

SPAD opens eyes to guide dogs

Chief operating officer keen to let blind take canines on public transport

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THE Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD) will discuss letting guide dogs board public transport with their blind owners soon.

Its chief operating officer, Azhar Ahmad, told *The Malay Mail* he was keen to allow dogs to guide the blind on public transportation.

"This proposal will be discussed with operators, such as Prasarana and Kertapi Tanah Melayu Berhad,

soon," he said.

"As regulators, we encourage public transport use for commuters of all backgrounds."

Azhar was asked to comment on an initiative by the Malaysian Glaucoma Society's "Dogs For Sight" programme to promote the use of guide dogs.

Its founder, Stevens Chan, said they had gathered 130 signatures and collected RM1,139 from individual donations of RM10 when kicking off their fundraiser at the Desa Park City Sports Centre last weekend.

"It is, of course, not enough to kickstart our campaign. Our long-term goal is to collect 100,000 signatures and RM150,000 in funds by year-end," he said.

Collaborating with non-governmental organisation Save One's Sight Missions, the Malaysian Glaucoma Society's long-term goal is to help set up the first guide dog service nationwide with local instructors taught to train eventual recipients on how to use their canine guides.

It also aims to have 25 dogs, such as golden retrievers, labradors and German

shepherds, brought in from the US, Australia or Taiwan.

Chan said they would be conducting other fundraising events every month towards this purpose. "In the meantime, we will be addressing the relevant authorities for advice regarding guide dog use in Malaysia.

"Pandan MP Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat will speak to the Land Public Transport Commission while MGS will consult agencies, such as the Selangor Islamic Department and Public Health Department, hopefully, within the next

two months."

Ong had said the matter would be raised among various ministries, as guide dogs were still prohibited from entering taxis, buses and trains in Malaysia.

Meanwhile, Chan had said in Singapore, the Environment Public Health Act was amended in 2006 to enable guide dogs to enter public places.

He had revealed Malaysia had over 30,000 blind citizens registered as disabled persons with many more unregistered, especially in rural areas.