



SARAWAK BAHÁ'Í NEWSLETTER

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Message from the Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Sarawak

To the Baha'is of Sarawak

Dearly loved Friends,

As we celebrate this Nineteen Day Feast of Masa'il, which means Questions in Arabic, it is an opportune moment for us to mention that we should reflect on what we do, to find out the rationale behind certain action and its significance thereof, instead of blindly following tradition. Such a reflection accords with the following meditation referred to by Baha'u'llah in His *"Book of Certitude"*: *"One hour's reflection is preferable to seventy years of pious worship."*

It was this lack of reflection that caused *"those people who, despite the love and yearning for truth which they profess, curse the followers of Truth when once He hath been made manifest."*

Reflection also plays an important role in the way we implement the current Five Year Plan. As learning is the *"primary mode of operation"*, it is characterized by action, reflection, and consultation, as has been explained by the Universal House of Justice on various occasions. That is why reflection meeting forms such an important part in any programme of growth, and why friends must attend such meeting.

In this message, we would like to refer again to our previous message, and the follow-up letter to the local assemblies, on the International Financial Collaboration Programme for the current Five Year Plan. Since our announcement, the friends in Sarawak have responded enthusiastically and contributed towards this programme, with some contributions being earmarked specifically for this purpose.

We wish to take this opportunity to clarify that, as the pledge is from your Spiritual Assembly, all contribution earmarked for this programme will be treated as contribution to the National Fund to meet our committed amount pledged to the Universal House of Justice. In this sense, our call to the friends to *"arise sacrificially to support"* this programme does imply calling the believers to increase their contribution to the National Fund to enable us to fulfill our pledge to the Universal House of Justice's call to the believers in Sarawak.

Have a unifying Nineteen Day Feast.

With loving greetings,
Spiritual Assembly of the Baha'is of Sarawak

Ruhi Book 8 Course successfully held

Report by Mr. Yong Kiong Choon

"Very inspiring!"

That must be on the lips of every one of the 38 people who participated in a full 4-day institute course held recently in the state capital, Kuching. The participants, some coming from as far as the northern region of Sarawak and among whom were several members of the Spiritual Assembly of Sarawak as well as the Auxiliary Board, actively took part in the course to study the first of the three units of Ruhi Book 8, which is entitled *The Covenant of Baha'u'llah* and is published by the Ruhi Foundation, Colombia.

Arranged by Ms Geriti Katik, the national coordinator, and facilitated by Counsellor George Soraya, who came all the way from Indonesia specifically for this purpose, the course, using a pre-publication edition of Unit 1, was successfully held on 25 - 28 November 2011 at the Kuching Baha'i Centre.

Right from the commencement of the course at 8.30am on Friday 25 November morning until its closing at 6pm on Monday 28 November, the participants enthusiastically delved into the study of all the 43 sections of this Unit 1, which covers the Center of the Covenant, Abdu'l-Baha, and His Will and Testament.

Coincidentally and befittingly, too, the

4-day study period stretched over the Day of Covenant and the Ascension of Abdu'l-Baha, thus allowing the participants to join in the celebration of the former by the Kuching Baha'i community at the same venue on 25 November evening, and in the commemoration of the latter by the same community at the same venue on the midnight of 27 November.

By the end of the 4-day course, the participants have gained better insight and understanding of the period following the ascension of Baha'u'llah and the rightful station of Abdu'l-Baha as His chosen Successor, the Center of His Covenant and the Interpreter of His teachings. They, too, studied the achievements of Abdu'l-Baha's ministry and explored extensive passages from His Will and Testament, and came to realize the full meaning and implications of Abdu'l-Baha's statement that *"the pivot of the oneness of mankind is nothing else but the power of the Covenant."*

"We all were greatly inspired by the greatness of the Covenant and its uniqueness in religious history," was the comment from one participant. "Equally inspiring was the immense sacrifice that the Center of the Covenant made in ensuring that the friends remained firm and steadfast in the Covenant," commented another, who added: "This study reminded us yet again of how great a person is the Master, who, even nearing the advance age of 70, travelled to the various cities in the West, such as London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, etc., to spread the Message of His Father. What we did pale in comparison to what the Master had done. This makes me realize how much more each of us can do to spread the unifying teachings of our Faith for the betterment of this world".

The course ended on a high note, with the participants feeling inspired and making commitment to conduct similar study with their fellow believers in their respective localities at the earliest opportunity!

Announcement

New members of the Regional Baha'i Council for Sarawak

The Spiritual Assembly joyfully announce the appointment of the new members of the Regional Baha'i Council for the three regions in Sarawak effective 26 November 2011 till 26 November 2012.

Northern Region

The members are: Mr. Riban Katik, Mr. Nyawai Unsa, Mdm Elam Langoh, Mr. Riki Pindie, Miss Tunga Benta, Mr. Ovat Lani and Mr. Chupong Chubot.

Central Region

The members are: Mr. Bundan Liban, Mr. Jesion Meding, Mdm Annie Tan, Mdm Kullan Baweng and Mdm Mariha Kupon.

Southern Region

The members are: Mdm Bari Enkek, Mr. Sigom Betek, Mr. Thomas Ngadan, Mr. Kaon Joken, Mdm Rosa Bangal, Mr. Arwin Lee and Mr. Bunsie Tunton.

We call upon the friends to work closely with the Regional Councils and strongly support the activities planned. At every cluster, we should be laboring assiduously within the framework of the Five Year Plan, laying a firm foundation for the expansion of the Baha'i community and extending to our friends, neighbours and colleagues our vision for building a new world.

The Assembly would also like to take this opportunity to thank those members who had served in the Regional Council and participated wholeheartedly in implementing the Plan's framework of action. We hope that you will continue to be in the forefront of activities and assist our community to meet the manifold challenges associated with the process of growth.

New representative

A message from the Regional Board of Trustees of Huqúq'u'lláh for Southeast Asia.

We are pleased to inform you that the Regional Board of Trustees of Huqúq'u'lláh for Southeast Asia have appointed Mr. V.P. Govindasamy Vedayagam to be the representative for Sarawak (Miri).

Mr. V.P. Govindasamy Vedayagam will be carrying out the education of the friends in the Law of Huqúq'u'lláh. His status of appointment is non-receipting representative. His term of appointment begins 11th September 2011 until 31st July 2013 ..."

(Mr. Govindasamy Vedanayagam is commonly known to the local people as Dorai. He resides at Kampung Sungai Biar, in Bakong cluster)

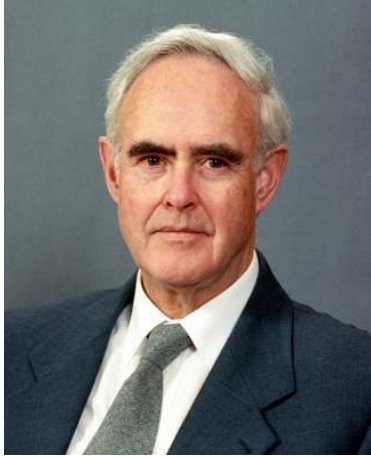
Upcoming Events

- 3rd Baha'i School Teachers Conference at the **Baha'i Centre** at No. 1 Nanas Garden, Nanas Road, Kuching on the 17 & 18 December 2011.
- Youth Pioneers' Conference commencing 21 December 2011.

Passing of a former member of The Universal House of Justice

dated 1 December 2011

Our hearts are laden with sorrow at the passing to the Abha Kingdom of our dearly loved former colleague Ian C. Semple, staunch,



Mr. Ian C. Semple

clear-sighted, outstanding servant of the Blessed Beauty. Having embraced the Cause of God in the prime of his youth while at university, he devoted his considerable energies, eloquent pen and keen

intellect to its protection and to the promotion of its vital interests throughout the rest of his life. A distinguished record of six decades of uninterrupted labour in the Divine Vineyard included service as a member of the National Spiritual Assembly of the British Isles, of the Auxiliary Board for Propagation in Europe and of the International Baha'i Council, and culminated in forty-two years of membership of the Universal House of Justice from its establishment in 1963 until 2005. The shining qualities of his being, his immense courtesy, surpassing humility, purity of heart, irrepressible joy and unflinching optimism--all born of an unshakeable faith in the Word of God and its capacity to redeem humankind--endeared him to everyone who had the privilege of knowing him.

We extend our loving sympathy to his beloved wife, Louise, to his dear children, Michael, Nicholas and Jennifer, and to his grandchildren for the loss they have sustained and pray for the bounties of God to surround them. May Ian's valiant soul receive a joyous welcome in the celestial realms above and be richly rewarded for his fealty and his exemplary dedication to duty. We call upon the friends everywhere to hold memorial gatherings in his honour, including befitting commemorative services in the Houses of Worship throughout the world.

Bakong Cluster launched 14th cycle program of growth

Report by Mr. Dorai

The Area Growth Committee launched its 14th cycle of program of growth on the Day of the Covenant. The event was hosted by Sungai Biar community on the evening of 25 November. The program include stories on `Abdu-l Baha, studying extracts of messages from the World Centre, reviewing achievements during the last few months and setting goals for the next cycle. The event was attended by many friends from neighbouring communities.

President of Pacific island nation visits Baha'i World Centre

1 December 2011

HAIFA, Israel — The head of state of the Republic of Palau has paid an official visit to the Baha'i World Centre.

President Johnson Toribiong with his wife, Mrs. Valeria Toribiong, were welcomed by a member of the Universal House of Justice, Mr. Stephen Hall, and his wife, Mrs. Dicy Hall, on 25 November. Also in the receiving party was a member of the International Teaching Centre, Mrs. Zenaida Ramirez.

Palau is one of the world's youngest sovereign states, located in the Pacific Ocean, 800 kilometers east of the Philippines. President Toribiong himself requested the visit to the Baha'i World Centre while on a state visit to Israel.

At a reception held in the Seat of the Universal House of Justice, Mr. Hall presented the president with the book, *Baha'i Shrine and Gardens in Haifa and Acre*. A laser-etched crystal memento of the Shrine of the Bab was also presented to Mrs. Toribiong.

"The president — who is an attorney by profession — expressed his appreciation of the Baha'i teachings on justice," said Kern Wisman, representative of the Baha'i International Community, who was a member of the welcoming party.

After speeches, the delegation — which also included Palau's Justice Minister, Mr. John Gibbons, and guests from the municipality of Haifa — visited the Shrine of the Bab and its surrounding terraced gardens, which particularly interested Mrs. Toribiong who, in her role as first lady, has done much to promote the beautification of her country. "It is an impressive experience when a head of state is able to see something of the essence, character, scope and scale of the Baha'i Faith — and respond with such respect to the beauty and dignity of this holy place," said Mr. Wisman



The President of the Republic of Palau Mr. Johnson Toribiong and his wife Mrs. Valeria Toribiong-pictured center are shown visiting the terraces of the Shrine of the Báb