 2018**

In the message from the Deputy Prime Minister, YAB Dato' Seri Wan Azizah Dr. Wan Ismail, she congratulated (Dr.) Radha Krishnan on the launching of his book, "Beacon of Light – Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, Fifty Years of Inspiring Service to the Differently Abled Communities". The book was published to commemorate fifty years of service dedicated to the blind and other disabled communities in Malaysia by Dr. Radha Krishnan.



Dato' Seri Wan Azizah said that excelling in sports is no mean feat but to do it for the visually impaired is even more inspiring. That is why Dr. Radha's accomplishments in blind football, shooting, judo, goalball, futsal, power-lifting, tandem cycling, tenpin bowling, lawn bowl and chess, bringing about accolades in paralympic sports and blind international championships, have made the nation proud.

His story will uplift and inspire the aspiring athletes to excel in sports, reach for the stars and never look at their disability as an impediment.

Dr. Radha Krishnan is no stranger to the disabled community in Malaysia. He started his service to the blind at the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) when he was just 21 years of age in 1968. Starting off as a junior clerk, he rose up the ranks to become Job Placement Officer in 1978 and continued in that post until 1995.

When Dato' Seri Wan Azizah was appointed as the first patron of the Malaysian Paralympic Council (MPM) on 2nd April 1998, Dr. Radha Krishnan was serving as the General Manager of MPM. He was subsequently the Chair of the International Blind Sports Federation, Asia Continent, from 2005 to 2017.

"I'm sure this commemorative book will serve as an inspiration to both the visually impaired and the community as a whole. I'm proud of his achievements and hope others will follow suit," said Dato' Seri Wan Azizah.

"I wish him all the best for his future and in his continuing service to the disabled community in Malaysia."

# BIOGRAPHY OF (DR.) S. RADHA KRISHNAN

*By Godfrey Ooi Goat Seen*

*Editor's Note: Radha's book was launched on 24th December 2018 (Monday) at the MAB Hall in Brickfields, Kuala Lumpur. In his biography, Dr. S. Radha Krishnan relates "fifty years of inspiring service to the differently abled communities". He was indeed a "beacon of light" to the blind and visually impaired for many years, especially when he was serving as Job Placement Officer at the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB).*

*We join in commemorating the services of Dr. S. Radha Krishnan with a summary of his book, "Beacon of Light – Dr. S. Radha Krishnan, Fifty Years of Inspiring Service to the Differently Abled Communities".*

Dr. Radha hails from Torkington Estate in Sabak Bernam, Selangor. He turned 71 on 22nd October 2018, thereby achieving his fiftieth year of outstanding service to the visually challenged communities in Malaysia and Asia.

He is the second child in his family of five children. His parents are Sinnathamby Naidu and Thanakodi Krishnan, who worked in the estate and brought up all their children with good academic qualifications. Dr. Radha was not exceptional, however, and after completing his MCE (form five), he started working.

Dr. Radha began his career in MAB in 1968 as an administrative assistant in the Sales Department. His passion for the blind and visually impaired grew as he got involved in helping them to sell their rattan baskets. He was highly impressed with his blind workers in skilfully weaving the cane baskets.



His devotion and dedication earned him promotion in MAB and he became the Job Placement Officer in 1977 and he helped to place many blind persons in employment. He found that the blind exhibited fantastic talents in many fields and he personally groomed them and identified their capabilities. So amazed was he with the talents, skills and capabilities of the blind that he decided to reject other job opportunities to work elsewhere and he stayed on in MAB.

His career advancement and personal life progressed gradually. He married Ms. Selvaranee Arumugam Pillai on 24th March 1974 and he has been blessed with three children, all of whom are girls.

In 1979 he got involved in sports for the visually impaired and he personally coached and ran together with the visually impaired athletes in the track events. The number of blind athletes grew in all the sports which included football, swimming, shooting, judo, goalball, futsal, weight-lifting, tenpin bowling, tandem cycling, lawn bowls and chess.

The visually challenged athletes received international recognition in 1982 when they participated in the Third FESPIC Games in Hong Kong. They won five golds for athletics and swimming and they attained fifth placing among the fifteen countries that took part.

1988 was a historic year for the differently abled communities when the Malaysian Paralympic Council (MPM) was formed. Dr. Radha was one of the founder members. Subsequently, the Malaysian flag was hoisted in Seoul, Korea in the 1988 Paralympic Games (the first games in which Malaysia participated).

The dedication and performance of the athletes in the international sports arena and the outstanding contribution of the MPM members earned Malaysia the honour to host the 9th FESPIC Games in Kuala Lumpur in 2006.

In 2010 the Malaysian Blind Sports Association (MBSA) was formally established by Dr. Radha Krishnan. He became the President of MBSA and is still holding the appointment until today. These athletes have participated

in international tournaments and they have gained accolades, especially in shooting, football, athletics, goalball, cycling and swimming.

With some of the blind showing keen interest in singing and playing musical instruments, Dr. Radha brought about the formation of the musical band, Suara Warna (or Colourful Voices). The band comprised blind singers and musicians in order to showcase their amazing talents. They have managed to stage a number of performances already. Some of the musicians have even been accepted into the mainstream music industry and a number of them have received international recognition.

Indeed, Dr. Radha, who "sees" for the blind and visually impaired, is totally involved in their upliftment and well-being. He is truly committed in helping them to gain achievement and success in all kinds of activities, be it in employment, in business and entrepreneurial development, in sports and music or even in matrimonial affairs.

Thus, the Malaysian Government has recognised Dr. Radha's excellent services and he has been awarded with the JSM (Johan Setia Mahkota), KMN (Kesatria Mangku Negara) and PJK (Pingat Jasa Kebaktian).

In 2009, the Academic Council of the Kursk State Technical University in Russia awarded Radha Krishnan with the honorary doctorate degree in recognition of his excellent services to the blind and disabled communities in Malaysia and Asia.

Truly, with grace and utmost professionalism, (Dr.) Radha Krishnan has achieved fifty years of meritorious services to the visually challenged and the differently abled communities both in Malaysia and Asia. He is indeed a shining example of diligence, achievement and success.

## **BLIND MECHANIC SETS GREAT EXAMPLE – DEFYING DISABILITY TO RUN HIS OWN MOTORCYCLE REPAIR WORKSHOP**

He was born blind, but that did not stop Azhar Ibrahim from opening his own workshop to repair motorcycles in Batu Gajah, Perak. Ever since he was seven years old, he loved to hear sounds, in particular, those of motorbikes.

"I've been operating my business for the past ten years after learning about handling and fixing bikes from a friend," said the 36-year old Azhar. "I set up the motorbike repair workshop in 2008."

He started out servicing customers at a small space in front of his house. A few friends then posted his story on social media and it went viral. Five years after that he received some cash aid from the Government to get more tools and build a proper workshop.

Previously, Azhar worked as a masseur and earned about RM800 per month in addition to the monthly aid of RM400 from the Welfare Department.

People are often puzzled about Azhar's occupation, given his visual disability. "All I can say is that I'm grateful for this gift from God," said Azhar.

In 2013 under the Business Incentive Assistance Scheme for Disabled Persons, Azhar received RM11,000 to help him develop his business.

Azhar has always wanted to be financially independent. "My mother didn't treat me differently from my siblings and I didn't use the walking stick. Our family was poor but it was enough for my parents to put food on the table."

Azhar's workshop is located in front of his parents' home but he lives alone in the shop. "I work alone, but I get help from friends to buy tools and spare parts. Most of the people who come here are locals but I have a customer from Shah Alam who comes here to get his bike fixed."

Touched by Azhar's story, Deputy Human Resources Minister, Datuk Mahfuz Omar, visited Azhar's workshop. "Azhar is one of a kind and should be an inspiration to all job-seekers. He didn't rely on anyone to get him a job but created his own path instead," said Mahfuz.



He said that as Chair of the Tangan Emas Perdana Menteri Award, he will suggest the creation of an award to honour persons with disabilities.

The State Health Environment and Human Resources Committee Chairman, A. Sivanesan, said that the state will donate RM5,000 to Azhar for his business.

"I'm thankful for the help I've received. To everyone out there, whether they have disabilities or not, keep going and never give up. We need to learn to be independent," said Azhar.



## **BACK TO SCHOOL PROGRAMME – 29 JANUARY 2019**

Dato' Shaiful Nizam Abdullah, Chairman of MCIO (Persatuan Melayu, Cina, India dan Orang lain) said that this is the fourth year of MCIO providing school bags to the blind students from three schools – two in Klang and one in Kajang. There were 60 blind students altogether receiving the bags together with rice and other goodies.

Dato' Shaiful said that besides giving school bags, "my business is to ensure that the blind get business and be independent. I, therefore, call upon the public to patronise the blind massage centres and to provide engagement opportunities for the blind buskers."

Dato' Shaiful expressed deep appreciation and great joy that Dato' Mohammad bin Abdullah, the Undang Luak Johol of Negeri Sembilan could be present as guest visitor in order to see for himself the work that was being done at the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB).

The Undang Luak Johol praised Dato' Shaiful for the way in which he was caring for the poor. As recommended by Dato' Shaiful, he himself came out to K.L. to look for a blind masseur and he has found that they can provide excellent service. He said that he would like to sit with MCAB at a meeting with the ministers in the Government in order to work out a National Blue Ocean Strategy for the blind. He suggested that MAB could produce its own white canes for export, build up the agricultural centre for the blind in Temerloh, Pahang and work with the hotels in employing blind masseurs which could be a means of promoting tourism.



## **HANDICRAFTED CHAIRS KEEP VISUALLY IMPAIRED MAN FOCUSED**

Although he lost his sight at age thirty-two due to a genetic condition, V. Saravanan did not lose his determination to provide for his family. He has even gone on to impart his work skills to other blind people.

Saravanan, 48, joined the Malaysian Association for the Blind and in four years, he had learnt to make designs on wooden chairs from the 68-year old master, Mr. Joseph Yong. He had learnt five basic designs from his 'sifu' at MAB.

He said, "I created another two new designs on my own for the Malaysian International Furniture Fair 2019 held at the Malaysian International Trade and Exhibition Centre (MITEC) in K.L."

His hand-designed chairs were among the items showcased at the fair to enable the public to place their orders through MAB.

"I also started to teach skills to other blind persons at MAB to help them make a living too," he said.

Saravanan said he was really happy to be able to impart his knowledge and woodwork skills to others like him. "It's pure joy," "It's pure joy," he added.

He had also set up a company so that he can carry out projects at his home in Shah Alam and support his family.

Saravanan's chairs ranged from RM85 to RM130 each, depending on the size. The 12-inch chairs cost RM85 each while the 18-inch handcrafted ones suitable for the dining table and computer table are priced at RM99 each.

"If the customer wants a glass top added, it will be priced accordingly," said the father of four children aged between 16 and 22 years.



# THE MUCH AWAITED RETREAT

*By Louis Prem Kumar*

It was a smooth landing on a summer morning as the wheels of the plane touched down on the runway of the Seattle Washington airport, thereby ending the long flight for 40 deafblind individuals on 26th August 2018. We were destined for Seabeck to attend the much awaited retreat.

Soon after the airplane's screaming engines had gone silent, we headed for the baggage claims and then to the bus waiting area. The bus team greeted me and my brother, Joseph, very cheerfully as we boarded the bus for the hour and a half journey to the camp site.

My feeling of excitement rose as the bus travelled along the beautiful scenery of green trees, beautiful buildings and the coastal beach. When we arrived at the Deafblind Retreat Camp, the staff and deafblind friends greeted one another with great joy by using the sign language. Then came a volunteer named Meghan who took us to what would be our bedroom for a week.

Looking out of the window, my brother told me that the place was all surrounded by apple trees and there was the splendid sight of a deer quietly resting. Indeed, the one-week programme at the Seabeck Camp was filled with the most thrilling activities that I had ever experienced. The meals being provided throughout the day were some of the most delicious servings and I enjoyed them thoroughly. My first hearty dinner consisted of a large serving of salad with tomato sauce and something which appeared to be like chicken pizza and a sweet creamy delicious pie for dessert.

After dinner, my assistant volunteer, Bob, took me to the meeting hall where all the new participants were gathered together. I was handed an FM microphone which would receive the announcements made on the main microphone by way of the telephone switch on my hearing aid. The device was like a handphone which was hung around my neck with a rope.

There at the meeting hall, I met an American deafblind friend named Patrick who used his special Braille display to communicate with me. He asked whether this was my first time coming to the retreat and I replied in the positive. Then came another deafblind friend named Bader – he was an

Arabian who had settled in Seabeck and he also used sign language. Both Patrick and Bader ended up in great laughter as they patted each other.

I was then introduced to many more of the deafblind participants, including Keith who was in charge of the retreat. Keith showed me the sign for "smiles" – you gently slide your finger across the shoulder.

Bob then took me out for a walk near the lagoon and the weather was quite cold. Nevertheless, I enjoyed the walk in the cold even though I was only wearing a t-shirt. We both walked and walked and walked as we chatted about some of our experiences and we laughed so much. Finally, I returned to my bedroom which brought to an end my first eventful day at the retreat.

Next morning, I had a hearty breakfast of flakes with unsweetened milk, sausage rolls, eggs, boiled potatoes, fruit juice and coffee. We then waited for the van to take us to the bike-riding location which was half an hour's journey from the Seabeck Camp. Both the volunteers and the deafblind participants were quite excited as we arrived at the bike-riding location. I rode on a tricycle, the volunteer sitting on the left side to do the steering while the deafblind sat on the right side to assist with the paddling.

Ashlynn Walker was my volunteer who rode the bike at a great speed and we both thoroughly enjoyed the bike-riding event. After riding three rounds, I was very tired to say the least. Ashlynn asked if I wanted to continue riding and I replied in the negative. So we returned to the camp to continue with some indoor activities.

I went to the handicrafts room where I found an interesting attraction. There were two containers filled with liquid. I put in my hand wrist-deep into the first container for about two seconds. Then I put my hand into the second container of liquid for about 8 seconds. When I took my hand out, the liquid began to form into a mould of my hand from the fingers up to the wrist. The instructor gently removed the mould and it became a solid frame of my whole hand made up of candle wax.

I was given the choice to have the craft painted in my favourite colour of blue. I brought the craft safely back home and it now stands in my showcase as a souvenir of the retreat.

Just across the road from the camp was the beautiful lagoon for boat-riding. My brother and I went along with the volunteer who assisted me to embark. Once in the boat, my volunteer sat on the left side and started paddling and steering while I paddled on the right side. We cheered and waved to my brother who was standing on the shore.

Each day the events turned out to be more and more thrilling. I felt such great excitement when we entered a room where two gentlemen were seated and quietly engaged in an activity which was described as the Hard of Hearing Activity. In this activity, we discussed issues relating to hearing difficulties and the use of sign language.

The two camp leaders, Steven Cook and Dale Kosier, greeted me by saying, "apa khabar"? Then Steven continued to say that he had gone to Indonesia many years ago and that his parents had even stayed for one night in Kuala Lumpur in 1963.

I joined the small group discussion on deafblind matters and issues. Concern was expressed over the history of events for the deafblind in Malaysia. We talked about the population of the deafblind in Malaysia, how they communicate with one another and the use of Braille. We also had fun learning some sign language and getting to know each other. I discovered that Dale is a 73-year old gentleman and that he was one of the last few founders of the Seabeck Deafblind Camp in Seattle and that the camp was founded in 1978. Dale uses the cochlear implant while Steven uses his hearing aid as well. We were then served coffee and cotton candy. The cotton candy felt like a large pomelo-sized round bubble stuck on a stick.

We then went on a long beach walk and we continued with an adventurous walk through the forest that surrounded the Seabeck Camp. We came across some tall and really huge historical trees which were said to have been there for the last 500 years. The ambience was wonderful with the pretty cool weather so that we could walk for miles without sweating or feeling tired.

Later on, I joined a group of about 20 deafblind persons and volunteers on a one and a half hour journey by bus to the Lighthouse. I was told that it was a large beautiful building consisting of many departments.

At the Lighthouse, there was a big Boeing department where the parts of an airplane were being made. The easels were also being made in another

department. With the marvellous technology available, the employees were well equipped to carry out their jobs.

Indeed, job opportunities there were endless if an individual is willing to work and has good work ethics. In fact, there are deafblind persons being employed in the agricultural industries such as in the making of fruit juices. Then, in explaining the history of the Lighthouse, we were told that it had actually been started with the deafblind group at Seabeck.

After lunch, we boarded the bus and the ferry back to the Seabeck Camp. To our surprise, there were some seals in the sea along the way. We also had a view of the city and especially the famous Sky Tower of Seattle.

Upon disembarking after an hour's drive, we came to a shopping centre called the Kittap Mall where we came across all kinds of souvenirs, including t-shirts, mugs, keychains and magnets. Back at the camp by bus, I saw many interesting things like the American cane, telescopic cane, mini travel guide and head vamp bus flash cards as well as many board games like chess, draughts and bingo. I was also given the opportunity to play the piano which plucked the ears of all the people around the camp. As a result, one of the Seabeck Camp founders offered me the opportunity to play music for a fund-raising programme, which I accepted with great joy.

The most colourful highlight to end the deafblind retreat 2018 was the dance party. We all enjoyed dancing together with the volume of the music machines on high which vibrated the dance floor. We enjoyed chatting with one another in sign language as we wished each other goodbye and we hugged one another.

I will never forget these sweet moments of memory and such a beautiful time of my life. I am specially indebted to Sharon Hooley who was the one that made it possible for me to know about this retreat. Sharon is a deafblind lady from Seattle who participated in the retreat in 2017.

It is my dream to be able to share such joy and happiness with the deafblind folks in Malaysia. I, therefore, welcome any assistance in setting up a group in our country in order to achieve our aims and goals.

You can reach me at phone number 019-3151331 or email [louisprem@gmail.com](mailto:louisprem@gmail.com)

# **FIRE SAFETY AND PREVENTION**

*By Jay Wong*

***Editor's Note: Jay Wong made his presentation on fire safety and prevention at the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) on 13th August 2018 (Monday). Here is what he said:***

Every day an average of 136 cases of fire occur. Some people have grills with locks and so they get trapped in their houses when such fires break out.

An electrical fire may be caused by malfunctioning of computers and air-conditioners or by too much extension wiring. When such fires occur, the first reaction is to run. In actual fact, the first thing is not to run but to switch off the mains. And you should not try to douse the fire with water because water can conduct or carry electricity. You should only use the extinguisher with dry powder or the one containing CO<sub>2</sub>.

For safety, it is better to use the extinguisher with ABC Powder. CO<sub>2</sub> is very cold and if you accidentally spray it on someone, especially on the head, he will be killed. First you must pull out the safety pin (if you push it, it will break). Take the nozzle of the hose and aim by pressing the trigger and spray. If you press to the left, there is less pressure but it can still be used; if you press to the right, it will be over-pressurised indicating that you cannot use it.

When you are in a car at the petrol station, don't use the handphone; when the signal frequency is too strong, it may create a spark which could come into contact with the petrol. Especially when you smell gas, don't use any electrical gadget. Before you take your hand off the petrol nozzle, touch the car metal to discharge electricity.

Should the car engine catch fire and you are trapped within because the door cannot open as it is an electric door, how can you escape? You must use a sharp instrument to break the window. In the car, there is always something that you can use such as the headrest which has two sharp-ended metal legs.

In fact, in the car there should be a first aid kit, torchlight, jump start cable, raincoat and a power bank (in case you need to charge the telephone). Three essential things that you need to have in the car known as the emergency triangle are the scissors which should be kept in plastic (to be used in case



you need to cut the belt), glass breaker such as a small hammer which should be left on the top-side of the door), and a portable fire extinguisher with ABC (which should be placed below the front seat for easy access and not in the boot).

When a car is on fire, it will not explode. (In the films, cars are shown to explode, which is not true). Remember not to put flour on the fire because it will burn. A wet blanket could be used but not for electrical fires.

At home if you smell gas, open the door and windows but don't switch on the light because it will attract sparks causing an explosion. You can use the handphone light but you must put the phone on airplane mode so that if people phone in, the phone will not attract sparks. So don't use the handphone on the spot. Most probably, it will be better for you to run and call 999.

How can you know if your house catches fire? If you can smell the fire, that means it is already too big. So how can you be aware when you are sleeping? The best thing is to have a smoke detector and fire alarm. Currently in Malaysia, it is not compulsory to install such a device.

Don't put flammable things near the extension wire or plug point. If the fire is already in the room, you will have difficulty in breathing and seeing. Even if the bomba does arrive, there is no guarantee that they can put out the fire immediately. So we should make sure first that we are safe by covering the nose and eyes with a filter mask or a wet towel or handkerchief and use a wet towel for the body.

Don't sit in the bathroom – it is like sitting in a sonar. If the body is on fire, don't roll on the floor but go for ABC or for sand. If it is burning oil, then flour can be used.

A fire extinguisher can last for about ten years. But you need to have it serviced every year. The small can extinguisher is not advisable as it is liable to explode.

The maple leaf smoke detector is best for use as it is of international standard. Always go for original equipment.

Ultimately, what is most important of all the fire equipment is the smoke detector for fire safety.

# FROM SORROW TO JOY - PART 1

*By Kiet Soon Ming*

*Editor's Note: At the age of twenty-seven, Kiet Soon Ming discovered that he was facing difficulties with his vision. After trying in vain to overcome his difficulties for about five years, he came into contact with the Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB). This helped to set him off on a new course leading to triumph and success.*

*Here is his inspiring story:*

I was born in Segamat, Johor sighted. My father was an odd jobs worker and my mother was a rubber tapper in a rubber estate. I am the oldest amongst four siblings with a younger brother and two younger sisters.

On completing my vernacular primary education, I joined my mum in tapping the rubber trees. Being able to work and earning my own livelihood gave me such a wonderful feeling of freedom and independence.

And so at the age of eighteen, I decided to leave my mother as I found a job in a pastry shop making 'towsah pia' and mooncakes. However, we were lowly paid and so after a few years, I left the shop and got together with some friends to open up a similar business. Unfortunately, business was poor and it lasted for only two years.

I became an apprentice in floor tiling and I was paid RM10 per day with meals provided. After working for three months, I was twenty-seven years old and I noticed that my vision was becoming blurred. I did not bother about it at first but after two weeks, my vision became so blurred that I could only see light. I thought it was just a matter of short-sightedness and so I went to an optician to be fitted with a pair of glasses. Unfortunately, none of the glasses worked and so the optician advised me to see an eye specialist.

I went to a private clinic in Johor Bahru. After examining me, the doctor gave me a letter to the Johor Bahru General Hospital for immediate attention. There the doctor informed me that I had retinal detachment and he sounded unhappy because I had taken so long to come to the hospital.

I was immediately warded, nonetheless, and I was given a bed with its end raised up by bricks to keep my head in a lower position than the rest of my body. At the beginning I felt rather uncomfortable but I gradually got used to it. I was in this position for one month but at the end of it, my vision was as poor as before. Thus, the doctor said that he had no other choice than to carry out an operation, which brought no improvement. So the doctor gave me a form and advised me to register with the Social Welfare Department so as to receive the appropriate training for a blind person. The doctor informed me that there was no possibility of recovery and that it would be a waste of time and money looking for further treatment even overseas.

I was very upset with the doctor's statement. How could he say such a thing to me? Indeed, my tears fell immediately upon hearing this. After returning home, I hid the form in the cupboard and I refused to show it to anyone. Then my friends encouraged me to go for treatment in a famous private eye hospital in Singapore.

So I made my way to Singapore and I was the only patient in the ward because it was Christmas day. The nurse took good care of me and even took me out for a walk. Before the operation, I was asked to pay up a certain sum of money but I told them that I had brought only three hundred dollars and I would have to owe them the rest. After the operation there was no improvement on my vision and the hospital then told me that I did not have to pay any more.

Back home in Segamat, I went back to work in the same pastry shop. Despite my blindness, I could do the job equally well because I was very familiar with it. After work, my colleagues would take me on a motor-bike for dinner or even sometimes to a cinema to watch a movie but I would often fall asleep.

Meanwhile, I was still actively searching for a cure. My employer treated me very well and often took me to see some traditional Chinese doctors, but it was of no avail.

One day, a friend told me that I should go to the Tung Shin Hospital in Kuala Lumpur to see if acupuncture could be of any help to me. There, at Tung Shin I was given free food and accommodation in the ward as well as free treatment from the doctor. I had very good rapport with some of the nurses and patients as we often chit-chatted together and went out for walks. After a period of three months, I was asked to leave the hospital as the acupuncture did not seem to work for me.

While I was in the hospital, a nurse brought two blind persons to see me. They were Tan Peng Hoon and K.K. Goh. They really opened up my mind when I learned that both of them had stable jobs and that K.K. Goh was even married to a sighted wife and had two small children. They strongly advised me to go to the Gurney Training Centre.

Back in Segamat, I continued to work in the pastry shop but this time I also decided to fill up the form given by the doctor in the Johor Bahru Hospital and submitted it to the Social Welfare Department. After waiting for two years, I was told by an officer that I would be sent to the GTC for training. On that day, a van from the Social Welfare Department came and transported me and my father to Kuala Lumpur. On reaching the destination, the gates of the GTC were closed as the students were still on their Hari Raya holidays. Fortunately, the kind matron of the Centre allowed me to stay in the hostel temporarily so that my father could follow the van back to Segamat.

When the students returned from their holidays, they immediately became my new friends. As they were blind like me, I felt my depression disappearing instantly. Moreover, I had two very friendly and caring teachers, Mdm. Lee and Mr. Yong. Mdm. Lee would often bring me home-cooked food from her house as she was worried that I may not be used to eating the canteen food.

In the Centre, I learned braille, orientation and mobility while my main subject was massage. I found the course to be easy and relaxing and, during the first month of holiday at end of the first term, I went out to work under the guidance of a blind friend, Lee Sheng Chow. I went selling tidbits from house to house in K.L. In the first few days, I went out with a guide and each one of us could earn about RM20 a day. I was very happy because it was considered to be good money in those days, it was more than 30 years ago.

Then I started selling on my own and I was even happier because I could earn twice the amount. At the end of the holiday, I managed to save about RM2,000 in my bank account. When the term reopened, I became famous among the staff and students in the Centre as they knew that I had made a small fortune during the holiday.

I continued to sell tidbits on Saturday and Sunday, which were the weekend holidays in the GTC. One day as I was walking out, I met the Principal of the GTC. I was scared because I thought that he was going to scold me as students were not supposed to work outside. To my surprise, he did not scold me and instead helped me to get a taxi. And so by the time of graduating from the GTC after a one-year period, I had managed to save RM5,000 in my account.

In those days, massage service by the blind was still very new and there were not many customers. To augment my income, therefore, I continued selling tidbits on my own. One day, I went up to the mezzanine floor of a shophouse to sell tidbits and I was unaware that the place was undergoing renovation. I opened the door and stepped onto the mezzanine floor but there was a hole from which I immediately fell to the floor below and broke my knee-cap and thigh bone. I had to be carried away by an ambulance to the K.L. General Hospital.

(to be continued|)



# **TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: THE NARRATOR SCREEN READER AND 2018 WINDOWS 10 INITIATIVES**

*By Moses Choo Siew Cheong,*

*Executive Director*

*National Council for the Blind, Malaysia*

While many of us have moved from JAWS to NVDA, mainly for economical reasons, we now have another choice of screen reader. Although Narrator has been around for some time, Microsoft has in recent years put in much effort to improve the facilities offered by Narrator.

Here is some useful information that now makes Narrator, the screen reader provided by Microsoft, to be much more useable. These updates from Microsoft are related to their October 2018 Windows 10 initiatives.

## **1. EASE OF ACCESS UPDATES**

There are now more ways to see Windows 10 from your own perspective with the addition of text-size customisation across the platform. From the "display" page in the Ease of Access settings or by typing "larger text" in the Search Bar, you can adjust a single global text size slider to make the text bigger across Windows, thereby making only the words bigger without affecting the entire visual layout. You can customise text size in conjunction with DPI scaling, otherwise known as the "make everything bigger" setting.

As the name implies, this feature makes everything on the screen larger, which can sometimes reduce productivity for users with low vision by requiring more panning or scrolling. Thus, by complementing DPI customisation with text size customisation, users now have more options in tailoring their Windows 10 display.

There is awareness that many users with low vision not only prefer more levers to customise for their experience and that they prefer using multiple tools together. Thus, the custom text size works well with Magnifier, thereby providing new ways for you to optimise your experience.

You can choose to keep your mouse centred on the screen, which can be particularly helpful at higher magnification levels, thereby helping you not to lose your mouse or your focus when trying to navigate.

## **2. NARRATOR IMPROVEMENTS**

Efforts have been made to make Narrator, the built-in screen reader, easier to learn and to use with two key updates. With the launching of Narrator, a new QuickStart tutorial experience will be made available. It will be able to teach you the Narrator basics such as keyboarding, navigation and editing. At the end of the QuickStart there is a link to the User Guide where you will be able to continue learning about Narrator.

## **3. NARRATOR SCREEN SHOT**

With a more familiar and improved keyboard, Narrator now ships with a new keyboard layout designed to be more familiar with screen reader users. In fact, differences in the keyboard layout are designed to improve the keyboard ergonomics and usability. (For more details on these changes, please see the Narrator user guide.)

## **4. EASIER NAVIGATION**

With Narrator Find, you can now search for specific text, to which Narrator will move if found. Narrator can also now present a list of objects such as links, headings or landmarks which you can quickly filter to find what you want. (Please refer to the Narrator user guide for command mapping.)

## **5. INCREASED EFFICIENCY**

Narrator will now automatically read dialogue boxes such as the Word dialogue box that appears when you try to close a document with unsaved changes.

Two key improvements have also been made to Scan Mode, a feature in Narrator that simplifies navigation by primarily using just the up and down arrow keys, thereby providing you with a seamless experience.



As Narrator stops on the interactive elements like the links, you can more easily interact with them or you can continue reading with just a press of the down arrow.

You also have more options for selecting text while in Scan Mode, including commands to copy an entire block of text without holding down the Shift key. Narrator's selection commands will copy the format of the text such as headings, lists and more.

In addition, you can speak the selected text using a Narrator command.

## **6. READING AND WRITING IMPROVEMENTS**

Within Microsoft Edge, you now have more flexibility with web browsing and reading with new ways to customise your learning experience with Learning Tools. They include Read Aloud for the web browsing experience and Grammar Tools which enable you to break words into syllables and to highlight the parts of speech.

Learning Tools are made even more powerful with the October 2018 update. With any ePub or web page in reading view, you can customise the page theme colour with Iriren colours that make it easier to decode text. You can also turn on the line focus for a web page in reading view in order to help you concentrate.

Additionally, you now have more ways to personalise the grammar tools. You can customise the highlight colour for parts of speech or turn on labels within the text if you find it difficult to disambiguate between colours. Should you run into words with which you are unfamiliar, you can quickly look them up in the built-in dictionary that also works offline.

Writing experiences are also improving. Text suggestions, which suggest the top three word candidates as you type, have been extended to 50 plus languages since its debut in the April 2018 update.

For those who are not too familiar with the keyboard, you can make use of the keyboard help command when Narrator is running. The keystroke to invoke the keyboard help is the Narrator key plus the number 1 key.



## **POINT TO PONDER: MONEY AND MONEY GAMES, PART 2**

*By Wong Kow*

In the first part of this article published in the January-March 2019 issue of "NCBM Outreach", I raised the question why even many professionals fall into the trap of money games and lose a substantial amount of money. As they are well educated, they would surely be well informed of such scams or illegal investment activities. Yet why are they so "stupid"?

As a matter of fact, a conman could be just any individual. As for the professional swindlers, they would usually organise their own "investment companies" whereby they would appoint and train teams of representatives on several levels to go in search of targeted "big fish".

If Robert (not his real name" happened to be one of the spotted "big fish", the swindlers will select an appropriate representative to find out more information about him, including his hobbies, state of health, financial status and family background. In this way, they would lure him easily into believing that the "investment plan" or scheme would be of great help to him.

When the opportune time avails itself, someone will introduce Robert to the money games investment manager. Robert will then be invited to luncheon or dinner parties where there will be many pretending to be "successful investors" proclaiming "beautiful experiences" of gaining handsome profits in a short time and managing to solve all their previous financial problems. Some of the others will dress up smartly and drive brand new luxury cars to attend the function, thereby appearing to be very successful without saying many words.

Under such circumstances, Robert will be easily convinced to sign up immediately. He will confidently put in whatever cash he has in hand and wait faithfully for the good returns.

More often than not, Robert has no opportunity for a second thought or to consult any family members or friends. The investment team will tell him of a certain special offer to be given only to those who sign up on that auspicious occasion. Or they might say that there are only the last few days for accepting new applications. Robert will, of course, be tempted to think, "Once I miss the boat, there will be no more such golden investment opportunities".

True enough, Robert will receive the high interest for the first month and even the second month. Then there seems to be a delay for the third and fourth month's income. The contact person's handphone seems to be out-of-service all the time. The usual internet address for him to check his investment position has been blocked.

Later, he finds out from the newspapers that such an investment company is a scam and that all the relevant accounts have been frozen. Both Bank Negara and the police are taking stern action to track down the illegal money game activities. The office and branches will be closed but the leaders' whereabouts are unknown.

It is a pity that Bank Negara's warnings against illegal gambling and irresponsible money game activities are ineffective. While many are aware of the high risk in losing lots of money, they still choose to fish in troubled waters. Many players simply believe that they will be lucky enough to quit with a big fortune.

There are those who habitually bet on numbers in the four-digit, three-digit or two-digit toto. They will put in lots of money gambling in this manner because there are at least three or more legally licensed companies that hold no less than three draws a week. The uncountable illegal runners take advantage of this to lure the gamblers. Imagine how much hard earned money goes astray in this way!

Casino companies of international standard are within our reach. Special privileges such as free board and lodging vouchers are offered to the regular players. So they take advantage of these free gifts and bring their families and friends along to enjoy their holidays there.

The gambling environment in the casino can easily get one's mind confused. Indeed, the amount of money involved in the gambling could be limitless. On a good day when the lucky star shines on you, you may win a hundred ringgit. However, that is not the end because you will probably put in more money in order to better your chances of winning. If it is not your day, you may lose thousands but you will not admit defeat. Unconsciously, you will withdraw more of your hard-earned money with the hope of better luck.

A former colleague of mine, Johnny (not his real name), recently lost almost all of his life-long savings through casino gambling. Thinking he had all the time in the world after retirement, he wanted to enjoy life by doing what he liked. At the beginning, he joined a group of friends to the casino once or twice a week. After winning some hundreds of ringgit for the first few weeks, he became more confident and went to the casino more frequently, placing heavier and heavier bets each time.

One day, after losing ten thousand ringgit, he was out of cash to continue in order to recover the losses. At this moment, a gentleman (who was actually the runner of an illegal money lender and commonly known as Ah Loong), noticed his predicament. The runner quickly approached Johnny to offer assistance. Without a second thought of the consequences of borrowing money from the "loan shark", Johnny accepted the offer. He took the money and went back to gambling with the hope of recovering the losses.

Alas! Luck was not on his side that day and he lost all the money that he had borrowed. You can surely imagine what fate awaited Johnny and his family!

## **REFLECTION – PEOPLE OR DEVICES?**

A young man had spent an hour with his dad as he had to transfer some money. He could not resist asking, "Dad, why don't we activate your internet banking?"

"Why would I do that?" his dad replied.

"Well, then you won't have to spend an hour here for things like transfer," said the young man. "You can even do your shopping online. Everything would be so easy." He was so excited about initiating his dad into the world of internet banking.

His dad asked, "If I do that, I won't have to step out of the house?"

"Yes, yes," the young man replied and he went on to say that even the groceries can be delivered at the door now and how Amazon was delivering everything.

His answer left his dad tongue-tied. He said, "Since I entered this bank today, I have met four of my friends. I have chatted a while with the staff who know me very well by now. You know I'm alone, son, so this is the company I need. I like to get ready and come to the bank. I have enough time and it is the physical touch that I crave. Two years back I got sick, the store owner from whom I buy fruits came to see me and sat by my bedside and cried."

His dad continued, "When your mum fell down while on her morning walk, our local grocer saw her and immediately got out of his car to rush her home as he knows where I live. Would I have that human touch if everything became online? Why would I want everything delivered to me and force me to be in contact with just my computer? I like to know the person that I'm dealing with and not the seller. It creates bonds, relationships. Does Amazon deliver this as well? Technology isn't life, you know."

So spend time with people, not with devices.



## **SOME QUESTIONS**

**Robert Louis Stevenson**

Our business in life is not to succeed, but to continue to fail in good spirits.

**W. P. Kinsella**

Success is getting what you want, happiness is wanting what you get.

**Anonymous**

The best things in life are free. The rest are too expensive.

**Mahatma Gandhi**

A small body of determined spirits fired by an unquenchable faith in their mission can alter the course of history.

**Anonymous**

Laughing is one of the best exercises; it's like running inside your mind. You can do it almost anywhere and it's even better with a friend.

**Dalai Lama**

Happiness is not something ready made. It comes from your own actions.

**Van Gogh**

Great things are done by a series of small things brought together.

**Anonymous**

Do what you can with all you have, wherever you are.

**S. John Glenn**

My view is that to sit back and let fate play its hand out and never influence it is not the way man was meant to operate.

**Unknown**

Mistakes make a man wise but not rich. Experience is the parent of knowledge and knowledge is the most precious of all jewels.

Someone said concerning employment

We create opportunities; we do not create jobs



## **PRINCIPAL OFFICE-BEARERS AND COUNCIL MEMBERS OF NCBM FOR 2018 - 2020**

Dato' Dr. Hsiung Kwo Yeun  
President, NCBM/ President of Sarawak Society for the Blind

Datuk Rosalind Chew Bee Koh  
Vice-President, NCBM/ President of Sabah Society for the Blind

Rt. Rev. Dato' Dr. Charles Samuel  
Hon. Secretary, NCBM/ Chairman of St. Nicholas' Home, Penang

Mdm. Jasmine Khoo Khin Sheen  
Hon. Treasurer, NCBM/ Hon. Treasurer of Society of the Blind in Malaysia

Dato' Kulasegaran A/L Sabaratnam  
Malaysian Association for the Blind

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

Mr. Jimmy Ng Kich Sheng  
Sabah Society for the Blind

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

Mdm. Annie Soon Nyin Yin  
Sarawak Society for the Blind

Mr. David Siaw Ting Cheng  
Sarawak Society for the Blind





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Dr Kway Eng Hock

Committee on Employment and Economic Empowerment (CEEE)  
Dr Ahmad Shamsuri Bin Muhamad

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



## **AUDITOR 2018-2020**

Inpana & Associates,  
Kuala Lumpur



## **REPRESENTATIVES OF NCBM TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS, 2018-2020**

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



## EARN SOME EXTRA CASH

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

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

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

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