

NCBM OUTREACH



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VISION AND MISSION STATEMENT OF NCBM

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

EDITORIAL BOARD

Moses Choo Siew Cheong

Wong Yoon Loong

Wong Kwee Heong

Nurun Jamiah

Chin Yew Cheng

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

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 (BVI).

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

Your financial support, therefore, will 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 the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia or Majlis Kebangsaan bagi Orang Buta, Malaysia.

Donations should be made in the name of :

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

MAYBANK ACCOUNT NUMBER : **5145 9813 0410**

**All Donations to NCBM are Tax exempted*

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** Please note that NCBM has not appointed any agent to collect cash on its behalf.
Thank you.*

NCBM'S SUPPORT SCHEMES FOR THE BLIND

1. NCBM's Job Pioneering Scheme

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

Please contact the NCBM secretariat for the application form.
Tel. 03-2028 1999.

2. 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.

Tel: 03-2028 1999

Email: info@ncbm.org.my

Contact person: administrative assistant

SPECIAL ANNOUNCEMENT



It is with deep regret, we inform you of the demise of Mr Lee Seng Lam, our dedicated NCBM Appeal Dept. Staff on 01st Dec 2019.

We extend our deepest sympathy and heartfelt condolences to the family, relatives and friends.

We are thankful and grateful for Seng Lam's commitment for past more than 25 years and the legacy he has left behind especially for National Council for the Blind, Malaysia.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

The World Blind Union (WBU), the International Council for Education of People with Visual Impairment (ICEVI), and the Organización Nacional de (ONCE) announce the postponement of the joint WBU and ICEVI general assemblies.

The WBU/ICEVI joint general assemblies will be held from May 21 through 26, 2021 in Madrid. Thanks to the local host, ONCE, the cost for rooms at the Madrid Marriot Auditorium are unchanged.

We know you will have many questions and ask your patience as we develop a "Frequently Asked Questions" document.

The International Organizing Committee felt it necessary to postpone the WBU/ICEVI general assemblies to protect the health and safety of all delegates and other attendees as the world works to combat the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic.

The 18th WBUAP Onkyo Braille Essay 2020 Contest for Blind and Vision Impaired (BVI) Persons in the WBUAP Region

The WBUAP in collaboration with the Onkyo Corporation will be organising the 18th WBUAP Onkyo World Braille Essay Contest for Blind and Vision Impaired Persons (BVI). The purpose of the contest is the promotion of Braille literacy and the sharing of inspirational experiences.

Kind assistance is being solicited from member-countries to help by taking the following actions:

1. **Set up the National Onkyo Selection Committee (NOSC) to comprise between three to five persons.**
2. **The duties of the NOSC are:**

2.1 Encourage participation and to receive local entries.

2.2 Select five best entries from either of the two age groups, translate them into English (if the essays are written in the local language), and have them emailed to the Chairman of the WBUAP Onkyo Selection Committee (WOSC) by 30th June 2020. Group A is for persons between the ages of 14-25 years, and Group B is for persons from 26 years and above.

2.3 The NOSC in each country may use its discretion in fixing the closing date for receiving the local entries, but do bear in mind the time needed for translating the essays. 15th May is being suggested as the local closing date.

The length of each entry to be submitted to WOSC should be between 700 and 1,000 words.

3. In determining the five best entries, you should give consideration to:

(a) The story line closest to the topic.

(b) Whether inspirational or amusing experiences and the style of writing.

(c) Accuracy and neatness in writing Braille.

(The local entries can be submitted via the electronic medium if the NOSC is satisfied that the writers are proficient in Braille. Do not send the Braille versions to the WOSC).

4. Each NOSC should submit a brief report on its composition and give the email address of the person with whom WOSC can correspond.

5. Each NOSC will receive US\$200 (two hundred) to cover meeting expenses. This money, together with the cash prizes for the winners, will be sent to the NOSCs for presentation to the winners after the Sponsor has given permission to release the results. This is expected to be around the beginning of November.

6. Email the five best entries (after translation) and the electronic photos of the writers to the Chairman of WOSC by 30th June

2020, the closing date. Entries received after 30th June will not be considered.

For further information, you can contact Mr. Ivan Ho Tuck Choy, Chairman of the WBUAP Onkyo Selection Committee 2020, tel. 6012-218-2311

Email: *ivanhochoy@gmail.com*

Address:

National Council for the Blind, Malaysia

Unit 13-8, Menara Sentral Vista

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Brickfields

50470 Kuala Lumpur

Malaysia

NEWS FROM WORLD BLIND UNION



World Blind Union
Union Mondiale Des Aveugles
Unión Mundial de Ciegos

The World Blind Union is calling on governments and national leaders to ensure that public information and health care communication messages regarding the Corona Virus Pandemic are accessible to all including the blind and partially sighted persons. Essential information should be made available in accessible formats such as braille, audio, large print, plain language and in easy to read format.

As the virus continues to spread worldwide, WBU wants essential services to be accessible and inclusive to all persons with disabilities including accessible hygiene health services, assistive devices, accessible digital technology and other support facilities.

The WBU is also urging government planners and key stakeholders to involve persons with disabilities in developing contingency plans to ensure that their specific needs are considered and effective mitigation solutions are implemented.

In addition, WBU is urging employers to ensure income protection for all as the virus takes toll on global economy.

Meanwhile WBU is urging all members to follow WHO guidelines to stop the spread.

The World Blind Union is actively monitoring the spread and potential impact of the Coronavirus and will keep members updated. The health and safety of our members are top priority.

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

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY MARCH 8, 2020

The World Blind Union joins the rest of the world on March 8th, to observe International Women's Day 2020 under the theme, I am Generation Equality: Realizing women's rights. The theme is aligned with UN Women's new multigenerational campaign, Generational Equality which marks the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and platform for action, the most progressive roadmap for the empowerment of women and girls internationally.

In our quest to mobilize global action to achieve gender equality and to strongly advocate for the human rights of women and girls who are blind and partially sighted, and through our work with organizations such as the International Disability Alliance (IDA), we ensure that issues affecting women and girls with disabilities (the marginalized group of an already marginalized segment of society) are clearly highlighted. For example, in conducting research and preparing country SDGs reports in compliance with CRPD. This provides governments and NGO's with a foundation on which they can change, develop and properly implement policies and legislation that will better the lives of all women and girls.

On this International Women's Day, WBU takes the opportunity to continue to encourage countries to develop national policies and frameworks that include women and girls who are blind and partially sighted; reform legislation and policies that restrict women from fully participating at all levels of society including taking up leadership roles and having a strong voice in decision making; ratify and implement the UN Convention on the Rights of persons with disabilities and to strive to achieve gender equality and women's empowerment (SDG 5), highlight key issues for ending poverty

(SDG 1), and ensuring healthy lives (SDG) for women and girls who are blind and partially sighted.

Meanwhile, the World Blind Union has launched a Women's Empowerment Award to recognize blind or partially sighted women who have worked exceptionally to empower other women. The first Women Empowerment Award will be presented at the WBU General Assembly in June this year. Nominations are now open and the deadline is 31 March 2020.

WBU believes that empowering women to participate fully in economic life is essential to build stronger economies and improve the quality of life for women, men, families and communities. Therefore, the WBU Women's Committee feels that this award will encourage others to participate more fully in their communities. For more information visit our website at: [http://worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/Call-for-nominations-for--WBU- Women-Empowerment-Award.aspx](http://worldblindunion.org/English/news/Pages/Call-for-nominations-for--WBU-Women-Empowerment-Award.aspx)

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



**SIARAN MEDIA
KEMENTERIAN KEWANGAN MALAYSIA**

BANTUAN PRIHATIN NASIONAL (BPN)

Merujuk kepada Pakej Rangsangan Ekonomi Prihatin Rakyat (PRIHATIN) bernilai RM250 bilion yang telah diumumkan oleh YAB Perdana Menteri pada 27 Mac 2020, Kementerian Kewangan ingin menjelaskan mengenai pelaksanaan dan cara mengakses **Bantuan Prihatin Nasional (BPN)** yang telah diperuntukkan sebanyak RM10 bilion bagi golongan rakyat yang layak.

Pembayaran BPN akan dibuat dalam dua fasa iaitu pada akhir bulan April dan Mei 2020, mengikut kelayakan berikut:

Kriteria Kelayakan

Kategori & Pendapatan Bulanan	Pendapatan Isi Rumah RM4,000 ke bawah	Pendapatan Isi Rumah RM4,001 hingga RM8,000	Bujang RM2,000 ke bawah	Bujang RM2,001 hingga RM4,000
Jumlah Bantuan BPN	RM1,600	RM1,000	RM800	RM500
Tempoh / Pembayaran	April: RM1,000 Mei: RM600	April: RM500 Mei: RM500	April: RM500 Mei: RM300	April: RM250 Mei: RM250
Penerima BPN yang TIDAK PERLU memohon atau mengemukakan permohonan baharu	Isi rumah yang sebelum ini telah diluluskan bawah senarai Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH)	Isi rumah pembayar cukai yang sedia ada berdaftar dengan LHDNM	Individu bujang yang sebelum ini telah diluluskan bawah senarai Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH)	Individu bujang pembayar cukai yang sedia ada berdaftar dengan LHDNM
Penerimaan bayaran bantuan	Secara terus ke akaun bank berdaftar di bawah BSH	Secara terus ke akaun bank berdaftar dengan LHDNM	Secara terus ke akaun bank berdaftar di bawah BSH	Secara terus ke akaun bank berdaftar dengan LHDNM

Bagi mereka yang belum berdaftar, **permohonan baharu** boleh dibuat mulai 1 April 2020 menerusi laman web rasmi LHDNM: www.hasil.gov.my.

Sekiranya terdapat sebarang pertanyaan lanjut, sila hubungi pihak Kementerian atau LHDNM melalui nombor-nombor telefon atau saluran-saluran berikut:

	No telefon/ e-mel	Waktu operasi
Kementerian Kewangan	03-8882 9089 03-8882 9087 03-8882 9191 03-8882 4565 03-8882 4566	Jam 9 pagi – 5 petang Ahad - Jumaat (Mulai <u>29 Mac 2020</u>)
	bsh@treasury.gov.my pre2020@treasury.gov.my Telegram: PRE PRIHATIN Facebook: Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia	24 Jam
LHDNM	1-800 882 747 03-8911 1000	Jam 9 pagi – 5 petang Ahad - Jumaat (Mulai <u>30 Mac 2020</u>)

Kementerian mengingatkan orang awam juga agar **berhati-hati dengan scammers** yang semakin berani mengambil peluang menipu orang awam yang memerlukan bantuan Pakej PRIHATIN ini. Penerima disarankan merujuk kepada sumber-sumber rasmi dan jangan memberikan maklumat kepada mana-mana pihak ketiga.

Kementerian ingin berterima kasih kepada rakyat Malaysia kerana telah berkongsi pandangan, teguran dan cadangan mengenai Pakej PRIHATIN menggunakan pelbagai saluran. Kementerian melalui Unit Pelaksanaan dan Koordinasi Stimulus Ekonomi Antara Agensi Nasional (LAKSANA), bersedia memastikan bantuan Pakej PRIHATIN disampaikan dengan efisien dan cepat.

Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia
Putrajaya
29 Mac 2020

LAMPIRAN



SOALAN LAZIM (FAQ) MENGENAI BANTUAN PRIHATIN NASIONAL 2020 BAGI GOLONGAN B40 & M40 PAKEJ RANGSANGAN EKONOMI PRIHATIN RAKYAT

1. Apakah Bantuan Prihatin Nasional?

Bantuan Prihatin Nasional adalah salah satu bantuan yang disediakan oleh Kerajaan dalam Pakej Rangsangan Ekonomi Prihatin Rakyat yang akan diberikan secara *one-off* kepada golongan B40 dan M40.

Pemberian Bantuan Prihatin Nasional bagi golongan B40 adalah berdasarkan pangkalan data Bantuan Sara Hidup.

Manakala Bantuan Prihatin Nasional bagi golongan M40 adalah berdasarkan data percukaian Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia (LHDNM).

2. Siapakah yang layak menerima Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40?

Kategori yang layak menerima **Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40** adalah seperti berikut:

- 1) Isi Rumah
 - a) Kahwin; atau
 - b) Ibu atau Bapa Tunggal / Balu / Janda / Duda yang ada melaporkan maklumat Anak pada permohonan BSH 2020; dan
 - c) Pendapatan Isi Rumah adalah RM4,000 dan ke bawah
- 2) Bujang
 - a) Bujang atau Ibu atau Bapa Tunggal / Balu / Janda / Duda yang tidak melaporkan maklumat Anak pada permohonan BSH 2020; dan
 - b) Had umur adalah 21 tahun dan ke atas termasuk kategori warga emas (60 tahun dan ke atas); dan
 - c) Pendapatan Bujang adalah RM2,000 dan ke bawah.

Kategori yang layak menerima **Bantuan Prihatin Nasional M40** pembayar cukai yang berdaftar dengan LHDNM yang berstatus adalah seperti berikut:

- 1) Isi Rumah
 - a) Kahwin; atau
 - b) Ibu atau Bapa Tunggal / Balu / Janda / Duda berdasarkan data percukaian; dan
 - c) Pendapatan agregat bulanan adalah RM4,001 hingga RM8,000 berdasarkan Borang Nyata Cukai Pendapatan (BNCP) terkini.

- 2) Bujang
 - a) Individu yang berstatus bujang dalam data percukaian; dan
 - b) Had umur adalah 21 tahun dan ke atas; dan
 - c) Pendapatan bulanan adalah RM2,001 hingga RM4,000 berdasarkan Borang Nyata Cukai Pendapatan (BNCP).
- 3) Pembayar cukai yang merupakan warganegara Malaysia yang menetap di Malaysia.

3. Berapakah bayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional yang akan diterima bagi golongan B40 & M40?

Jumlah bayaran yang akan diterima adalah secara *one-off* seperti berikut:

Kategori	Pendapatan	Peringkat Bayaran		Jumlah
		Bayaran Pertama (April 2020)	Bayaran Kedua (Mei 2020)	
Isi Rumah	RM0 – RM4,000	RM1,000	RM600	RM1,600
	RM4,001 – RM8,000	RM500	RM500	RM1,000
Bujang	RM0 – RM2,000	RM500	RM300	RM800
	RM2,001 – RM4,000	RM250	RM250	RM500

4. Bilakah tarikh pembayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40 boleh dibuat?

Tarikh pembayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40 akan dibuat pada bulan April dan Mei 2020.

5. Bagaimanakah kaedah bayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40 ini dilaksanakan?

Kaedah bayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 adalah seperti berikut:

Pembayaran sekiranya:

- 1) Ada maklumat akaun – bayaran adalah secara kredit ke akaun; atau
- 2) Jika status bayaran adalah gagal kredit – bayaran adalah secara tunai di Bank Simpanan Nasional
- 3) Tiada akaun – bayaran adalah secara tunai di Bank Simpanan Nasional (BSN)

Kaedah bayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional M40 adalah seperti berikut:

- 1) Bayaran akan dibuat melalui akaun bank yang dinyatakan di dalam BNCP terkini yang telah dikemukakan.
- 2) Bayaran akan dikreditkan ke akaun bank ketua isi rumah.
- 3) Jika taksiran bersama telah dipilih semasa mengemukakan BNCP, bayaran akan dikreditkan ke akaun bank atas nama pembayar cukai yang ditaksir.

6. Bagaimana jika akaun bank yang didaftarkan adalah tidak aktif atau tutup?_

Bagi Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40:

Sekiranya status pengkreditan adalah Gagal Kredit, pembayaran akan dibuat secara tunai melalui Bank Simpanan Nasional.

Bagi Bantuan Prihatin Nasional M40:

Pemohon boleh mengemaskini maklumat akaun bank melalui aplikasi **e-Kemaskini** (<https://ez.hasil.gov.my/ci/> > e-Kemaskini > Profil Diri) untuk memastikan maklumat akaun bank adalah terkini dan aktif. Pastikan akaun bank adalah atas nama penerima.

7. Bila dan bagaimana semakan status penerimaan Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40 boleh dibuat?

Penerima yang layak menerima Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40 boleh membuat semakan status mulai 1 April 2020. Pangkalan data BPN adalah berdasarkan:

- 1) Untuk B40, senarai penerima BSH yang diluluskan, dan
- 2) Untuk M40, senarai pembayar cukai pendapatan yang memenuhi kriteria pendapatan BPN yang ditetapkan

Semakan status boleh dibuat di Portal Rasmi berikut:

- 1) Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia, <http://www.hasil.gov.my>
- 2) Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH), <https://bsh.hasil.gov.my>
- 3) Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia, <https://www.treasury.gov.my>

8. Adakah permohonan baru boleh dibuat sekiranya tidak tersenarai sebagai penerima Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40?

Ya. Jika memenuhi kriteria tetapi tidak tersenarai, permohonan baharu Bantuan Prihatin Nasional untuk B40 dan M40 boleh dibuat mulai 1 April 2020 secara dalam talian di Portal Rasmi berikut sahaja:

- 1) Lembaga Hasil Dalam Negeri Malaysia, <http://www.hasil.gov.my>
- 2) Bantuan Sara Hidup (BSH), <https://bsh.hasil.gov.my>
- 3) Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia, <https://www.treasury.gov.my>

9. Apakah dokumen yang diperlukan semasa membuat permohonan rayuan Bantuan Prihatin Nasional?

Selain daripada mengisi borang atas talian, pemohon boleh mengemukakan bukti pendapatan.

Kesemua permohonan akan disemak berdasarkan data agensi yang telah ditetapkan.

10. Bilakah bayaran bagi mereka yang membuat permohonan Bantuan Prihatin Nasional akan dilakukan?

Sekiranya permohonan baharu Bantuan Prihatin Nasional diluluskan, bayaran akan dibuat pada bulan Mei 2020 secara sekaligus.

11. Jika pemohon Bujang berstatus Pelajar Sepenuh Masa, adakah layak menerima Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40?

Tidak. Pemohon Bujang yang berstatus pelajar sepenuh masa adalah tidak layak menerima Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40.

12. Adakah penerima Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 & M40 yang berada di pedalaman negeri Sabah dan Sarawak akan menerima bayaran pada April 2020?

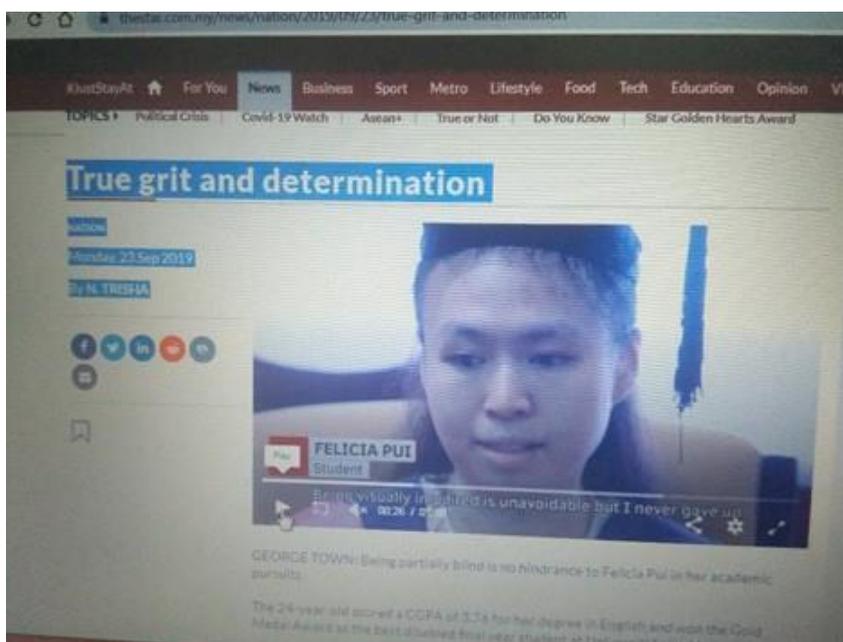
Tidak. Pembayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional B40 bagi penerima Pedalaman di Negeri Sabah dan Sarawak akan dibuat secara sekaligus bersekaligus dengan bayaran Bantuan Sara Hidup 2020.

13. Bagaimanakah kaedah pembayaran Bantuan Prihatin Nasional bagi penerima pedalaman di Negeri Sabah dan Sarawak dilaksanakan?

Kaedah pembayaran akan dilaksanakan melalui pembukaan kaunter di kawasan pedalaman Negeri Sabah dan Sarawak yang akan diselaraskan oleh Perbendaharaan Malaysia Sabah dan Sarawak melalui Kementerian Kewangan Malaysia. Lokasi dan tarikh akan dimaklumkan kemudian.

NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND, MALAYSIA

WITH GRIT AND DETERMINATION, LOW VISION STUDENT WINS USM GOLD MEDAL AWARD



Being low vision or partially blind is no hindrance to Felicia Pui in her academic pursuits. The 24-year old student scored a CGPA of 3.76 in English and won the Gold Medal Award as the best disabled final-year student at Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM) in Penang.

Felicia said, "I'm grateful for having been chosen as the recipient of the USM Gold Medal Award this year. There are definitely challenges for people with disabilities but I put in a lot of effort, be it in life or in my studies. I'm not totally blind because I can see light and colours. I've been like this since birth but I've never looked at it as being something that cannot be done. I have accepted this unavoidable circumstance."

With Felicia was her younger sister, Andrea, 23, at the press conference. Andrea is also partially blind or low vision.

"Andrea's vision is slightly better than mine but we both use the same method to study. We did the same course but minored in different subjects. We studied using soft copies by downloading an app that read out the notes for us," Felicia said, adding that her family moved to Penang from Sarawak in 2011.

Felicia, who majored in Translation, said that she would like to pursue a Master's degree in the same field.

Andrea, on the other hand, would like to further her studies in music or the French language.

STEVEN CHAN KUM FAI RECEIVES THE STAR GOLDEN HEARTS' AWARD

Steven Chan Kum Fai was among ten Malaysian citizens who had been recognised for their selfless contributions to society by receiving the Star Golden Hearts' Award. Steven became blind as an adult but instead of despairing and wallowing in self-pity, he decided to turn his tragedy into something inspirational by venturing into the programme of empowering the blind and vision impaired persons through meaningful job placements and by raising awareness in order to facilitate the social inclusion of the marginalised.

For the fifth year running since 2015, the Star newspaper, the Star Foundation and Yayasan Gamuda have been giving out the Star Golden Hearts' Awards as a reminder that hope is still alive and well in Malaysia. There were, in fact, over 400 nominations, from protecting the vulnerable to preserving environment.

After much deliberation, ten winners were finally selected, among them being Steven Chan Kum Fai for empowering the blind and the marginalised. The ten deserving Malaysians have thus been recognised for their selfless contributions to society.

This award is proof that anyone – regardless of age, status or income group – can make a difference in the places they live, study and work. All it takes is a pure heart of gold.

THE 17TH ONKYO WORLD BRAILLE ESSAY CONTEST (2019)

Essays were received from eight countries – China, Indonesia, Myanmar, Malaysia, Philippines, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. Together they submitted 32 entries – 11 essays for Group A and 21 essays for Group B.

As in previous years, the WBUAP Onkyo Selection Committee (WOSC) had a tough time selecting the seven winners as the essays were of high quality. In fact, some of the entries were just a few marks separating the winners from each other.

The results are as follows:

1. The two Fine Works Prizes for Group A of US\$200 went to:
Werut Bulbon, 16-year old male student from Thailand; and
Luong Thi Tra My, 17-year old female from Vietnam.
2. The two Fine Works prizes for Group B of US\$300 were awarded to:
Kim Jongsim, 53-year old female from South Korea; and
Ma Khaung Bram Nan, 50-year old male from Myanmar.
3. The Excellence prize for Group A of US\$500 went to:
Zhao Houren, 15-year old male from China.
4. The Excellence prize for Group B, also carrying US\$500, went to:
Ma Gaoliang, 55-year old male from China.
5. The Otsuki Prize of US\$1,000 went to:
Kong Hwei Zhen, 25-year old female lawyer from Malaysia. The prize was awarded to her for the following reasons:
 - (a) Her description of taking the road less travelled by the blind and vision impaired to explore life's opportunities, overcome barriers and embrace reality, shines forth with passion and enthusiasm.

- (b) Her perseverance and determination in undertaking the journey, full of twisting and turning challenges, are most admirable.
- (c) Her resourcefulness and collaborative effort with other people and organisations in contributing towards the development and well-being of society, are very inspiring.

The Chairman of the WOSC, Mr. Ivan Ho Tuck Choy, extends hearty congratulations to the seven winners and would like to convey his deep appreciation to all who had participated.

He extends very grateful thanks to the eight countries for forming the National Onkyo Selection Committees (NOSC's) and encouraging participation in the contest, and for putting in so much effort in translating the essays from the local languages into English.

He further extends heart-warm thanks to the WOSC comprising Mr Hiroaki Ishiwata and Ms Naomi Yuki from Japan, Ms Jordina Howell from Australia, Prof. Kamonwan Inaram from Thailand and Mr Godfrey Ooi from Malaysia for the effort and hard work they put in to select the seven winners of the contest.

Finally, but not least, Mr Ivan Ho would like to convey his very sincere thanks to Ms Michiko Tabata and members for having placed their trust in him to implement the project on behalf of WBUAP.

NEWS FROM MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND

LIM AH PEN – FIRST PRIZE WINNER OF THE ELDERLY BLIND TALENTIME

Lim Ah Pen, known to many as being the blind crooner of Brickfields, recently became a member of the Elderly Blind Club of MAB at age 55. This qualified him to take part in the Elderly Blind Talentime which was held on 7th December 2019 at the MAB hall.

This was the first time for Lim Ah Pen to take part in the Elderly Blind Talentime. There were thirteen participants and Lim Ah Pen came out as the first-prize winner of RM300 with his rendition of the favourite pop song of many, "Corina, Corina".

The second prize of RM250 went to Foong Poh Leng and the third prize of RM200 went to Shamsuri. The other ten contestants received the consolation prize of RM20 each.

MAB HONOURS CONTRIBUTIONS OF VOLUNTEERS TO THE BLIND

MAB celebrated its first International Volunteer Day on 5th December 2019 to honour the efforts of its volunteers. About 50 volunteers received certificates of appreciation during the celebration at Kompleks MAB.

The certificates were presented by MAB Volunteer Development Committee Chairman, K. Sundralingam, MAB General Manager George Thomas, and MAB Prevention of Blindness Committee Chairman Datuk Dr. Veera Ramani.

Sundralingam has been volunteering at MAB for more than ten years. He said, "the volunteers become very close to the visually impaired as they spend lots of time with them and even go on trips together."

He added that the theme of inclusivity for this year's International Volunteer Day was about helping the disabled to engage and be included in society.

MAB volunteer, Hamizah Mohd. Shahaid, teaches Yoga to the visually impaired. She said, "I want to help increase their mental and physical strength through Yoga. They're very enthusiastic but it's a challenge for me as they have to rely on verbal cues and I need to do body adjustments so that their poses are correctly done," she said.

Kamala Teve P. Chinniah's duties as volunteer include sealing appeal letters to be sent to potential donors as well as arranging books in the MAB library.

She said, "Since my children have grown up, I like to do voluntary work instead of just sitting at home. I think it's good for us to do what we can for the needy. I hope more young people will come forward and volunteer in whatever capacity they're able."

George Thomas also introduced MAB's new approach in recruiting more volunteers so that they can employ their skills and talents better.

He said, "in the new registration forms for potential volunteers, they're able to outline their skills and talents. There will also be monthly volunteer orientation programmes."

The celebration also included a choir performance by members of the MAB Elderly Blind Club.

For details on volunteering, call 03-22722677 or visit mablind page on facebook.

LAUNCHING NEW MASSAGE CENTRE TO EQUIP THE BLIND WITH SKILLS

The Malaysian Association for the Blind (MAB) has launched a new massage centre, the MAB Shoppe, as part of the corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiative by Rex K.L.

The new MAB Shoppe in Jalan Sultan, Kuala Lumpur, is aimed at creating employment for the visual impaired by gaining skills in massage therapy.

Charles Chew, MAB Business Development Committee Chairman, said that the Centre's concept was closely related to MAB's aspiration to create equal opportunities for the visually impaired. Chew said, "MAB is providing training so that the visually impaired can enjoy the same quality of life as sighted persons. Through this effort, hopefully it can give the community employment and teach them to be independent. This is our 3rd outlet in our efforts to help the visually impaired community, following the first shop that was opened in Mid-Valley in 2002. The shop has been built in order to highlight the quality massages and reflexology services that the blind can offer. We run the certificate courses for massage and reflexology in order to provide employment and career opportunities for the blind community," Chew explained.

Meanwhile, MAB General Manager, George Thomas, said that apart from providing massage and reflexology services, MAB is also planning to upgrade the outlets with additional facilities to become wellness centres.

He said, "Nowadays, we also provide academic training, computer training as well as handicraft courses with certificates. By multiplying their abilities and skills through training, the blind can become more self-sufficient."

Dr. S. Hadi Abdullah, MAB Education Committee Chairman, said that the main objective was to create individuals who would be economically independent.

He said "this Centre is not a business for our Association but a programme to promote the visually impaired and their capabilities. The income they generate goes back to them with nominal deductions for administrative costs. We hope that the public will appreciate the work done by the visually impaired with their capabilities and their drive to be independent."

Hadi said that the massages at the Centre were done by well trained professionals. In addition, the masseurs were capable of dealing with muscle pull as well as provide post-natal massage as part of the home services offered.

45 JOB PLACEMENTS FOR THE BLIND IN YEAR 2019

MAB was able to find jobs for 45 blind and vision impaired persons last year in 2019. They were as follows:

22 masseurs, 5 sales assistants, 2 administrative executives, 1 administrative assistant-cum-cashier, 1 guide for dialogue in the dark, 2 housekeeping personnel, 1 promoter, 1 salesgirl, 1 telephonist, 3 sales executives, 2 front desk personnel, 2 digital marketing personnel, and 2 scanning personnel.

NEWS FROM SOCIETY OF THE BLIND IN MALAYSIA

SBM CAME OUT CHAMPION

SBM sent a contingent to take part in the NCBM Sports Carnival 2019, which was held at the Kompleks MAB from 15th to 17th November 2019. A total of seven events were contested at the carnival.

We are proud to announce that SBM turned out as the champion for the carnival. Heartiest congratulations to all our players.

ESTABLISHMENT OF SABAH COUNCIL FOR DISABLED PERSONS IN 2020

It was reported in Daily Express Sabah of 22nd November 2019 that plans were in the pipeline for the establishment of the Sabah Council for Disabled Persons in the year 2020. The State Health and People's Well-Being Minister, Datuk Frankie Poon, made the announcement in his winding speech and said that this was in accordance with the Ministry's Key Performance Index for 2020.

The minister said that the Council would be responsible for developing accessibility for persons with disabilities, including the physical environment, transportation, education, health and much more.

This idea was first presented at the Regional Awareness workshop on the Asean Enabling Masterplan organised jointly by Sabah State Social Welfare Department, Sabah Society for the Blind and National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) on 28 August 2019.

TRAINING COURSE IN THE CEREMONIAL BEATING OF GONGS

On 7th December 2019 (Saturday), SBM Sabah Branch held the launching ceremony to introduce the first phase of the training course on the ceremonial beating of gongs. It was organised by the SBM Sabah Branch Culture, Arts and Social Committee at the Sabah Community Service Centre from 8.00 am till 12.00 noon. The ceremony was officiated by YB Datuk Seri Panglima Wilfred Ma Tangau, Deputy Chief Minister of Sabah.

Another training course on how to assist the blind and visually impaired was organised by the Communications, Advocacy and Human Rights Committee of SBM Sabah Branch on 7th and 8th December. This course was held for the benefit of the associate members. Included in the course content was the programme concerning methods of practical assistance when travelling or making visits to places of interest.

EULOGY: WILLIAM GODWIN BROHIER



Greetings,

On behalf of friends and colleagues in the disability field, I have the privilege today of sharing memories of Mr. Brohier, or Bill, as he is known to many here today.

I was 4 years old and spoke only Hakka and Cantonese when, one evening, a man with a gentle voice, speaking a strange language, visited our family in our wooden quarters.

Before he left, he gripped my small hands, gave me a firm handshake and said something which I didn't understand.

A few weeks later, I was on my first train journey travelling with my father to the St. Nicholas School for the Blind. We were welcomed by the same man with the gentle voice.

Only then did I realise that I was to be enrolled at the school. And, Mr. Brohier was its much loved Headmaster.

He was gentle, but firm.

He punished us for our many acts of mischief. Yet, we shall always love him as our best-ever Headmaster.

When Mr. Brohier first reported for duty at St. Nicks, he was a hardworking and conscientious young teacher who walked the grounds nightly to check that all was in order.

One night he heard beautiful piano music flowing from the hall which was pitch dark. Was it haunted?

Soon after, Mr. Brohier found out that it was not a ghost.

Rather, a blind student, Peter, was playing the piano.

That was Mr. Brohier's early lesson on the ability of blind persons to function perfectly well in the dark.

Mr. Brohier had his hands full dealing with us blind students.

Many of us were inclined to mischief.

He created in St. Nicks a secure and safe space where we blind children experienced much joy running through the corridors and its open grounds. It was great fun growing up at St. Nicks.

In the process, we developed skills for living independently and moving about confidently.

Being blind, tactile exploration was important.

I often wandered around St. Nicks, touching doors, walls and windows.

Once, I put my hand through a window and touched the switchboard of St. Nicks.

This broke off a call that Mr. Brohier was on.

He rushed out of his office to find out the cause.

The kind and brave switchboard operator, Katharine, covered up for cowardly me who ran away.

Later, Mr. Brohier was amused to learn the truth: his call had been cut off when my fingers wandered past the window and over the switchboard keys.

Even today, we fondly recall Mr. Brohier's advice to us at St. Nicks.

A group of us had tried to get money from fellow students for an end-of-year party.

As such soliciting of funds was not permitted, we were hauled up before Mr. Brohier.

His advice to us was: You don't need much for a party: just two nuts and a drink.

So, even today, we still remind each other of Mr. Brohier's advice for a party: just two nuts and a drink, that's enough!

We who grew up in the St. Nicks of Mr. Brohier are confident and productive citizens.

Many of us are parents and grandparents.

We feel enormously blessed that he touched our lives so deeply.

Today, we are gathered to give thanks for a man whose work had such an enormous impact on the lives of the community of blind people and persons with disabilities, both nationally and internationally.

William Godwin Brohier was a pioneer educator and innovator, especially in the blindness field.

For St. Nick's, Mr. Brohier secured a solid institutional and financial foundation.

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) exists thanks to Mr. Brohier's relentless pursuit of his vision in a body whose member organisations could discuss common issues and take collective action.

NCBM today is a key pillar for efforts to strengthen national legislation on the rights of Malaysians with disabilities.

As he played an increasingly prominent role on the international stage, Mr. Brohier also championed the rights of persons with disabilities to empowerment and equality.

He knocked on Government doors from Mongolia to Fiji, the Republic of Korea to the Philippines, Myanmar and Bangladesh, drawing attention to the need for a level playing field for blind people in particular and the inclusion of diverse disability groups in mainstream life.

Mr. Brohier served two five-year terms as the first Asian President of the International Council for the Education of the Visually Impaired (ICEVI) in its 40-year history.

On the international stage, Mr. Brohier cut a distinguished figure as the well-spoken and finely dressed gentleman who so powerfully represented the interests of blind persons.

Despite his charm and handsome appearance, Mr. Brohier was most devoted to his ever loving wife, Margaret.

It is known that, even when he was once placed next to the beautiful princess of Monaco, he paid scant attention to her and was merely as polite as courtesy required. He only knew who it was when asked by those envious of his proximity to the Princess.

We shall always remember Mr. Brohier's gentleness and kindness. He was a true gentleman.

His dedication to fighting for our collective rights to education, training, employment, self-empowerment and equality will inspire us to continue building on his legacy.

We believe that Mr. Brohier's achievements would not have been possible without the exceptional support rendered by Auntie Margaret.



It is only fitting that we express our loving appreciation to Auntie Margaret for enabling Mr. Brohier to be the blessing that he was for all of us.

I wish to conclude by giving thanks for the life and work of Mr. Bill Brohier, our most beloved Headmaster of St. Nicks, our mentor and our Friend.

I am mindful that others in Asia-Pacific also lay claim to Mr. Brohier, as their Champion for the rights of all persons with disabilities to participate in mainstream society on an equal basis with others.

Let me quote from Luke 4:18-19

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to bring good news to the poor.

He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour.”

Mr. Brohier,

May you be richly rewarded for your good deeds with eternal bliss with Christ our Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

Delivered by:

Wong Yoon Loong

Manager

NCBM Centre for Advocacy and Research (CARE)

Saturday, 18th January 2020

St. George’s Church, Penang.

IN REMEMBRANCE OF WILLIAM G. BROHIER

By Ivan Ho Tuck Choy



We want to remember Mr. William Godwin Brohier who passed away on 16th January 2020 (Thursday) at the age of eighty-seven. In his long and distinguished career and with the many responsible positions he held in the various organisations, he has made a significant impact on the lives of blind people, both nationally and internationally. William G. Brohier knocked on the doors of governments to appeal to them to create a level playing field for blind people and he had helped to empower them to become independent and useful citizens.

William Brohier, fondly known to everyone as Bill, first appeared on the blindness scene in 1960 when he joined St. Nicholas' Home (SNH) as its Principal Designate. After successfully completing a certificate course in the teaching of blind children at the University of Birmingham in 1961, he returned to Penang to take up the position of Principal. In 1972 he again went to the United Kingdom to take up a diploma course in Education and Management at the Sheffield Polytechnic. In November the following year, Bill was promoted to be Executive Director of SNH and he held that position until March 1979 when he went international.

Among some of the memorable achievements of those 19 years Bill spent at SNH included the following:

1. He obtained for SNH the status of a special primary school from the Ministry of Education. This ensured the school of an annual grant of 90 percent towards paying the salaries of teachers and other staff plus a per capita grant for the students to meet recurrent expenditures.
2. Ensured the required number of teachers were employed and trained in the teaching of blind children either at the Special Teachers' Training Institute (STTI) in Kuala Lumpur or overseas, thus improving the standard of teaching and the quality of education for blind children.
3. He cooperated with the STTI's training programme by encouraging their trainee teachers to do their practical training at SNH. He also established very good rapport with the Princess Elizabeth School and other non-governmental organisations in furthering the standard of education for blind people.
4. He supported the extension of the Integrated Education Programme of the Ministry of Education at the secondary level which the Home had pioneered in 1960.
5. He started the Occupation Training Centre for Blind Women within the compound of the Home and initiated the After-Care Service mainly for ex-Nicolites. The functions of these services included finding employment and undertaking some income-generating activities.
6. He improved the physical facilities with a big development programme with public support. This enabled SNH to introduce more programmes and to expand its services, such as the tape lending library with proper recording studios, the Low Vision Unit, a science classroom and even a swimming-pool.
7. He dramatically increased the Home's financial position through aggressive fund-raising activities and built up the Endowment Fund to a few million Ringgit.

8. He obtained international recognition for SNH as one of the leading schools for visually impaired children in this region through the organising of important conferences and presenting of papers on services to persons with visual impairment which were well received by experts on such matters. Comments had been received from some ex-students that they were proud to have been in that school during its heydays.

After leaving SNH, Bill went on to assume more influential and responsible roles in the international arena in terms of advocating for better services for the blind. In March 1979 he was appointed as the South-East Asia Regional Representative of the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (now known as Sight Savers International) until the office became unnecessary in 1991. That same year he was also appointed to the post of Regional Representative of the Christoffel BlindenMission (CBM) until his retirement in 1992. In August 1987 Bill became the first Asian to be elected President of the International Council for the Education of the Visually Impaired (ICEVI) in the organisation's 40-year old history and he was re-elected for a second five-year term in 1992.

Indeed, Bill had contributed much while holding such important positions and he has touched the lives of many during his globe-trottings to carry out his duties. As it is not possible for me to mention all his contributions and outstanding services to people with disabilities, I shall skip the international chapter of Bill's history and recount some of the things he did for organisations serving the blind in the country after he left SNH. By using his influence and persuasiveness while wearing the different hats, he was deeply involved in the following:

MALAYSIAN ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND (MAB)

He actively supported their blindness prevention programme, especially the Mobile Eye Clinic, the Job Placement Unit, and the introduction of the Community-Based Rehabilitation service at the Taman Harapan Agricultural Training Centre.

SOCIETY OF THE BLIND IN MALAYSIA (SBM)

He staunchly supported their pilot agricultural projects in Pahang and the employment of a fulltime Executive Secretary. The later action positively strengthened the movement of the blind in Malaysia.

SABAH SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND (SHSB)

He worked closely with the Department of Health in the training programme of medical assistants and nurses for the primary eye care services, particularly in the rural areas of that state, and in the attempt to set up a Job Placement Service for the Blind in that organisation.

SARAWAK SOCIETY FOR THE BLIND (SKSB)

Similar projects were undertaken in Sarawak, including the employment of an Orientation and Mobility-cum-Job Placement Officer.

Bill worked tirelessly on and behind the scene to ensure that NCBM became a reality. He spent many hours negotiating and trying to convince certain leaders working in the organisations serving the blind of the benefits of having a national body whereby all member-organisations could come together to discuss common issues and take collective actions in resolving them. So strong was his belief in such a body that he managed to persuade his bosses in Sight Savers International and the Christoffel BlindenMission to pledge substantial financial support to NCBM during its formative years and they even extended their commitment beyond the usual three-year period, and the funding of major projects and activities either between member-organisations or with the various ministries of the government. After NCBM became a reality, Bill continued to play a very active and influential role, whether as Chair of the NCBM Committee on the Prevention of Blindness or as a representative to important assignments until 2014.

Some of the noteworthy activities included the following:

- A Perkins Braille repair course for instructors from the Ministry of Education and member-organisations.

- An employment seminar to improve the job placement service for the blind in the country and to upgrade the skills of such officers.
- Organised a seminar on eye care which eventually led to the formation of the Standing Committee on Eye Care and Care of the Blind under the Ministry of Health.

In recognition of his services to the state and country, Bill was awarded the Pingat Jasa Kebaktian (PJK) in 1973 and the Darjah Johan Negeri (DJN) in 1992 by the Government of Penang.

NCBM honoured him in 1999 with the NCBM Tun Hussein Onn Award for Distinguished Services to the Visually Impaired for the role he played in promoting the education of blind children, introducing and improving the services for the blind and the strengthening of organisations to provide such services. This award was made more meaningful because Bill was nominated by a group of individuals, both blind and sighted, who appreciated what he had done and they felt strongly that such good deeds should not go unnoticed.

May his actions be examples for all to emulate in serving the blind. Thank you, Bill, for all that you have done for the blind community. May you be richly rewarded for your good deeds with eternal blessings.

MR. BROHIER'S FORGIVENESS LESSON

By Godfrey Ooi Goat See

I was a student at St. Nicholas' School for the Blind in Penang during the 1950s. I was at the primary school from 1951 to 1964 and I spent another four years at the St. Nicholas' hostel from 1965 to 1968 while I studied at the St. Xavier's Integrated Programme from Form Two to Form Five.

I am truly indebted to St. Nicholas' Home for its services, especially its school and education programme, which have equipped me with many of the life skills, thereby enabling me to live a life of independence and self-reliance in the community at large.

Without St. Nicholas', I believe I would surely have not remained long in this world. My father was just a poor coconut-husker and he did not know how to take care of a blind child, especially after my father and mother got separated during the early years of my childhood. From the conversations that my father had with friends and strangers alike when we were in the coffee-shops for our meals, I came to realise and to understand the real cause of my blindness.

According to what I heard from my father, I was born as a seven-month old premature baby and so I had to be placed in a special container. He said that I looked so small and frail (as big as a milo tin I remember him saying) and that I was still wrapped up in some black stuff. Being superstitious and hoping that the spirits would not be able to recognise me and take away my life, my parents gave me a girl's name, which was Guat See. However, the people at the birth registration put down my name as "Goat See", and so I have come to be known as "Goat" by my friends.

Years later, I learned that the container in which premature babies would be placed is known as the incubator. I also learned that in the 1950s, premature babies would be placed in the incubator with pure oxygen minus the nitrogen. In those days, it had been discovered through science that animals placed in pure oxygen became more lively and active. Thus, it was thought that this would have a similar positive effect on premature babies.

In subsequent years, it was realised that pure oxygen without nitrogen had negative effects on the premature baby. It could make them blind, retarded in growth or size, and it may even cause them to become mentally retarded, and the effects may be immediate or they may be gradual in terms of years to occur. This medical condition was initially known as Retrolental Fibroplasia but it is now known as retinopathy of prematurity.

Well, I believe this explains how I became blind and why I have not been able to grow to normal stature like my other friends and everyone else. In spite of these advantages, nonetheless, I am still most appreciative and very grateful for the opportunity that has been given to me to live a normal life filled with challenges to overcome difficulties and hardships and to experience the beauty and meaning of living.

And so with my premature birth, with the onset of blindness, with my father's poverty, and my father and mother becoming separated in the early years of my childhood, I believe I would not have survived if I had not been referred to St. Nicholas' Home at the age of four by the Penang Welfare Department. After all, I had two sisters a few years before me who died during the Japanese Occupation due to illness and the inavailability of medicine.

Through the St. Nicholas' education and rehabilitation programmes, I have been equipped with many skills for life, including braille, cane travel and even some simple techniques of cooking. The school also helped to prepare me for my academic career and consequently I graduated from the University of Malaya with a B.A. (Hons.) degree in 1974 and subsequently obtained my Diploma of Education from the same university in 1978.

Furthermore, St. Nicholas' provided the opportunity for me to gain work experience when I was employed to serve the organisation as Executive Officer in April 1975 and subsequently as Appeals Officer (raising funds for the Home) from May 1976 to April 1977. During this period, I gained much by acquiring knowledge and skills in office management, conducting correspondence, promoting public relations and carrying out interpersonal communications, especially with the many visitors who came to see the Home.

I want especially to express my deep appreciation and grateful thanks to Mr. William G. Brohier who was the first principal of the school and later on the first Executive Director of the Home. I really consider myself very fortunate to have been both a student and subsequently an employee during his stint at St. Nicholas'.

During our early school days Mr. Brohier endeavoured to instill in us the ideals and principles of responsible leadership and a personal conscience by providing opportunities for us to set up committees that could interact with the school authorities, to become prefects by shouldering responsibilities, and to hold other responsible positions.

I vividly remember learning how to organise a debate which dealt with the hot topic of the day – "blindness is better than deafness" – and how some of us relished the opportunity of acting as the Chairman because this meant having the authority to silence everyone (including the principal himself) by banging on the table.

I also remember very well sensing the tightness and frustration in Mr. Brohier's voice when he had to discipline us for our misdemeanours with threats of "the thundering slap" or he actually had to administer some punishment to teach us a lesson.

My mind often goes back to the Chinese New Year day of 1967 – some of us had deliberately fired crackers in the early morning hours before the lifting of the ban at 9 a.m. The matron, Miss Perelle, caught us red-handed but no one would admit to firing the fatal shot just as she appeared in our bedroom. And so despite the holiday, the whole school was summoned to the hall for an assembly.

At the insistence of Mr. Brohier's questioning, one of us, Charles Goh, admitted, "in the true sense of the word, I fired the cracker at one minute to nine."

Mr. Brohier controlled his irritation and started lecturing us on the ideas of truth, honesty and fairness. Then he gave us an ultimatum – to stand in the sun the whole day long or to face the cane. Everyone of us chose the cane

and I believe this made Mr. Brohier feel a sense of relief and at the same time he was secretly proud of us for having proved the mettle of our manhood. Only cowards would have opted for the punishment of standing in the sun the whole day long!

We all trooped to his office and queued up in front of his desk. Soon it was my turn to be caned. The cane hit two of my fingers with some pain but I took the opportunity to put into practice what he had preached to us many times during morning chapel.

I said, "Mr. Brohier, as the Bible says we must forgive, I forgive you for caning me."

Of course, I was quaking with fear and nervousness but he took my hand with the painful fingers and he shook it gently. After that, the guys behind me confidently announced, "I forgive you, Mr. Brohier" after the cane landed. I believe that this lesson in particular had taught us a lot about how boys and men should behave. It is my sincere hope that St. Nicholas' will continue to be run on such sound ideals and principles.

THE 2020 BUDGET – PROVISIONS FOR THE POOR AND THE DISABLED

By Ooi Hock Tiam

The 2020 budget was tabled in Parliament by YB Tuan Lim Guan Eng, Finance Minister, on Friday, 11th October 2019. Here are some of the highlights for the poor and the disabled.

1. All civil servants will receive a bonus of RM500 by the end of year 2019. A total number of 1,700,000 (one million seven hundred thousand) persons will benefit from this.

In addition, all pensioners will receive RM250 by the end of 2019.

2. Petrol subsidies will be given out by January 2020. They will be RM30 per month for a car and RM12 per month for a motor-cycle. These subsidies will be given only to those who are recipients of the Bantuan Saraan Hidup (or BSH).
3. All disabled persons above the age of 18 and having an income of below RM2,000 a month will be entitled to the Bantuan Saraan Hidup (BSH).
4. All disabled persons above the age of 40 who are receiving the BSH will be given an additional one-off payment of RM300. They will also be entitled to receive the My Salam Medical Insurance. Under this insurance scheme, a person will be entitled to a claim of RM8,000 when he is diagnosed with a critical disease plus RM50 per day for 14 days if he stays in hospital.
5. A total amount of RM23 million will be allocated for the schools to provide facilities for disabled students. This provision is in line with the Government , Zero Reject Policy in education. This means that no individual person, whether disabled or otherwise, will be denied the opportunity of receiving proper education.

6. No mention has been made regarding the welfare allocation. It can, therefore, be assumed that the status quo remains the same, particularly with regards to the disabled workers allowance (Elaun Pekerja Cacat – EPC).
7. Income tax relief for individuals donating to the non-governmental organisations (NGO)s has been increased from 7% to 10%. In other words, a person can now claim exemption from income tax if he or she donates more of his or her income to charity.
8. All civil servants in the implementation category, or those who are in the non-professional category, will have their Cost of Living Allowance increased from RM300 to RM350 per month.
9. A sum of RM10 billion will be allocated to provide housing loans for the poor to purchase low-cost houses.

As usual, everybody from every sector is expecting the Government to give more. Nobody remembers that, in fact, the Government of the day is owing the world more than RM1 trillion. Perhaps, it is now time to ask for less in order to be able to buy more things. At the end of the day after all, it is the purchasing power that counts rather than how much cash we have, which will determine what is our standard of living. In other words, it is how inflation is being kept under control.

So let us start asking for less in order to get more instead of asking for more which might result in us getting less!

DR. ABDUL RAHMAN TANG ABDULLAH – EXEMPLARY MODEL OF THE BLIND IN EMPLOYMENT

By Godfrey Ooi Goat See



Over a period of twenty years or more, Dr. Abdul Rahman Tang Abdullah, who was born blind, saw his own steady rise from tutor to Associate Professor. He has certainly achieved great things – but how did he meet with such astounding success?

Abdul Rahman Tang had his primary education at the Princess Elizabeth School for the Blind from 1975 to 1981. He then went on to study at the High School Muar in Johor for Form One to Form Six from 1982 to 1988. He was in the integrated programme where he studied alongside sighted students in the school.

Rahman said that while he had to work very hard at his studies, he was very fortunate to have had very good and dedicated resource teachers to help him. He said, "I am fully indebted to two teachers, Cikgu Kanahan and Cikgu Mustaffa Hamzah who helped draw the Economics diagrams during my critical years in Form Six. I remember, in particular, one Indian teacher, Mr. S. Manandi, who was my Malay language teacher. He was very diplomatic and really knew how to handle us without resorting to anger whenever we misbehaved in class. I remember especially Miss Ong Gern Gern, who was a very good Economics teacher. She was the main factor contributing to my success in the higher school exam because I got a B for Economics. I'm

also very grateful to the Friends of the Blind Society (FOB) who assisted me reading up reference materials."

Rahman Tang went on to the University of Malaya in 1989 where he majored in history and graduated with a First-class Honours degree in 1992. Because of his excellent degree results, he was offered a tutorship at the University.

Not long after, however, he was offered the post of Assistant Lecturer at Universiti Islam Antarabangsa (UIA) in 1993. Subsequently, he was appointed as Lecturer at UIA in 1996 and soon after he became Assistant Professor in 2007. Eventually, in 2012, he was sent to Universiti Malaysia, Sabah where he was again appointed as Assistant Professor of the History of Malaysia and South-East Asian Studies. He currently lectures on the History of Malaysia, European History and Research Methodology.

When asked how he had been able to achieve and succeed, Rahman Tang admits, "actually life hasn't been plain sailing at all. It is extremely difficult for a blind person to do History, especially to do Ph.D. which is truly tough going having to decipher the handwritten materials which are the primary sources for study. I think it's much easier for a blind person to do literature, politics or even economics."

So why did Rahman Tang take up History?

"Oh, I had no choice, I guess," says Rahman Tang. "Since I majored in History with First-class Honours, it seemed quite logical for me to continue with my Master's and Doctorate studies in History. It took me about eleven years to complete my tertiary education."

Thus, Rahman Tang was able to read for his Master's Degree in South-East Asian Studies (politics and history) from 1995-96 and then to read for his Ph.D. on Malaysian History from 1997 to 2000. In fact, he obtained both his master's and doctorate degrees from the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London.

Rahman Tang had to stay in England from 1995 to 2002 (about seven years) in order to pursue his studies there. To carry out his research, he had to go to various institutions which included the National Archives of Singapore Library, the School of Oriental and African Studies in the University of London, the Rhode House Library at Oxford University, the Windsor Royal Archives (official residency of the British queen), the National Archives of Malaysia in Kuala Lumpur and its branch in Johor Bahru.

For his Ph.D., Rahman Tang did a study on Sultan Abu Bakar of Johor and he had to reinterpret the history of the Sultan and the Johor sultanate. He had to study both primary and secondary sources in order to produce his own original right.

For the secondary sources, they were obtainable from the internet or he could get printed materials which he would read with the help of a scanner. For the primary sources, he had to gain access to the raw materials or handwritten documents which were only available at the institutions in England.

"I'm among the few lucky ones from Malaysia to have been able to go to the Windsor Archives. I went there twice in 2001 and 2007," Rahman said with great appreciation.

He continued, "not everybody would know how to read the handwritten texts without first familiarising themselves with the material. I had to rely a lot on volunteers and this is where my wife played a vital role in lending assistance with the reading which was indispensable and which I most appreciate."

Actually, it was in 1980 when Rahman Tang first met his wife in a dating agency at the University of Malaya. She is Amnah Yahya who was also a student studying TESL at the University. They got married in July 1993 from Kuala Lumpur and they had five children. The oldest is in his twenties while the youngest is in primary education.

Rahman Tang said that in the course of his studies, the most memorable and even sentimental moment came when he managed to lay his hands on the essay from the Windsor Archives through the colonial office. This gave him an insight into the real history of the Johor Sultanate and he was greatly surprised to discover that, in actual fact, the anti-colonial sentiments were

not realistic at all – indeed, most of the sultans were happy and wanted to befriend the King or Queen of England in order to gain favourable treatment for themselves. This meant that they actually succumbed to colonialism rather than wanting to be free from colonialism. They were willing to be the protectorates of Britain.

Indeed, it took eleven long years for Rahman Tang to complete his studies. He had to get people like his wife to read for him in order to put the material into Braille.

Rahman Tang said, "Braille is very important indeed because it is not easy to listen to the reading. But then you do need the raw materials in order to be able to write down one's own original work."

Rahman Tang stayed in England from 1995 to 2002 when studying for his M.A. and Ph.D. at the University of London. He found the environment in Britain to be very user-friendly to the blind and he could walk freely in the city. He found that in the 1990s when he was there, London had much better accessible infrastructure than in Malaysia. While London had user-friendly pavements and accessible transport, there were too many obstacles on the streets in Malaysia and not all transport was easily accessible.

Now as Associate Professor in Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Dr. Abdul Rahman Tang Abdullah is lecturing on Malaysian history, European history and on research methodology. He says that the lecturer should be able to present the general view and that he should try to give new ideas based on one's own research or field of study. While various approaches can be taken in studying history – multi ethnic, religious, global or whatever – one needs to emphasise reconciliation rather than being overcentric although Malay-centric deserves to be highlighted. Ultimately, every view has its limits.

To mark the papers of students, Rahman Tang got his wife or other volunteers to assist him initially. Later, he negotiated with the UMS authorities to allow the students to type out their work on the computer and save on a thumb drive for him to mark. Taking this innovative step made it possible for him to mark the hundreds of scripts much more easily. Now he could complete the work within two weeks. Moreover, the marks he gave were now based solely on his own judgment without any intervention from his assistant readers.

"Yes," says Rahman Tang, "I'm now really working like a sighted person."

Rahman Tang also spends his time writing journal articles in English. He has written articles on the Malay economy during the colonial period, the origins of water supply from Johor to Singapore, and on Islam and modernisation in Johor. His articles can be downloaded from Google free of charge.

Rahman Tang says, "Now my performance is based on mainstream criteria rather than based on blindness leniency. A blind person's academic performance should be equal to mainstream performance. In other words, we have to be like a sighted person when doing our job, whether it be in marking papers or writing articles, conducting research or giving lectures."

Finally, Dr. Abdul Rahman Tang Abdullah says, "I'm truly indebted to the National Council for the Blind, Malaysia and to Moses Choo, the Executive Director of NCBM, for the invaluable assistance they have given me in helping to produce Braille materials for the purpose of teaching. In fact, they have been doing this for more than ten years since the year 2002 and even now they're continuing to do so. I express most grateful thanks to NCBM and thanks a lot, Moses Choo."

I REMEMBER W. ALAN JOHNS

By Ivan Ho Tuck Choy

Back in 1983 when the five organisations serving the blind in Malaysia were holding discussions on the formation of a national body, the undercurrent at the time that was pulling us along was the Royal Commonwealth Society for the Blind (RCSB), which in the early 1990s was renamed as the Sight-Savers International (SSI). Back then, RCSB was helmed by a blind person, Sir John Wilson, who was assisted by Mr. W. Alan Johns.

Working with the two gentlemen in the capacity of the RCSB Regional Representative in the Asia-Pacific office was Mr. William G. Brohier, operating from his office in Penang. It must be mentioned here that William Brohier had played a very significant role in selling the idea of having a national body to RCSB and in convincing Sir John Wilson to put his full backing behind the project.

The National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) came into being on 24th October 1984 with its inaugural meeting held at the Hotel Jayapuri, the site where Hotel Hilton PJ stands today. Tun Hussein Onn was elected as ProTem President, and I as the ProTem Vice-President.

RCSB and the Christoffel BlindenMission (CBM) of Germany provided the funds to NCBM for running the administration and for organising activities and projects for the next few years. Coincidentally, William Brohier was also the CBM South-East Asia Regional Representative and in this strategic position he was able to use his influence to convince Rev. Garms, Executive Chairman of CBM, to support NCBM. In fact, CBM continued to support NCBM up to 2010, albeit on a reducing basis, although they had originally indicated that they would discontinue the funding after ten years.

All of us at the time had high hopes and expectations that with the formation of NCBM, we would somehow soften the hard positions taken by some leaders, thereby enabling us to work together tackling national issues facing the blindness field and in developing new services. While the representatives were willing to sit down and discuss certain issues, none was prepared or able to come forward with funds for such purposes.

When the euphoria of a workable national body had begun to subside after two or three years of NCBM's existence with the lack of financial sustainability and everything discussed seem to be mere empty rhetoric, Alan Johns, who had by now succeeded Sir John Wilson upon his retirement, played the crucial role in ensuring that NCBM would not fail. He was very supportive of the many proposals put forward, among them of which were some of the following:

1. RCSB will renew and increase its financial commitment to NCBM for another five years from 1989 to 1994

Alan Johns had figured out that by then NCBM would have become self-reliant with its member-organisations chipping in to share the financial responsibility. CBM, in turn, would give its financial backing which it did so in due course.

2. All funding of projects previously negotiated directly between RCSB and the implementing organisations would be channelled through NCBM

Under this arrangement, Alan Johns hoped that the coordinating role of NCBM would be strengthened. Furthermore, the funding of the Rehabilitation Service for the Rural Blind programme implemented by the Malaysian Association for the Blind and the Sarawak Society for the Blind was extended from three to five years.

3. Several projects that had been identified by NCBM and deemed beneficial to the work in the blindness field could be carried out jointly between NCBM and the Government

Alan Johns thus gave his whole-hearted backing to these projects. In like manner, Rev. Garms of CBM threw in their strong support. Some of the major activities were the organising of workshops on employment and on fund-raising.

Some of the workshops and seminars included the following:

1. Seminar on the formulation of a national plan for the prevention of blindness

This seminar resulted in the setting up of the National Standing Committee on Eye Care and Control of Blindness by the Ministry of Health. This proved to be of benefit to the paramedic personnel in the rural districts of Peninsula Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak. Indeed, in those days there was an acute shortage of ophthalmologists even in the hospitals of major towns in the country. Therefore NCBM, with funding from RCSB and CBM, was able to sponsor expertise from overseas in order to meet some of the unbudgeted expenses.

One of the activities that was initiated by the National Standing Committee and which is being carried out till this day is the celebration of the International World Sight Day. This annual event is aimed at creating public awareness on avoidable and treatable causes of blindness.

2. Orientation and Mobility Course

With the techniques in Orientation and Mobility (O. & M.) being one of the most important requirements for independent living by the blind, a three-month course was organised in order to provide training for twelve instructors not only from the member-organisations of NCBM but also from the Department of Special Education as well as from Indonesia, Philippines and Thailand.

The course was conducted by Dr Thomas Blair and it was held at St. Nicholas' Home in Penang. The objective was for this group of trained instructors to impart their knowledge to other personnel in their respective organisations, thereby ensuring that this aspect of work for the blind would not be neglected.

3. Perkins Braille repair and maintenance workshop

A five-day workshop on the repair and maintenance of Perkins Braille was held at the Business Inn, K.L. The fifteen participants were from the member-organisations of NCBM, the Department of Special Education, from Myanmar, Thailand and Indonesia.

The above-mentioned items are just a brief summary of the dealings that NCBM had with Alan Johns. They, nevertheless, suffice to demonstrate the concern and sincerity Alan Johns had for the development of work for the blind in this country despite his many engagements in other parts of the world. In fact, it was Alan Johns who, on one of his trips to hold discussions with NCBM and Government officials, tried his best to persuade me to resign from Kumpulan Guthrie to join NCBM as a fulltime staff with RCSB underwriting the salaries for the next five years. He, and others like William Brohier, realised that, no matter how hard I tried, I would never be able to achieve much by serving on a voluntary basis. However, I reluctantly turned down the offer as my children were still in school and I myself was quite contented with a secure job.

Alan Johns subsequently retired from SSI in 1994 and I, as President of NCBM at the time, extended our deep gratitude to him and SSI for the tremendous support they had rendered to NCBM since its founding years until 1994.

Unfortunately, not long after his retirement, Alan Johns was diagnosed with a rare neuron-motor disease which resulted in his passing away within months.

Alan Johns was truly uncompromising in his principles and yet very receptive to good ideas, forceful in persuasion but never imposing, and busy with work but ever ready to fix a friendly appointment for discussions over a cup of coffee.

These are my lasting memories of the man, Alan Johns, OBE. NCBM is indeed fortunate to have had a person like him heading SSI at the time. We are most grateful and very proud to have been associated with people like Alan Johns.

May his soul rest in peace with God's blessings.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE: THE QBRAILLE XL ALM BRAILLE DISPLAY AND USB KEYBOARD

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



This innovative technology makes it no longer necessary for anyone using a Braille display on the computer to memorise the keystrokes used to simulate Windows commands.

Have you ever found yourself struggling to remember the series of commands to perform a keyboard shortcut on your display? Have you tried to do a command that is not configured on your display? Have you found yourself switching back and forth between your computer keyboard and your display to accomplish your work? If so, then the QBraille XL from HIMS may be the perfect device for you.

The QBraille XL is a forty-cell display with a standard Perkins-style Braille keyboard which also has all the function and navigation keys of a standard keyboard. Thus, you can type in Braille while being able to perform all the shortcuts and commands that you are used to with the standard keyboard keys.

For example, Control+F is done by holding the control key and pressing the dots for the letter F. Commands like Control+Tab or Alt+F4 are done by using the same keys you are used to.

This has been made possible by some software that makes the display appear to a connected device as both a Braille display and a regular USB or Bluetooth keyboard. Even if you have not configured the display with your screen reader, the navigation keys and computer Braille input will work perfectly, though you will not have Braille output.

The QBraille also has a small suite of internal applications which are very similar to those found on the Braille Edge. The only new internal application that the QBraille has is a DAISY reader for reading textbooks from services like Bookshare. The QBraille does not have speech built in, so the DAISY reader is Braille only.

THE HARDWARE

The edges of the QBraille are fairly clean, with the only thing on the left side being the power button while the front and back edges are completely empty aside from a small hard reset button near the right of the back edge.

The right side has a USB C port for charging and connections over USB, and behind that an SD-card slot. A card must be installed for the notepad and DAISY reader to function.

On the top front of the unit is a forty-cell display, with the standard panning and cursor routing keys that are common to all HIMS displays.

Above the display is the keyboard. The main portion of the keyboard is a standard Perkins keyboard that any display user will be familiar with. On the same row as the spacebar are several keys. From left to right there is control, function, Windows and alt. To the right of the spacebar are another alt, applications, and the right control key. On the far right are the arrow keys, just as on a standard keyboard. Above the arrows is the standard six-pack of keys that you find on most keyboards.

This is arranged in two columns of three keys with insert and delete on the top row, home and end below insert, and page up and down below the delete key.

Above the Braille keys is a row containing escape on the far left, then the standard F1 through F12 keys. Below F1 are tab, caps lock and shift. Below the escape key are the pairing and mode buttons which have various functions when you are connected to a device.

The QBraille also comes with a protective case that looks fairly sturdy and fits the device very snugly.

THE SOFTWARE

It takes about thirty seconds for the QBraille to start up and it will display progress messages on the display. After starting, you will be at the main menu.

The menu has several options – notepad, DAISY reader, applications, options and information. The applications folder contains an alarm, clock, calculator and calendar. In fact, they are quite similar to those on the Braille Edge.

First you go into the options menu to set your preferred Braille language and Grade, whether you want sounds to play, and other settings.

Most of the QBraille's magic happens in the connectivity mode. When you select connectivity from the main menu, you will have a choice between USB, Bluetooth keyboard, or Bluetooth display.

If you choose one of the Bluetooth options, you will be placed into pairing mode, then into terminal mode once a device is paired.

If you select USB, you are directly placed in terminal mode. Once you have at least one connection, pressing the pairing button plus the F1-F12 switches between Bluetooth connections and by pairing+escape will switch to the USB connection.

USING THE QBRILLE WITH OTHER DEVICES

If you are using a USB connection, the keyboard mode is active immediately. In this mode you can use all the standard function keys and type in Braille; however, there will be no Braille output. To make things fully functional, you need to download the HIMS USB driver if you are on Windows. Then you can configure your screen reader to use the display.

Once this is done, you will automatically be put in hybrid mode. Here the display will output Braille normally and the keyboard will operate in the keyboard mode. To have the keyboard work through the normal Braille display drivers, press the mode button to turn hybrid mode off.

To set up a Bluetooth device, you have to select the Bluetooth display and pair it as you would any display, then select Bluetooth keyboard and pair that as well. Once this is done, you will be in hybrid mode.

When you have at least one connection, you must use the pairing and function keys to switch to an empty slot to pair either a new display connection or a new keyboard connection.

Unfortunately, there seems to be no way to view a list of established connections; neither is there a way to clear one specific connection. However, you may be able to clear it by resetting all the pairing information through the options mode.

USING THE QBRILLE XL

After being connected, there are two options on how to work with the display. If hybrid mode is off, the QBraille will function (as in any other display) by using the command set in your screen reader of choice. But if hybrid mode is on, all the function keys behave as they would on a regular keyboard, and so Braille input works a little differently. Pressing the pairing and mode buttons together toggles between the various available input modes. The choices could be computer Braille, U.S. uncontracted, U.S. contracted, UEB uncontracted, and UEB contracted.

For computer Braille, the keys are directly sent through to the device. For the others, the text is sent when the spacebar is pressed.

There is one drawback, however, especially when using single letter navigation when you are browsing a web page. Perhaps the best thing to do when browsing a web page in hybrid mode is to change the input mode to computer Braille. Then the letters behave exactly as desired.

CONCLUSIONS

The QBraille XL is an excellent device that makes it easier to use a computer.

On mobile devices, you can use a Braille display and a Bluetooth keyboard.

The internal applications although basic, they do provide a way to take some notes, read a book, or use the basic scheduler.

Being a forty-cell display with an expanded keyboard, it may be considered to be too big for everyday portability without a laptop bag or briefcase.

Anyway, if you are an office worker, or you may be doing a lot of work with the computer, then the QBraille XL is worth your consideration.

Well, the experience may not be perfect. Nevertheless, it is overall a great and excellent device.

A SPECIAL TRAVEL SITE FOR THE BLIND

In June 2019, the Blind Travellers' Network was launched by Stacy Cervenka. This is an online platform which connects blind and vision impaired persons with information and resources for access of the blind in countries around the world. The platform hosts blog posts, reviews, discussion boards, and event listings to help users expand their horizons, leave their comfort zones, and explore new places.

This web site is dedicated to global travel opportunities for the blind, enabling blind people all over the world to explore independently.

Cervenka, who is blind, came up with the idea of the platform after she and her husband Greg, also blind, sought to enjoy a leisurely horse-riding lesson at a ranch, but they encountered obstacles and disrespect. She wanted to make a posting about her experience but realised this would take a long time to reach out to other blind people. So she came up with a centralised place where she could post a review of that stable to keep other blind people informed.

With the creation of this Blind Travellers' Network, it contains information about travelling with a white cane in China, paragliding in Torrey Pines, and beach-going in Sydney, Australia.

To visit the Blind Travellers' Network, go to **blindtravelersnetwork.org**

A POINT TO PONDER: THE TELEPHONE

By Wong Kow

Nowadays many people would say, "I just can't live without a smartphone." Therefore if any family member were to leave the house for work, for an appointment or even for fun, he or she would be reminded to bring along the mobile phone. Apparently, the phone is just as important as his or her personal documents like the identity card, the ATM card, some other card or even his money.

True enough, it is not difficult to realise that most of the companies dealing with telecommunications are making a huge amount of money. Interestingly, it can be observed that the number of mobile phones in use exceed the total number of the population in the country. Moreover, bearing in mind that there are those children who are too young to know how to use a phone and those who are very old and do not want to own a handphone, it simply explains that many handphone lovers must be using more than one phone on a daily basis. While I do not doubt the importance of carrying along a handphone for the convenience of communication and for emergency, the trend of carrying two or more handphones at the same time is surely fascinating and most amazing.

During my childhood years in the Cameron Highlands in the 1950s, telephone communication was no less important. Under those circumstances, nonetheless, phones were difficult to come by even for making an emergency call. In fact, in the year 1950, my family was in the remote farmland of the Cameron Highlands. Whenever there was a family emergency, my father had to walk for at least half an hour to the nearest shop or police station in order to borrow the phone to pass on information to my uncle in Penang. When someone wanted to call us back, it was just as difficult or near impossible.

The quest of using the phone was a bit easier when we moved to a village about twenty kilometres away from Bukit Mertajam. At this time, our village home was just about five minutes' walk from the nearest shop where we could borrow the phone during an emergency. Of course, the shopkeeper would be more obliging if we were good customers, and so we bought most of our household goods from the shop and we paid promptly.

I came to work in Kuala Lumpur in the year 1965 and stayed with a blind friend, Lai Kok Keong, and his family. After familiarising myself with the house and the room for me to share with the Lai brothers, my first reaction was, "Wow! There is a telephone!" At this time, even in Kuala Lumpur, most of the houses were not equipped with a telephone set.

Subsequently, I moved to a Kuala Lumpur Government low-cost flat where I stayed from the 1970s right until 1997, the year when I retired from my fulltime job. According to the officials from Telecoms, there were not enough telephone lines to meet the demand from the tremendous number of applications coming from those people living in the low-cost flats. I myself had to wait for a number of years before my application for a house phone was acceded to in 1986.

In those years, some businessmen were carrying mobile phones with them but the phones were rather big in size and clumsy to hold and the monthly rental for phone usage was rather expensive. Indeed, in those days it could be a heavy financial burden for an average wage earner.

In the 1990s, the mobile phone manufacturers managed to reduce the size of the phone and even improved its functionality. In addition, the price of the phone and its monthly rental had been reduced, thereby making it much more affordable to the general public. Moreover, with many more mobile phone manufacturers competing in the highly lucrative market, a greater number of service-providers were also available.

Today the mobile phone is commonly known as the "smartphone". And so by now, I may have aroused your interest in learning more about the smartphone as well as the internet. Well, if you wish to upgrade yourself to becoming a smart person with the smartphone that is suitable for you, you may like to consider the following questions and find out the appropriate answers most beneficial to you, thereby giving you value for your money and enabling you to spend your time more effectively in meeting your interests.

1. What type of phone would suit your needs most?
2. What are the apps and internet services that you require?
3. With which service-provider would you want to sign up for the package of your choice?
4. Would you want to use the E-Wallet to make cashless payments through the smartphone?
5. When this article reaches you, there should be much talk on the subject of 5G with increased knowledge of technology and IT updates to satisfy the dreamers of tomorrow. Are you one of those dreamers?

I must apologise as I think I am not smart enough to offer any further suggestions on the above mentioned points. Nevertheless, you can certainly find more relevant information yourself. You may be greatly enlightened by reading up the articles on "Technology Update" by Moses Choo Siew Cheong, the Executive Director of National Council for the Blind, Malaysia (NCBM) published in this magazine.

In conclusion, I would like to say that "Learning is a lifelong journey". The more we learn, the more interesting we would find life to be.

AGAINST ALL ODDS – AN AUTOETHNOGRAPHY OF STIGMA AND RESISTANCE IN THREE CULTURAL CONTEXTS

Part II

By Lim Teik Hock

Editor's Note: Lim Teik Hock provides an autoethnographic account of his life as a visually impaired person in three cultural contexts – Malaysia, Britain and Australia. He highlights the prejudices and stigmatising experiences he had encountered and he explores the resistance strategies employed in these contexts.

In the first part of this presentation, he shows how the early stigmatising experiences in the Malaysian context became the source of a keenly felt and productive sense of anger that had fuelled a critical resistance to disability oppression.

An alignment of class and serendipity factors provided the opportunity for him to go to England in the 1970s to attend university. The volatile and progressive political context in the United Kingdom at the time provided a theoretical frame and focus for his resistance.

Here is the second part of his presentation:

Indeed, with the early stigmatising experiences I had faced as a visually impaired person in Malaysia and subsequently being denied the opportunity of gaining meaningful employment, I was really living a meaningless existence. I was filled with frustration as I was not going anywhere in life.

It was at this moment of disappointment and despair when I had the sudden prompting to go to the United Kingdom. In fact, this feeling had come at the right time because this was when my father had just passed away and he had left behind in his will a house in Penang, the proceeds of which were to go to my family. So I cajoled my family to let me use the money for enhancing my education abroad.

Indeed, I felt that it was the best thing that mother had ever done for me in giving me the one-way ticket to London. It was certainly the right thing that father had done before he passed away in willing the property for sale, thereby leaving behind some money for me to go abroad.

I was in London from 1971 to 1984, which was known as being the time of the big smog because of industrialisation. When I landed in London, I had no basic survival skills at all. I could not even boil an egg or wash my own clothes. All of such tasks had been done for me all the while by family members and the servants. Indeed, I had to learn going shopping for some things of personal need because I was tongue-tied and I could not express myself properly. Fortunately, I realised that this had to change quickly or else I would find life to be very miserable.

I recall an early incident when I needed to buy some condoms. I asked a couple of friends for assistance but they turned me down by saying, "Why don't you go and get the condoms yourself?"

Having no one else to turn to, I sheepishly approached the receptionist at the chemist's store and asked, "Madam, can you help me get some condoms?"

She immediately stood up and said, "Come along, young man, follow me."

She took me to the particular section and on reaching the display, she announced loudly the different brands, sizes and sensitivity of the condoms. At that moment in time, I felt so embarrassed that I wish I could bury my face in between her bosom. She was a bit like that Mrs. Robinson character. I was so embarrassed because there were other people in the shop doing their own thing. I wanted to tell her that she was embarrassing me but instead I quickly paid up and rushed out in order to avoid further embarrassment.

Well, I had to learn how to understand the different types of English accents, especially when some of them spoke with such a strong local accent. On one occasion, someone was saying something to me and I kept saying, "I beg your pardon". After some repetitions, I gave up trying to understand and simply pretended to concur with him.

From the aspect of finance, I also found it rather hard to cope. I remember staying in a hostel for about two years and every morning I would have two or three helpings of bacon and egg until I got fed up of eating that stuff eventually. To save money, however, my lunch was a quick affair – a bottle of milk and a bar of chocolate. Truly, this was my diet during the two years when I was staying in the hostel.

Then I had to learn how to carry out some basic tasks such as cooking, washing and how to operate meters by using coins. If I did not put in the money properly for hot water, I would get cold freezing water.

Yes, I had to learn to be sharp. I had to learn to be aware of things and to be able to take advantage of situations and even to get away with some unconventional behaviour if I wanted to stretch the envelope.

Subsequently, I was able to register for a physiotherapy course which was especially tailored for blind students. As it would be difficult for a blind person to draw and understand diagrams of bones and such like, much of the course structure had to do with viva and oral examinations. This meant that the students had to be able to give clear descriptions of structure or explain functions precisely. This was a big disadvantage for me as I had been used to doing things with the amount of vision that I had been able to retain.

Furthermore, I was not very good at remembering things through rote learning. I preferred to be argumentative and to be more telling than it is. Besides, I had to massage old ladies and help them exercise on the bars, pull the pulleys and so on. They were quite stinking and sweaty but I had to say nicely that they were unwashed and a bit smelly. However, this would put me off by lunchtime as I was greatly affected by the odour.

Truly, I found the course to be tough-going and after some soul-searching, I decided to abandon the course. It was not a decision that I took very lightly as I felt very much indebted to my family that had to sell our late father's house in order to sponsor me to London. But I felt that I really had no choice in the matter.

And so I took the next step of going to college to take up my A-levels education. Simultaneously, I managed to find some part-time work with the Quakers, who were very understanding people. In the course of meeting so many people while I stayed near the University of London, I attended a lot of political functions and I became very politicised.

Subsequently, I got myself admitted into the North East London Polytechnic (now called East London University) where I took up a degree course in politics and sociology. Fortunately, there was a Disability Affairs Officer at the university and I was able to get advice from him on doing things and how to survive.

My studies involved a lot of reading and I found that I had too many materials to read and digest. So to be a smart survivor, I made friends with one or two of the lecturers who were more helpful than the rest. I remember one lady lecturer in particular as she invited me to join her at the pub and to bring along my tape-recorder. She would read out the summary of books which she had reviewed for the publishers, including subjects on feminism, which was her forte or specialisation as the expert or critic. Thus, it was not out of choice that I had to study cleverly and make use of whatever resources and materials that were available to me. After four years of study, I managed to obtain my degree as well as a diploma in Vocational Guidance.

With my qualifications, I was able to make application for a job as Career Officer with the Local Education Authority. I was offered the job but I did not take it up. This was because friends had influenced me to go for a Master's degree, especially as a grant could be obtained from the Local Authority in those days. And so I went on to Warwick University in Coventry to read for my Master's degree.

However, before gaining admission to Warwick University, I had been staying for a long time (more than six years) in an apartment with students from the North East London Polytechnic. The authorities wanted to get me out as I was no longer studying at the Polytechnic.

The authorities told the housing agency to take me to court but I was very prepared with my white cane and three friends to assist me. When my case was mentioned, I stepped forward and the old magistrate, with huge spectacles hanging from the tip of his nose, looked up at me and at the lawyer of the housing agency.

The first thing that the magistrate uttered to the lawyer was, "Why are you harassing this poor blind bastard?"

The lawyer looked up in embarrassment. Me and my three friends nearly fell to the floor laughing. We tried to hide our giggles and to contain our laughter.

The magistrate then turned to me and said, "Mr. Lim, you know that you have to move out of this place as the owners want the property back to rent it out to other students. However, given your situation, I will give you six months to move out. I'm sure that by this time, you would be able to find something else."

Can you imagine, the magistrate was so kind in giving me this long period of grace? I was overwhelmed by his graciousness and generosity. Me and my friends grinned very broadly and we thanked his honour for his kindness. Certainly, one can tell by the look of the lawyer's face that he was feeling very miserable because he had no choice but to wait for me to vacate the premises. I can say that I was stretching the envelope.

By this time, I had already attended many tribunals and I had got myself acquainted with the British system. I had even won some minor cases concerning the issue of obtaining some benefits from the Social Security system. Also, by this time, I had already managed to obtain British nationality with the help of the pro-bono lawyers to work on my case.

And so I was off to Coventry for the Master's course. Things started well with quite a lot of texts to digest. This time, I surrounded myself with readers to help me. One of the readers, in particular, became very fond of me. In the height of winter, I went to her place for a reading session. Usually, she would cook dinner and I would join her and her family. Then her husband would get on to his work and the children would go to sleep.

On this particular night, her husband was away on business and it was snowing heavily. You could see the snow piling up higher and higher. Usually, she would offer me a lift to the local train station. On this occasion, however, she said that the weather was looking extremely bad and asked if I was sure that I wanted to go home.

"Would you want to stay?" She said.

So we continued drinking heavily. One thing led to another and we became very close physically. Needless to say, we had an affair and this carried on for a few months.

One day, this somehow dawned upon her husband and he set us down with the question, "What are you two going to do about it?"

I was at a loss for words despite my intense feelings for the lady as I was in no position to finance her. And so I took up the gentleman's part, apologised and said that I would disappear from the scene.

All the worse for me at this time because I had my dissertation piece of 20,000 words to write for my Master's. For the next three days, I sat in front of the typewriter but no words could come out of my mind. I just kept gazing at the lady's face and I was being plagued by the breaking-up scene. I kept drinking heavily and smoking.

I was in such straits and in this state of loss that I just could not proceed for many weeks. Friends saw me in that state and they advised that I should return to Malaysia.

Considering the fact that I was not able to focus attention on my work, I decided to abandon the course and I came back to Malaysia. I stayed back in Malaysia for another three years.

Truly, I cannot face her at all! Up to today I have not contacted her. But she was a lovely woman! I would have married her if I had the money! I'm sorry I broke up her marriage!

A STORY – GANDHI'S WIT

When Mahatma Gandhi was studying law at the University College of London, a white professor, whose last name was Peters, disliked him intensely and always displayed prejudice and animosity towards him.

Also, because Gandhi never lowered his head when addressing him as he expected, there were always "arguments" and "confrontations".

One day, Mr. Peters was having lunch at the dining room of the University, and Gandhi came along with his tray and sat next to the professor. The professor said, "Mr. Gandhi, you do not understand. A pig and a bird do not sit together to eat."

Gandhi looked at him as a parent would a rude child and calmly replied, "You do not worry, Professor. I'll fly away."

Mr. Peters, reddened with rage, decided to take revenge on the next test paper. But Gandhi responded brilliantly to all questions.

Mr. Peters, unhappy and frustrated, asked him the following question. "Mr. Gandhi, if you were walking down the street and found a package, and within was a bag of wisdom and another bag with a lot of money, which one would you take?"

Without hesitating, Gandhi responded, "The one with the money, of course."

Mr. Peters, smiling sarcastically, said, "I, in your place, would have taken the wisdom, don't you think?"

Gandhi shrugged indifferently and responded, "Each one takes what he doesn't have."

Mr. Peters, by this time, was fit to be tied. So great was his anger that he wrote on Gandhi's exam sheet the word, "idiot" and gave it to Gandhi.

Gandhi took the exam sheet and sat down at his desk, trying very hard to remain calm while he contemplated his next move.

A few minutes later, Gandhi got up, went to the professor and said to him in a dignified but sarcastically polite tone, "Mr. Peters, you signed the sheet, but you did not give me the grade."

SOME LIFE LESSONS

THE MEANING OF LIFE

Life is not meant to be easy; it is not meant to be lived. Life is sometimes happy, at other times rough. With every up and down, however, you learn lessons that make you stronger.

HOW TO GAIN PEACE

The less you respond to negativity, the more peaceful your life becomes.

WHERE IS BEAUTY AND HAPPINESS?

A man asked an artist, "How do you make such beautiful things from stone?"

He replied, "Beauty is already hidden there. I just remove extra stone. Your happiness is also hidden within yourself. Just remove worries."

ACT ON YOUR WORDS

However many words you read, however many words you speak, what good will they do you if you do not act upon them? Why regret?

Never regret a day in your life. Good days give happiness, bad days give experience; worst days give lessons, best days give memories.

PURPOSE IN LIFE

In life you will realise that there is a purpose for every person that you meet. Some are there to test you, some will use you, some will teach you, and some will bring out the best in you.

DIRECTION IN LIFE

Keep going. Everything you need in life will come to you at a perfect time.

WHY PRAY?

Sometimes prayer does not change the situation but it changes our attitude towards the situation. This gives us hope and it changes our entire life.

MATHS LESSON

Mathematics may not teach us how to add happiness or to minus sadness in our life. However, it does teach one important thing – every problem has a solution.

MEDITATION

Buddha was asked, "What have you gained from meditation?"

He replied, "Nothing! However, let me tell you what I have lost – anger, anxiety, depression, insecurity, fear, old age and death."

REFLECTIONS

THE SCHOOL SYSTEM

The school system teaches children to be clever but gives them no tools to control that cleverness. The result is that children grow up using their cleverness to grasp things for themselves. Thus, self interest has become the main rule of the game.

- Pra Buddhadesa, the rivia monk, outspoken scholar of Thailand

THE PATH OF ORDER

Our needs are not material needs. Our needs are biological, social, ecological and spiritual.

It is we who have created the very condition that requires material goods to satisfy our needs. The world displays order and this order is critical, i.e. we cannot change it without impunity. This order must be respected. All the traditional societies had this concept.

- E. Goldsmith in his essay, "Debt, the great misinterpretation"

HAPPY SOCIETIES

Happy societies, cultures and individuals are worth striving for. Happy people do not sit around plotting revenge or thinking up ingenious ways to destroy innocent people.

Less obviously, happy people do not dream up utopian schemes to promote human well being such as communism or fascism. The intended results of such schemes never materialises, even after enormous destruction and bloodshed.

It is rather gradual change, over the generations, along with better understanding of the natural world made possible by science and technology, that has at least a chance of promoting human happiness!

In the declaration of independence of America, it is the pursuit of happiness and not its attainment that is being aspired for.

BOSS OR LEADER?

The boss drives his men; the leader inspires them.

The boss says, "I"; the leader says "we".

The boss demands respect; the leader commands respect.

The boss knows how it is done; the leader knows how to do it.

The boss knows who is wrong; the leader knows what is wrong.

GETTING OFF THE BUS

A social worker gave this advice: "You must know when to get off the bus. Don't wait for the bus to reach the terminus for everybody to get down and then you are told by the driver to get off the bus."

Likewise, in life we must know when to move on. Don't just live aimlessly from day to day. One must know when to change and one must learn to accept change.

T.E. LAWRENCE

All men dream, but not equally. Those who dream by night in the dusty recesses of their minds wake to the day to find that it was vanity.

The dreamers of the day are dangerous men, for they act out their dreams with open eyes to make it possible.

TO ASPIRE AND ACHIEVE

Two important factors should be considered in order to fulfil aspirations or achieve our goals.

Firstly, we must learn to be organised in our own lives. Secondly, but just as important, we must be willing to lead at times or be led at other times.

This means that we must have pride and humility and we must know the appropriate time to exercise one or the other.

CHOOSING INDIVIDUAL FOR A JOB

Factors to consider are as follows—

Is he life threatening?

Is he life saving?

Is he life extending?

Is he life transforming?

Which is the most important factor?

HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

For effective Human Resource Management, three important elements must be present as follows—

1. Performance management – Evaluation and analysis of jobs and results.
2. Development of human resources – manpower training, scouting for talents and skills, and assessing the abilities and competencies of personnel.
3. Compensation management – Rights, responsibilities and obligations on the one hand; benefits, incentives and privileges on the other.

NELSON MANDELA ON THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATION

Destroying any nation does not require the use of atomic bombs or long-range missiles. It only requires lowering the quality of education and allowing cheating in examinations by the students.

Patients die at the hands of such doctors, buildings collapse at the hands of such engineers, money is lost in the hands of such economists and accountants, humanity dies at the hands of such religious scholars, justice is lost at the hands of such judges.

The collapse of education is the collapse of a Nation.

SOME QUOTATION

Estée Lauder:

I never dreamed about success; I worked for it.

Unknown:

If there is no enemy within, the enemy outside can do no harm.

Abraham Lincoln:

The best way to destroy an enemy is to make him a friend.

Ralph Marston:

Happiness is a choice, not an achievement. Nothing will make you happy until you decide to be happy.

Unknown:

You do not attract what you want; you attract what you are.

Unknown:

Keep going – don't watch the clock. Do what it does – that is keep going.

Tony Gaskins:

I forgive, but I also learn a lesson. I won't hate you but I'll never get close enough for you to hurt me again. I can't let my forgiveness become foolish.

Thomas A. Edison:

Many of life's failures are people who did not realise how close they were to success when they gave up.

Unknown:

You can't change how people feel about you, so you don't try. Just live your life and be happy.

Unknown:

Happiness is not the absence of problems. It is the ability to deal with them.

Jim Morrison:

The most important kind of freedom is to be what you really are.

Unknown:

To grow old and regret is easy, to choose and change is hard. And as the saying goes, things worth doing are hard.

Unknown:

Believe in yourself but don't be attached to your own point of view.

Unknown:

In prosperity your friends know you; in adversity you know your friends.

Mother Teresa:

Loneliness and the feeling of being unwanted are the greatest poverty.

Adeline Yenma, in her book, "Chinese Cinderella":

Believe that one single positive dream is more important than a thousand negative realities.

Charles Chaplain:

You need power only when you want to do something harmful. Otherwise love is enough to get everything done.

Anonymous:

It's not what you have. It's what you do with what you have that matters.

Thomas Edison:

Our greatest weakness lies in giving up. The most certain way to succeed is always to try just one more time.

Anonymous:

No one can change the world but you can make a difference.

Anonymous:

The heart of a volunteer is not measured in size but by the depth of the commitment to make a difference in the lives of others.

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' 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 (2018 - Nov 2019)
Malaysian Association for the Blind

Prof. Dr Veera Ramani Ondiveeran
Malaysian Association for the Blind, Malaysia

Mr. Charles Chew
Malaysian Association for the Blind, Malaysia

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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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

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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. Articles of an informative nature written in your own words (about 500 words) - RM80.
5. Poems which are personal compositions depicting experiences of a blind person (about 50/100 words) - RM40/RM80
6. Interesting tidbits, jokes or other information taken from magazines or other documents of limited circulation - RM15

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

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

NOTES