

# Pushing for use of seeing-eye dogs

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THE Malaysian Glaucoma Society (MGS) aims to one day use the service of seeing-eye dogs throughout the country.

Collaborating with non government organisation Save One's Sight Mission (SOS Missions), they plan to gather 100,000 signatures with a minimum RM10 donation each, to help set up Malaysia's first-ever guide dog-service campaign this weekend.

"We aim to gather RM150,000 so we can get dogs to be brought in from the US, Australia or Taiwan," said World Blind Union Asia Pacific president Kua Cheng Hock yesterday.

"We also hope to eventually secure another 24 more from whichever country is generous enough to contribute."

"Hopefully, the Malaysian guide dog-service will learn to breed golden retrievers, labradors and German shepherds. Instructors can also be taught to train eventual recipients on how to use their guide dogs properly," Kua said.

He said in Singapore, the Environment Public Health Act was amended in 2006 to

enable guide dogs to enter public places.

MGS founder Stevens Chan said Malaysia has over 30,000 blind citizens registered as disabled persons with many more unregistered, especially in rural areas, he added.

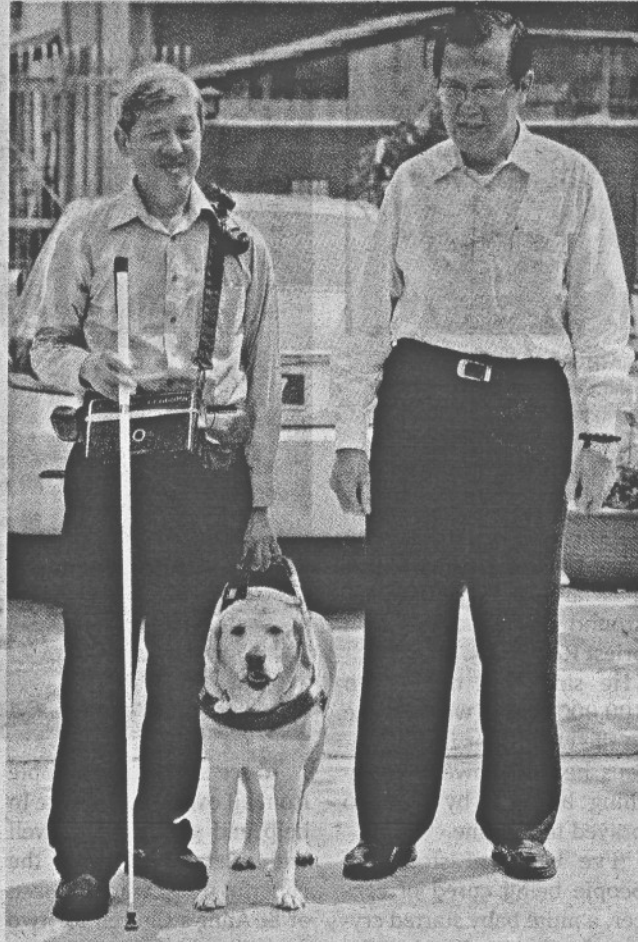
"It is difficult for blind Malaysians to be independent and lead normal lives as there are too many restrictions on having guide dogs," Chan said.

"As Malaysia is a multi-religious community, we are willing to work with various governmental and religious bodies to enable policies for guide dogs to be allowed into malls, restaurants, hotels and work places. The campaign may take many years and will be tough."

Meanwhile, Pandan MP Datuk Seri Ong Tee Keat who was also present yesterday pledged to advise SOS Missions to navigate towards allowing guide dogs into public places.

"The issue will be raised among various transport ministries, as guide dogs are still prohibited from entering trains, buses and trains. Although the LRT does have certain facilities, it is still inadequate," he said.

"We will discuss this with the Land Public Transport Commission (SPAD), The Selangor Islamic Depart-



**GIVING SIGHT TO THE BLIND:** Kua (left) with his service dog Kendra and Ong at the press conference regarding allowing the blind and their guide dogs on public transportation — Pic: ARIF KARTONO

ment (JAIS), the Agricultural Ministry, Suhakam and municipal councils," Ong said.

The two-day Dogs For Sight campaign event will

be held this weekend at the Desa Park City Sports Centre from 3pm to 7pm.

The event will also offer free glaucoma-screening for both people and dogs.